

# CCLD Educational Survey

2016

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calling the Department of Labor and Industry at  
(651) 284-5015 or 1-800-342-5354

## The survey design and demographics

The survey was sent to 723 CCLD licensed building officials with available email addresses. The survey was conducted using Survey Monkey and the data downloaded to SPSS for analysis. When the survey was closed, 323 responses had been received, a 45% response rate. Figure 1, below shows the distribution of survey takers by self-reported job description. No accessibility specialists responded to the survey. Table 1 gives the number of respondents in each professional category.

Figure 1: Percentage of respondents by self-reported profession

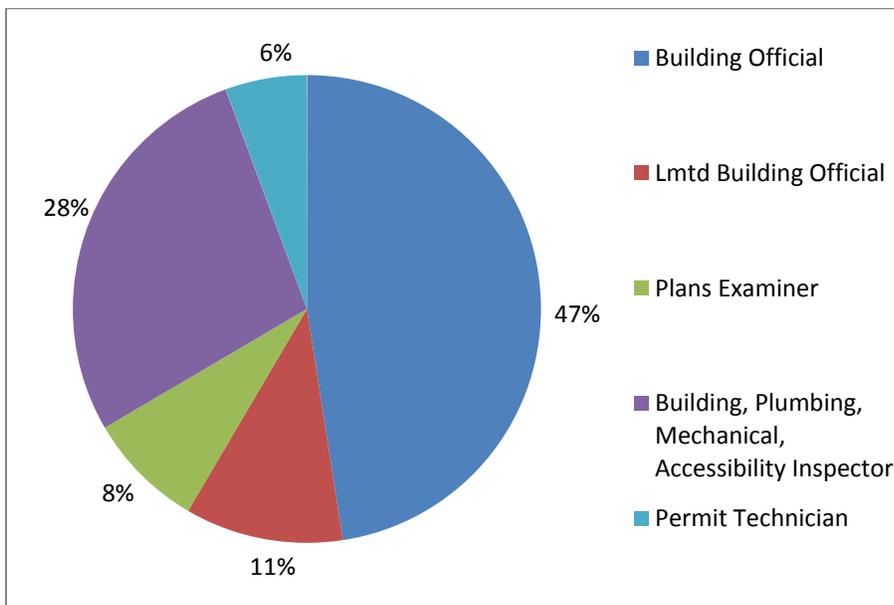
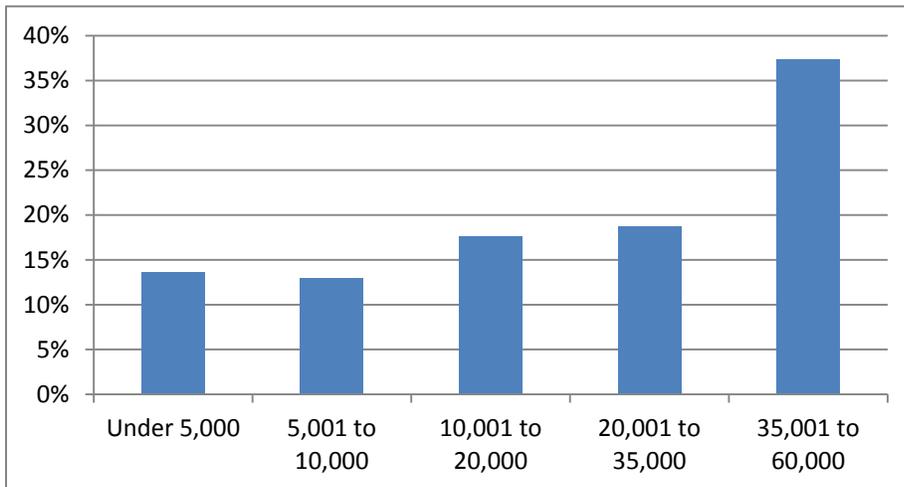


Table 1: Number of respondents by self-reported profession

	Respondents
Building official	135
Building official limited	31
Plans examiner	23
Building, plumbing, mechanical, accessibility inspector	79
Permit technician	16
No response to question given	39
<b>Total</b>	<b>284 responses, 323 incl. missing</b>

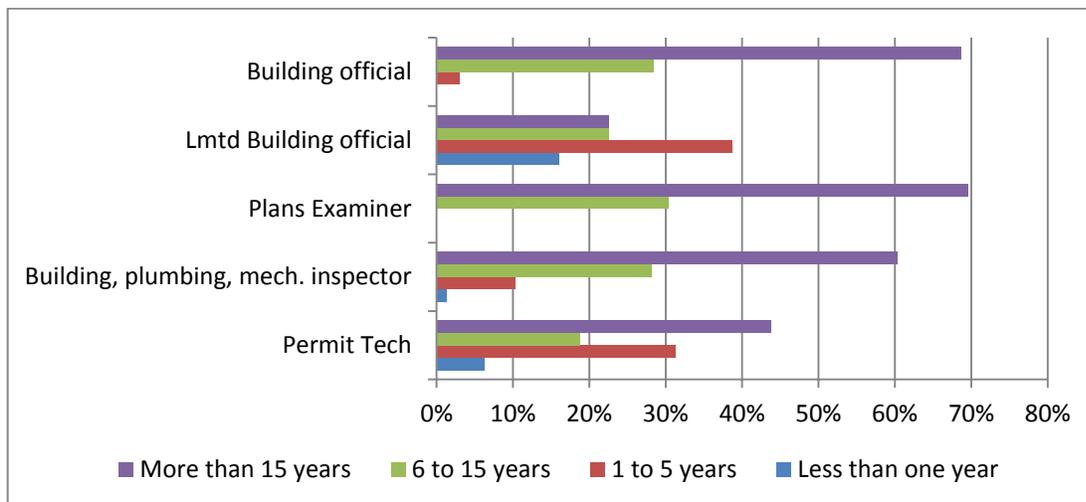
Nine out of ten respondents worked for municipalities. The responding officials worked in a wide range of population-sized jurisdictions with the only notable concentration being in the 35,000 to 60,000 range, see Figure 2.<sup>1</sup>

Figure 2: Respondents by jurisdiction size



Sixty-nine percent of the population of building officials and plan examiners have more than 15 years of working experience in the field, see Figure 3. Limited building officials and permit technicians make up 23% and 19%, respectively, of the responders with more than 15 years' experience.

Figure 3: Working experience by profession



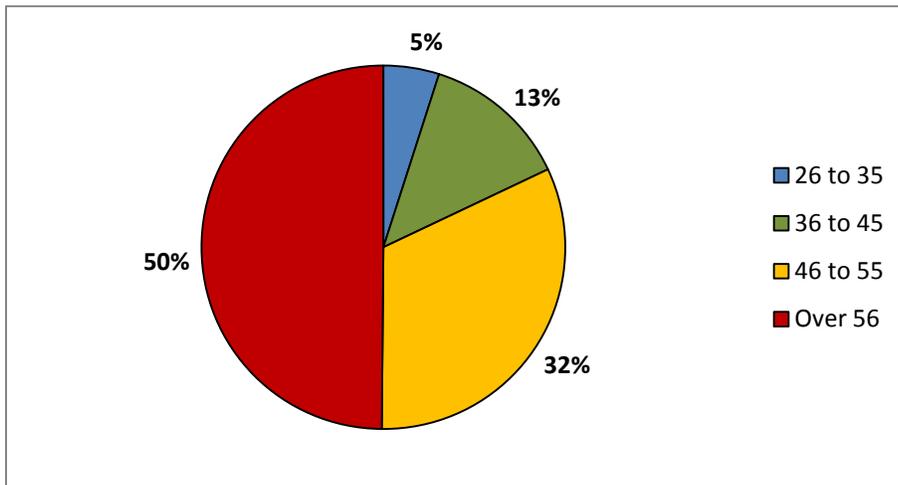
<sup>1</sup> This category may be skewed as the category of "over 60,000" was omitted from the survey erroneously.

Responding building officials had been in their current position an average of 12 years. Limited building officials and permit technicians were more likely to have been newer to their current positions. Jurisdiction size did not seem to affect job tenure.

## Age

The age of building officials affected their survey responses on many questions. Half of all responding building officials are currently over age 56 and an astounding 82% of building officials are over age 46.

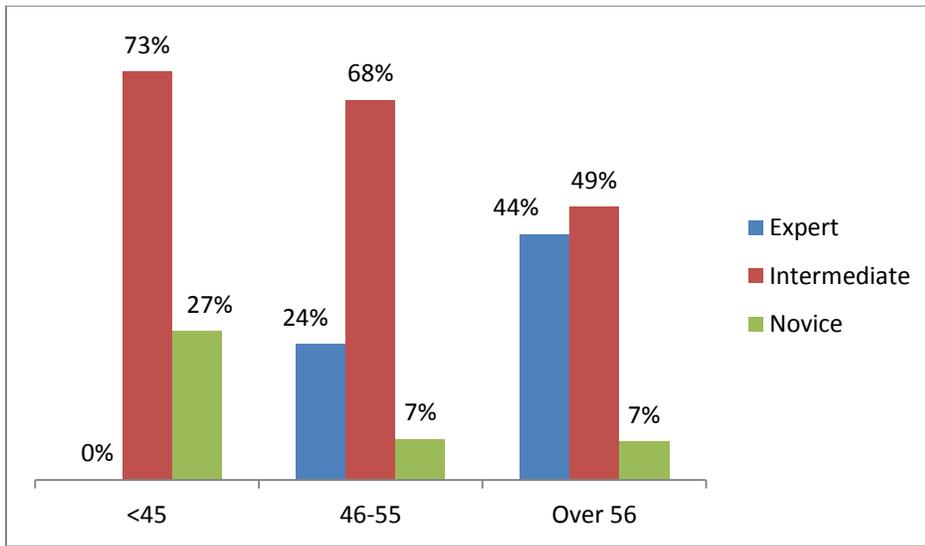
Figure 4: Percentage of respondents by age cohort



This anticipated loss of trained inspectors will undoubtedly challenge CCLD’s educational resources. The department will need to consider carefully how these inspectors can be replaced without causing large scale program disruptions.

The majority of all age groups assess their occupational knowledge as “intermediate” (see question 14, Appendix 1 for a definition). As might be expected, those assessing their knowledge as “expert” tend to be older.

Figure 5: Self-reported expertise by age cohort



No inspectors who were younger than 46 years of age described themselves as experts.

## Training

There is general unanimity on being able to attend all-day training events; only two respondents stated they would never attend an all-day event. Preferences for training event times were also fairly uniform with only permit technicians expressing a preference for another choice, mornings; all other professions preferred all-day training events with mornings the clear second choice.

Figure 6: Preferred training times, all

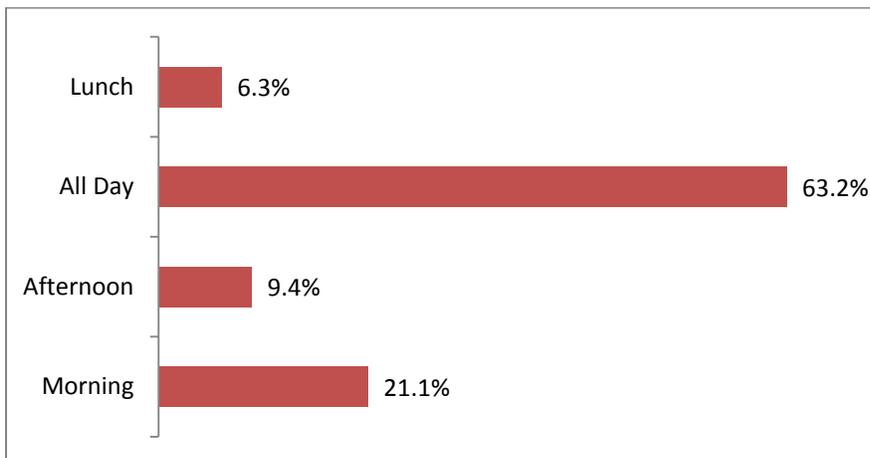


Table 2: Preferred training times by profession

	Designated Building Officials	Limited Building Officials	Plan Examiners	Building, plumbing, mech. Inspectors	Permit Techs
Morning	30	12	3	15	10
Afternoon	13	8	2	6.0	3
All day events	115	25	17	60	5
Luncheons	9	5	0	4	3

In response to the question, “If you would attend an all-day training event, how often would you? Almost 95% of respondents replied they would attend at least twice a year. There was some variation based on age as Figure 8 illustrates. Generally, younger building officials preferred a more frequent training schedule. There appears to be no correlation between respondents’ assessments of their expertise and how often they would attend trainings, see Table 3. Fifty-five percent of building officials preferred winter for attending trainings and 39% had no preference.

Figure 7: How often age cohorts would attend an all-day training event

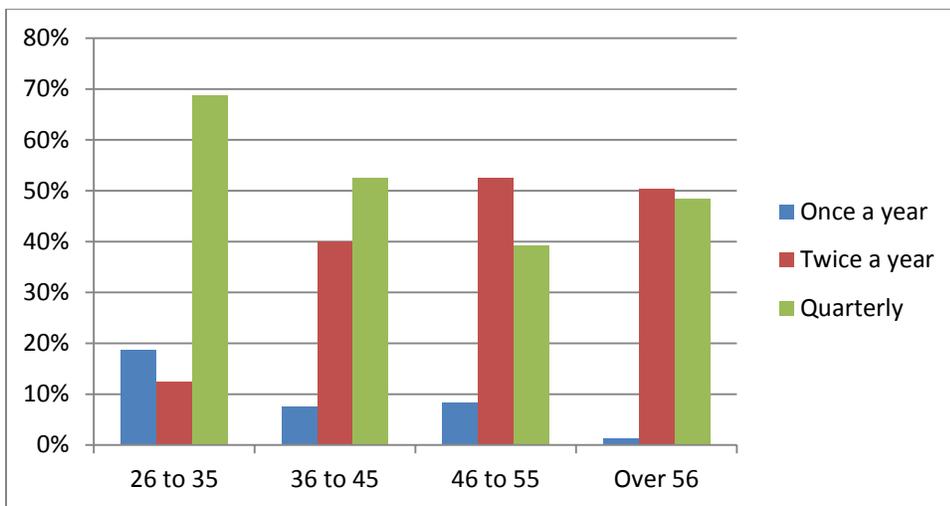
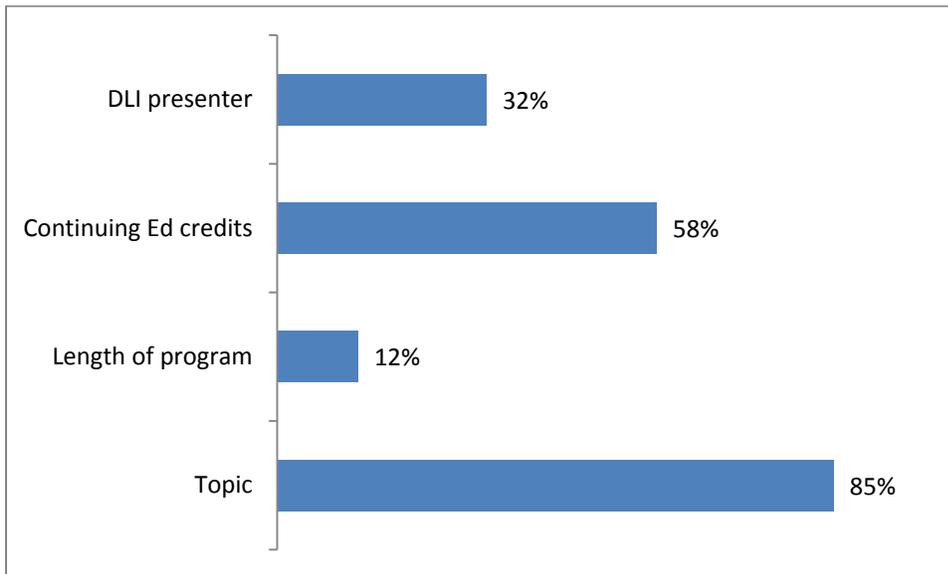


Table 3: How often respondents would attend an all-day training event by self-reported level of expertise

Indicate your current level of knowledge	Once a year	Twice a year	Quarterly	Total
Expert (I am confident and knowledgeable in the field and ca	3	70	55	128
Intermediate (I understand it well enough to do my job and f	8	65	75	148
Novice (I am learning as I go and believe that with continue	4	5	7	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>292</b>

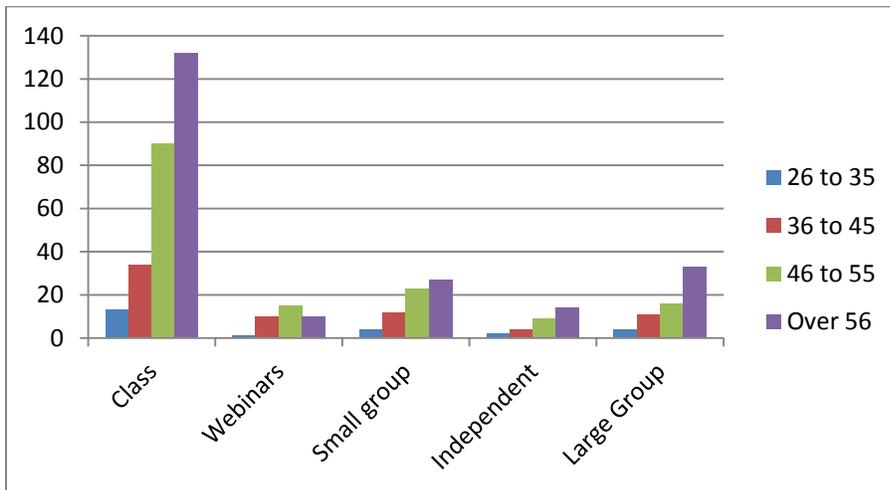
The two major factors that influence training attendance are the topic and continuing education units. Question 11, “Which of the following would influence you to attend a training ...”, allowed for multiple responses. We received 605 responses to this question, 87% of responders listed “topic” and 58% chose “continuing education units”.

Figure 8: Factors which would influence attending a training



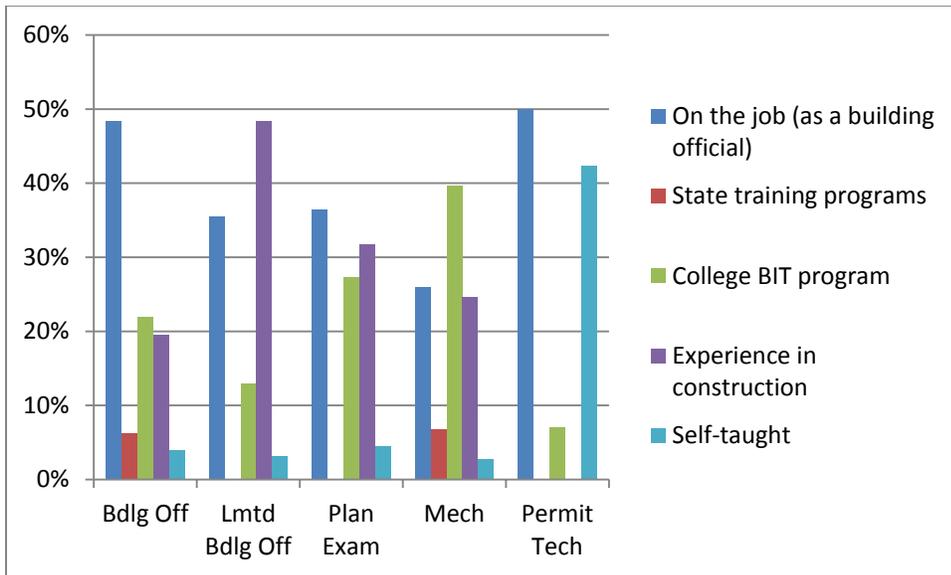
Overwhelmingly, 85% of responders preferred classroom trainings as the preferred method of learning. Even allowing for multiple responses, no other method topped 20% favorable. Neither age, profession, nor level of knowledge influenced the choice of the preferred learning method, see Figure 10.

Figure 9: Choice of learning method by age cohort



There were significant differences between how the related professions learned the duties and tasks of their jobs, see Figure 11. Building officials and permit technicians were most likely to have learned “on the job.” Mechanical inspectors were most likely to have learned their craft in a college BIT program. Permit technicians described themselves as self-taught at eight times the rate of any other group. Limited building officials were most likely to report they learned the duties and tasks of their jobs through construction experience.

Figure 10: Methods of job learning by profession



Age affected how building professionals learned their jobs much less than their specific job profession. Outside of the youngest cohort, 26-35 years old, age groups were fairly homogeneous in how they learned. The youngest cohort was much more likely to cite “on the job” and least likely to cite “college BIT program” as how they learned their job duties.

Question 15 asked responders to rate their top five training needs. There was substantial differentiation by profession to this question. Figure 11 shows the results for all professions by topic. The top five training needs are highlighted in blue. Figures 12-16 shows the five most requested topics by profession.

Figure 11: Top training topics

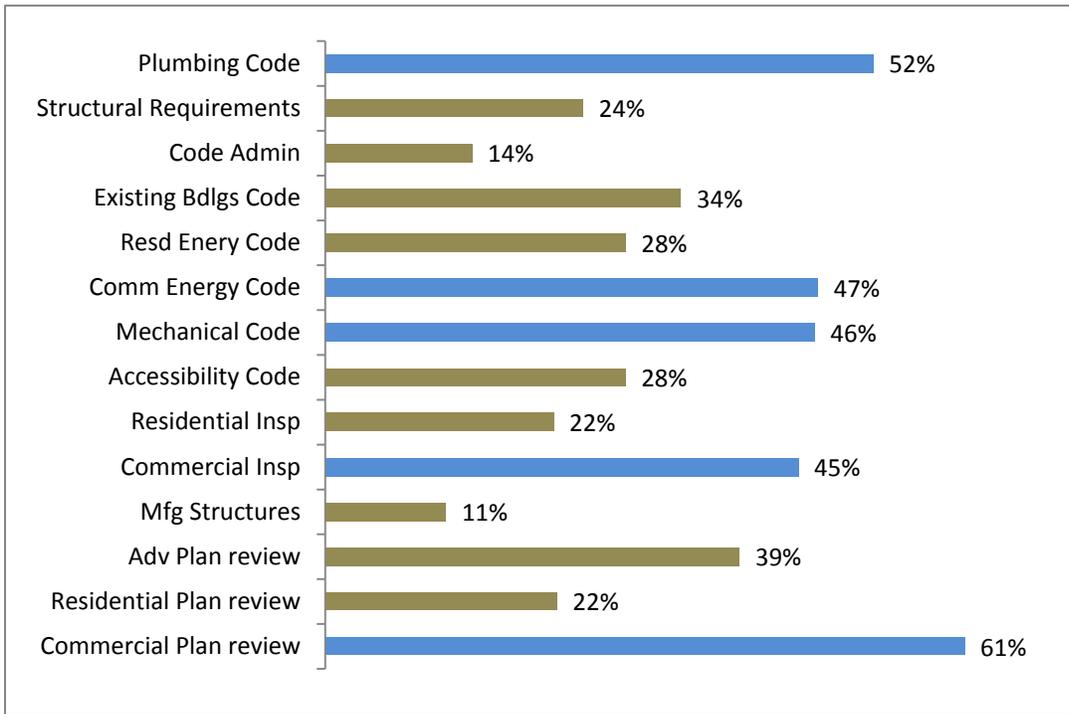


Figure 12: Top five educational topics for designated building officials

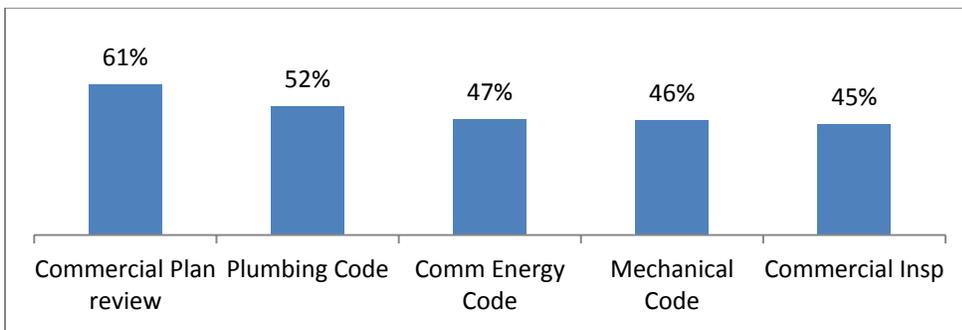


Figure 13: Top five educational topics for limited building officials

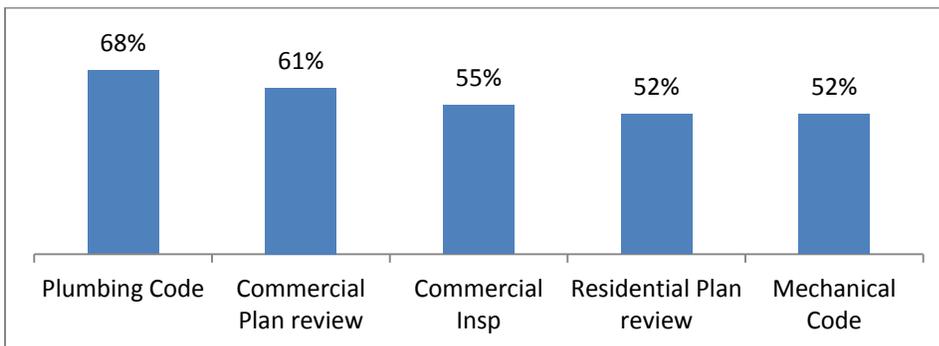


Figure 14: Top five educational topics for plan examiners

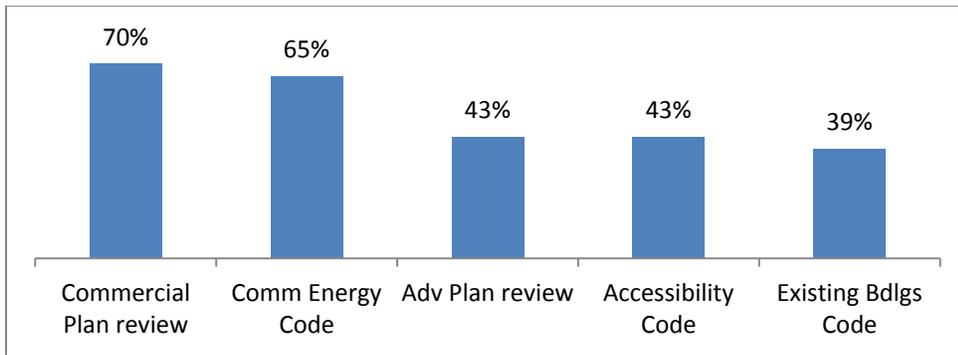


Figure 15: Top five educational topics for building, plumbing, mechanical, and accessibility inspectors

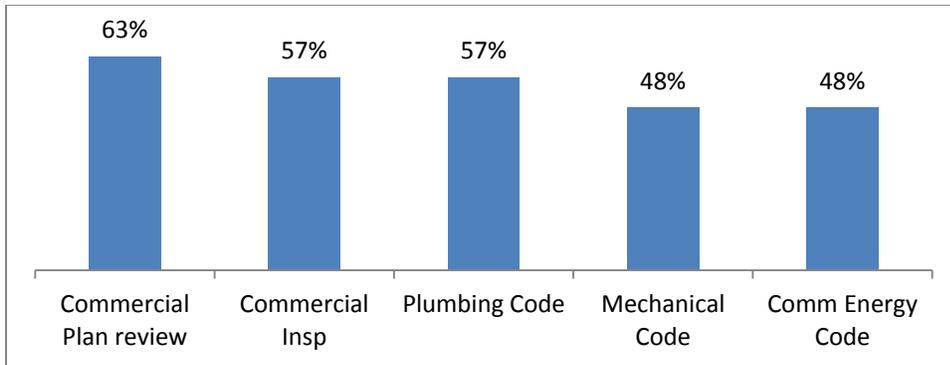
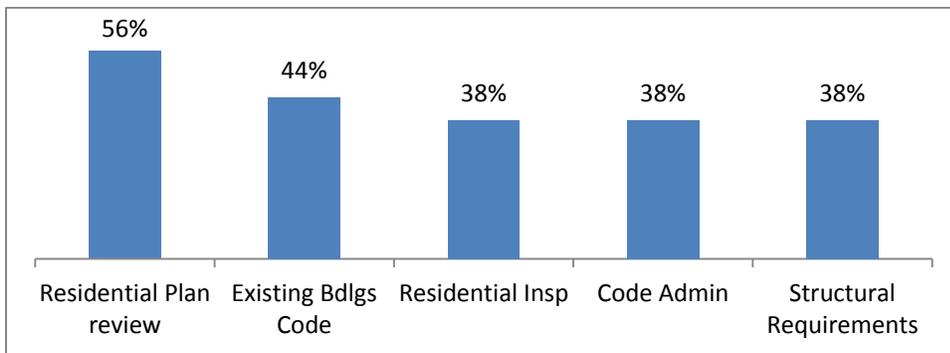


Figure 16: Top five educational topics for permit technicians



## Comments

The survey respondents submitted 155 comments in response to the question, “Please share with us what you would have liked to have known prior to becoming a building official or entering the building code regulation industry”. One-hundred and thirty-two contained meaningful responses. Examples of non-meaningful responses were, “none”, “n/a”, etc. All comments entered as a response to question 16 can be found verbatim in Appendix 3.

Table 4: Comments sorted by category

Code issues	Specialized knowledge	Lack of support	Management or People skills	Money	Training	Enforcement	Politics	Other
22	22	7	10	4	23	7	30	7

I created 9 categories for sorting the comments as shown in Table 4. “Code issues” and “Specialized knowledge” contained a wide variety of issues within each category. Most interesting was the large number of comments under “Politics”, largely showing surprise that politics could enter into code enforcement at the local level.

### Appendix 3

**All responses to Question 16, “Please share with us what you would have liked to have known prior to becoming a building official or entering the building code regulation industry”**

1	A broad-based overview of how codes are organized.
2	A wider knowledge base, particular concerning the vast variety of trades involved in building a structure.
3	Additional plumbing knowledge
4	all the house flippers ruining the construction business
5	An understanding of how Doli, sfm, doh all work. Who has authority and where. A contact list with very ntact sites.
6	Anything! I knew nothing.
7	architectural designer
8	As a building official, you are on your own. There is no real support from the state (and that is getting to be truer as time moves on).
9	As a Permit Technician, knowledge of codes and inspections would have been helpful prior to taking this position, however, I have learned through the years ""on the job"" and from my Building Official!
10	Better management skills.
11	Can never have enough people skills.
12	Code cycles changes
13	difference in salary in outstate areas
14	Difficult to get decent training
15	Enforcement process of building code
16	Getting up to speed with new codes
17	Given the specific sections in the Code Books to study and review and have to refer to when I have a question. I didn't know where these were and that I had access to them.
18	Good people skills are needed to be able to communicate what the issues may be and making sure people understand they are being heard even if they don't like what you have to say about the issues that always come up. Second I think this is a good time to get into this part of the construction industry with all of the people who will be leaving in the next 10 years. If they are knowledgeable in technical aspects of the code and have good personal skills when working with others they can pretty much write their own ticket.
19	Government Politics : o )
20	Hoe extremely difficult it is to convince people how important code compliance is.
21	How great and satisfying a career it has been. If I had known how good it was I would have gotten into it many years before I did.
22	How hard it is to get your first municipal Inspector position!
23	How hard it was to qualify to take the full BO license test based on arbitrary point schedule devised by the state

24	How much fun it could be.
25	How much information we have to know
26	How municipal government works in relation to the building department
27	How narrowly focused/closed minded inspectors and Building Officials can be.
28	how politics play into role
29	How quick my hair would turn gray.
30	How the code is written. The code writers could put a lot of the code in much better language or worded clearer, for less challenges for everyone. Interpreting the code can sometimes be more of the challenge then actually doing the work.
31	How to better work with the political pressures of the job.
32	How to deal with city councils, administrative staff that do not know, nor willing to care, what we do.
33	How to deal with the day to day issues that come with the job
34	How to deal with the political pressures and how to educate my council about the importance of the building dept role within an organization.
35	how to get started
36	How to navigate and better advocate for the industry in the political environments of City Administrator and City Manager types of government.
37	HVAC experience
38	I am considering letting my BO lic lapse because of the absurd CEU process to maintain certification. No carry over of a few credits. DLI/ICC presented courses are not automatically approved for CEU.
39	I should have started earlier.
40	I think it would be helpful to have more online training available from the state. Webinars are great I found a series on braced wall lines from the APA & the ICC. I think it would be nice to see the state produce some of these seminars. I would pay to have access to webinars of this type. It isn't easy to go to night classes when you are working during the day and the colleges are a good distance away. Thanks.
41	I thought that the State would offer code opinions when you were in need of help.
42	I went through the BIT aas program and was ready
43	I wish I had known how political the code enforcement process can be and how over all the years I have been doing this the state has provided less and less support for those of us in the field. This lack of guidance by the state had led to inspectors who enforce things that are not in the code. This can make all of us look bad, including DOLI.
44	I wish I would have had a better understanding of the vast and varied knowledge one needs to possess/obtain to be competent and able to do a good job. I guess that in a sense I was lucky that I didn't know what I didn't know when I entered the field. If I had known, I'd have been too afraid to do the job.....
45	I would have like to have known about all the other aspects of the job we have to deal with. Junk houses, mold, hoarders and people who chose to live in filth.
46	I would have liked to know that this field of public service was available when I was younger. I would have applied for the necessary skills training a long time ago. More advertisement is needed.
47	I would like to have had a greater knowledge of commercial inspections.
48	I would like to have known more about the administrative aspects of city employment and how to advance in my career.

49	I would like to see training provided by CCLD paid for by the surcharge currently collected
50	If I had known how rewarding the profession USUALLY IS, I probably would have tried to become involved earlier.
51	interpretation of codes
52	It is exactly what I expected
53	It is hard to get a foot in the door without experience
54	It never ceases to amaze me that there is little, if any, enforcement. There is no penalty for making mistakes.
55	It would have been nice to know that the code is so political and industry driven. And now the state can pick and choose who can inspect certain projects with the same certification! crazy
56	it's not as simple as it seems
57	its direct ties to economics and job security
58	Journeyman status in a trade or Arch/Eng training prior to working as a building inspector
59	Just how much code there actually is.
60	Knowing how to handle difficult people in the field
61	Lack of knowledge contractors have. Did not know about the Politics control in code regulations.
62	Lacking professionalism
63	Legal meaning to gain compliance, and how to challenge the municipality B.O. when as an inspector for a final interpretation of codes.
64	lousy pay
65	mechanical and plumbing codes
66	More about city government and other regulatory agencies concerned with the building industry.
67	More about code administration and other laws of MN that affect municipalities.
68	more about plumbing
69	More about the code.
70	more about Plumbing and mechanical for commercial
71	More administrative as I run a one stop shop
72	More Commercial training. Not just a fly-by but dig in a bit. Most of the trainings are refreshers but don't go very deep in content.
73	More commercial plan review. I think it depends on who had the job before you and how they trained you when i took over we did a very poor job of plan review now we do an excellent job but i worked with other code officials on plan review in my opinion there should be a universal check list for plan review to follow would be a big help
74	MORE KNOWLEDGE OF ACCUAL INSPECTIONS, WHAT TO LOOK FOR
75	More of a step by step training or apprentice program for plan review.
76	More step by step versus book and big picture things (i.e.: check listing, reports, communication hierarchy - stuff like that)
77	Most of it is learned on the job no matter how much training you receive.
78	na
79	na-do not work for jurisdiction
80	navigation of the code documents
81	none
82	Nothing
83	Nothing, I was well trained by previous BO's

84	Nothing, really. But I have come to realize my passion for honest, involved code enforcement is not as prevalent as I expected. What that means is although uniformity is virtually impossible, the degree of judgements and interpretations is often extremely broad.
85	obtaining code knowledge in all trade disciplines
86	Ok with it
87	Plan review. The now-defunct BIT program lacked any plan review education. We need that BIT program to be re-established again, as it was in the past. And, Question #3 above, my city has about 78000 residents.
88	Plumbing / Mechanical
89	politics
90	Politics
91	Politics at local level are tough. B/O recognition at local level is nonexistent
92	Politics of Code enforcement
93	Residential and commercial plan review training.
94	Swinging a hammer was more pleasant than joining the dark side
95	take advantage to learn all you can from the old timers in the industry - that is where the knowledge is - tap it
96	That any idiot can become a building official. There is not any consequences for doing a poor job. There is too much politics involved in the job and no one to back up enforcing the code equally.
97	That codes constantly change and the contractors don't keep up with the changes fast enough so we are constantly teaching in the field.
98	That contractors are not required to have as much code knowledge as inspectors.
99	That getting approved classes for license credit would be so challenging and finding classes that have relevant content.
100	That i was going to have to be a combination inspector (mechanical and plumbing). Test/certification does not prepare you for that
101	That it is difficult to get training on commercial plan review
102	That local elected officials without any training could have so much influence on code enforcement and there is no regulatory watchdog at the state level to stop it. Local elected officials can tell the B.O. when, where, and how to enforce the MSBC and most comply in order to keep their jobs. Seems even more prevalent with contracted inspectors because, like any business, they are coddling to their customer aka the local government body.
103	That ongoing training would be so hard to come by.
104	That pay is not as high as the job should be.
105	That pay is not good based on your responsibilities and required knowledge. Community support is hard to come by. Conflict is a given at some point in your career.
106	That the building department is approachable and flexible as possible.
107	That the job can be this much fun. I would have done it sooner.
108	That there are too many politics involved in the process
109	That there is not as much uniformity as you are led to believe.
110	That you must have to drink every night to cope the headaches!!!!!!!!!!!! Kidding it is a great occupation, you have really learn to take the tough days in stride
111	That you won't get hired unless you are a man already networked into the city you are interviewing with.

112	The amount of code changes and so often. Also the great P.E.R.A. retirement plan!
113	The amount of political involvement
114	The amount of politics involved
115	The amount of time it takes to research things and how difficult it can be to find the correct answer
116	the challenge of working with elected officials
117	The classes help with any questions prior to certification
118	The code format
119	The codes will become exponentially more complicated, the building official will be responsible for a sea of regulations, and the BIT program will not be properly supported by the state.
120	The complexity of knowledge required to be proficient in the industry
121	The ever changing codes and the problem to keep up with all the amendments. Also the testing required to become a building official is extreme. It recently changed again I believe with more questions added but the same time period to complete. I would consider revising the test and also have a pre-test class similar as to the limited test.
122	The importance of having excellent communication skills to be successful in this career.
123	The lack of consistencies within the Code profession and the assistance that was offered was pathetic.
124	The lack of professional respect for the position and department , If we are ever going to attract the qualified people into this field , this stigma needs to be addressed
125	The lack of web CEU available.
126	The limited amount of job openings and if you're younger person breaking into the field, is there any tips to become a more in demand candidate!!!!???
127	The magnitude and impact of State and local politics
128	The most important thing is enjoying the people you work with.
129	The need for good writing skills.
130	The negative perception of the code industry. We need to educate the public as to the value our services provide, and train our industry how to provide a better level of customer service.
131	The personal disposition needed to be authoritative and personable. Use of verbal judo.
132	The political part of a municipality
133	The politics involved at the local level, and how to deal with it.
134	The politics of being a municipal building official. It would also be helpful if the codes were unilaterally enforced over the entire state.
135	The politics of government work
136	The state was very helpful when I first started (25+ years ago). That assistance priority has slowly diminished to a level where it takes several recorded phone prompts to talk to someone at DLI. State training programs have become more of a ""tax"" that attendees must pay in order to obtain their required CEU's to maintain their state certifications. For the quality of training provided, the state should consider reducing surcharge fees and remove them from the training arena or provide more of and better topical training seminars for the fees they are collecting.
137	There are a lot of people who expect me to be an expert in every subject in all code applications.
138	There is a lot of ""grey"" in the code. You have to understand the intent of the code to be able to use it as a guide. Not everything in the real world is black and white.

139	There is an amazing lack of respect for Building Safety and Code Administration. The statutory responsibilities of the Building Official are not always well understood nor supported nor put into practice; perhaps because the bar is set too low for Building Officials (more than Code knowledge and field experience is needed to effectively run a department) and DLI does promote the industry. The work of Permit Technicians receives little regard/recognition beyond lip service; perhaps because it is overwhelming done by ""girls"" and has never been fully assessed for K/S/A and is not viewed as a viable part of a career path.
140	There needs to be specific training and time in grade for being the designated BO.
141	Through the years I valued the stories of decisions that involved grey areas (i.e. changes in occupancy, work started without a permit, government conflicts and so on
142	understanding the political environment
143	Very political- you are recognized by name when a job comes up; especially if you participated ALOT at the various code committees (when do they actually do their inspection job?) It should be based on code knowledge, education, experience, and then the willingness to join in the code committees.
144	Was a union carpenter. Came in cold to profession. Profession has been good. Might have been good to have more information before making switch, such as a mentor or career professional for advice.
145	We have a population of over 350,000
146	what main elements/concepts are most misunderstood within the code
147	What my career would be like
148	When I first started in 1997 there were only a few documents UBC Plumbing code mech code the building code was in one bool when I look around the office at the racks of code materials I sometimes feel like a part time librarian. I wish I would of payed closer attention to the Dewey decimal system
149	When I was a Contractor I had a code book. When I began training to become an Inspector, I walked into a Library!
150	Why the code is interpreted differently from city to city.
151	why the department is limiting the input they receive from their technical staff on things
152	wide variety of issues
153	Without the job time constraints, more time to attend education presentations.
154	worked in the construction field
155	Would like to have worked for both a small and large inspection department, just to be a little more rounded and less specialized.