The home of collaborative contracting

# Trained to Deliver

## Training, skills and the future of construction contract management

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# Foreword

**Every project this industry delivers depends, in the end, on whether the people running it understand not just what a contract says, but what it asks of them. This research looks at whether the industry is equipping its people to meet that standard.**

What it finds is a workforce that already believes in training. Professionals across every market we surveyed told us, with striking consistency, that the right training matters to their role and to their industry. Where the research is more instructive is in what stands between that belief and practice: investment that does not always follow conviction and, even among those already trained specifically in contract management, real gaps in exactly the mechanisms that shape whether a project succeeds.

Training is not preparation that sits alongside the technical work of delivering a project. It is part of that work. Understanding how a contract allocates risk, triggers an early warning or resolves a compensation event shapes outcomes as directly as any other professional skill.

At NEC Training, we have spent over three decades building the capability that sits behind collaborative contracting, working alongside NEC Contracts to ensure that the people using our contracts understand not just the words on the page, but what they mean in practice. This research affirms why that work matters, and points to the need to ensure that we get the right training to the right people, consistently, throughout their careers.

**Andrea Naylor**
Managing Director,
Thomas Telford Ltd

# Introduction

**Ask professionals across the built environment whether training matters, and the answer is close to unanimous. Ask whether their industry invests enough in it, and the answer changes, and not for the better. That gap, between what people believe about training and what their employers actually do about it, is what this research sets out to measure, and where it is doing the most damage to how projects get delivered.**

**85%**
**say the correct training is important in their role, yet**

**61%**
**say the industry underinvests in it**

The construction industry is navigating several pressures at once: technological change, the transition to net zero, tightening regulations, persistent skills shortages and shifting workforce expectations. Meeting them depends on people, and on whether the industry equips those people with the right skills at the right time, throughout their careers.

This research draws on the same programme behind NEC Contracts' 2026 global report, Trust, Contracts and Outcomes: A Global Study of Construction Supply Chain Relationships, extended with a further module of questions on training, professional development and contract management capability. It surveyed more than 1,000 professionals across the UK, Australia, Singapore, Hong Kong and Peru, alongside qualitative interviews with UK-based procurement and commercial professionals and NEC contract training tutors. Full details of the methodology are set out in About the Research at the end of this report.

85 per cent of professionals said the right training matters to their role, and said so consistently across every market surveyed. Only 61 per cent think their industry actually invests in it. That is the gap this report is about, not whether people value training, but what happens once training needs paying for and scheduling.

This is the third piece of research NEC Contracts has published on the state of the industry in the past two years, following 2025's Transforming Construction and 2026's Trust, Contracts and Outcomes. It is the first to look specifically at how, and whether, lifelong training equips the people who deliver its projects. This report examines what the research found. It looks in particular at contract management training, where the gap between belief and practice is most consequential, and at what is required to prepare the industry for wider use of collaborative forms of contract.



# Attitudes to Training

## Belief in training is close to universal

83% of professionals in delivery-facing roles across the five markets agreed that lifelong training is essential in the built environment industry, and 85% agreed that the correct training is important in their role. Agreement was even higher among architects (88%), civil engineers (91%) and facilities managers (89%).

Recognition of training's importance grows with age and experience. Among 18 to 24 year olds, 70% agreed lifelong training is essential, rising to 80% among 25 to 34 year olds, 87% among 35 to 44 year olds and 91% among those aged 45 to 54. Many in this oldest group will have spent 20 to 30 years in the industry, long enough to have lived through several cycles of change, and their conviction reflects that.

There was some variation across markets too. Agreement that lifelong training is essential was most universal in Peru, where 91% agreed, including 66% who strongly agreed, and Hong Kong, where 88% agreed. It was lowest in the UK, at 74%.

A similar pattern held for the importance of training to individual roles. 90% of Peruvian respondents agreed, and a significant majority of 68% strongly agreed. UK respondents were less convinced, at 78%, though almost half (48%) of those who did agree, agreed strongly. Hong Kong respondents were also broadly in agreement, at 92%, but more mildly: the majority (60%) only somewhat agreed.

**83%**
**agree that lifelong training is essential in the built environment industry.**

Across the five markets, a consistent pattern emerges. UK respondents are broadly positive about training, including the value of soft skills, but that support is neither universal nor as firmly held as in Peru. A fifth (20%) of UK respondents were neutral on whether lifelong training is essential, compared with just 6% in Peru. This suggests that UK industry culture does not yet place the same weight on lifelong training that is evident in Peru, and to a large extent in Australia.

None of this describes an industry that needs persuading. It already believes. What it lacks, as the next section shows, is a reliable way of turning that belief into budget, access and time away from billable work, consistently, and not only for the professionals whose employers already prioritise it.

## Soft skills versus technical training

There was widespread recognition that training in soft skills, such as people and project management, matters as much as technical training. This was the view of 82% globally, including 43% who strongly agreed. Recognition was highest among those in larger organisations: 91% of respondents at businesses with 5,001 to 10,000 employees agreed, as did almost the same proportion (90%) at businesses with more than 10,000 employees, against 76% at businesses with fewer than 50 employees.

Australia (85%) and Singapore (80%) sit close to the global figure. Hong Kong, at 78%, falls between the two, while the UK's 71% remains the outlier, the only market where fewer than three in four professionals see soft skills training as equally important to technical training.

The distinction matters because soft skills training changes behaviour, not just knowledge. Technical training teaches someone what a compensation event is. Soft skills training is what determines whether they raise it early, communicate it clearly and work through it collaboratively rather than defensively - the difference between a contract mechanism working on paper and working in practice.

That organisational issue has the most impact on smaller businesses. In a business with fewer than 50 employees, the person managing technical delivery is often the same person managing the client relationship, there is no separate layer to absorb a communication failure. If soft skills training is reaching those businesses at 76% against 90% to 91% for larger ones, the organisations with the least capacity to recover from a breakdown in trust are also the ones least likely to have trained for it.

This is not a training gap the industry can close with more technical courses alone. A contract sets out what should happen when a risk emerges, but whether it actually happens depends on someone being willing and able to raise it, in the room, on time, in a way the other side can act on. Contract Management Training, covered later in this report, is where that gap becomes most consequential: even trained professionals report real gaps in the mechanisms that depend on exactly this kind of communication.

What's clear is that professionals recognise more readily than their organisations invest. Where technical training has established pathways, qualifications, CPD



requirements and employer mandates - soft skills training more often depends on individual initiative. The result is a form of training the industry says matters just as much, but treats as less essential in practice.

## Which areas of training are currently of interest to you?

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| #1 | Risk management | 38% |
| #2 | Project management | 35% |
| #3 | Cost and financial management | 29% |

*"Risk management is very important for driving better value for money across tendered price offers and subsequent management of unforeseen risks. This is through strategic risk allocation, coupled with target-oriented commercial mechanisms that enable cost-effective management of time and cost risks within project objectives."*

**Raymond Au, Sole Proprietor**
**DARA Consultancy**

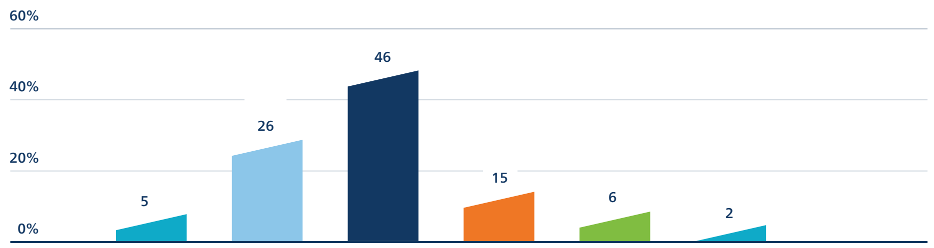


# Training in Practice

79% agreed that training and development are a core part of their organisation's culture, one of the clearer positives in the research. In Peru, almost nine in ten (89%) agreed, including 58% who strongly agreed. In the UK, agreement was lower, at 68%, with only 28% agreeing strongly. Within the UK, facilities management professionals (94%) and civil engineers (76%) showed the strongest agreement.

This pattern held globally too: architects, civil engineers and facilities managers were consistently the most likely to see training as central to their organisation's culture. That fits the nature of their work. Architecture and civil engineering both require up-to-date technical knowledge to meet evolving regulation and innovation, while facilities management combines technical, regulatory, operational and customer service demands, where well-trained staff reduce risk and improve performance.

## What level of investment does your business make in training?




- **Very high investment** (training is a strategic priority with significant resources)
- **High investment** (substantial budget, proactive training culture)
- **Moderate investment** (regular training budget, covers basic needs)
- **Low investment** (limited budget, training available only when essential)
- **Very low investment** (minimal or no budget allocated)
- **Don't know**

> *"This insightful report provides valuable evidence of the industry's commitment to professional development and highlights several encouraging trends. It is particularly pleasing to see the strong recognition of lifelong learning, the importance placed on developing competence, and the value attached to a range of training interventions delivered through accessible and effective learning methods."*
>
> **Barry Trebes, Consultant**
> **Trebes Consulting Limited**

Belief that training matters is not the same as spending on it, and the two come apart quickly once the question turns to money. 61% said there is a lack of investment in training across the industry, a view held fairly consistently across professional groups: 62% of architects and civil engineers agreed, as did 57% of project managers within main contractors and 59% of their counterparts in specialist contractors. Facilities managers (74%) and surveyors (68%) were more likely still to say investment falls short.

> *It's money well invested to upskill the individual. The upskilling helps the individual's knowledge, makes them more valuable, more experienced, and feel more valued that we're putting time and effort into their development.*
>
> **Commercial Manager**

Peru had the highest level of agreement (71%) that more should be invested in training, in keeping with the value Peruvian respondents place on training generally: if training matters this much, spending should follow. The research suggests it currently does not, fully.

UK respondents were more split. 55% agreed there is a lack of investment, 23% disagreed (the highest of any market) and 21% were neutral. It is not clear from the research whether this reflects genuinely stronger investment in the UK, or simply a lower baseline expectation of what good investment in training should look like.

At a business level, the picture is mixed. The largest group (46%) described their employer's investment as moderate, with a regular budget to cover individual needs. Just over a quarter (26%) reported a high level of investment, with a further 5% describing it as very high.

A fifth (21%) said their business made a low or very low level of investment.

Australia had the strongest employer investment of the five markets: 44% reported high or very high investment, against only 16% reporting low or very low. Hong Kong sat at the other end, with just 12% reporting high investment and none reporting very high; 68% described investment there as moderate, the highest proportion of any market. Singapore was similar, with 21% reporting high or very high investment and 58% moderate.

The UK had the most polarised picture: 29% reported high or very high investment, almost matched by the 28% who reported low or very low, the highest proportion of any market reporting low investment. In Peru, a quarter (25%) reported low or very low investment, consistent with the wider finding that around seven in ten Peruvian respondents believe the industry underinvests.



## Uneven investment

Investment varies as much by profession as by country. Only 15% of facilities management professionals and 18% of surveyors reported high employer investment, and none in either group reported very high investment. Among project managers, 33% of those at main contractors reported high or very high investment, against 23% at sub-contractors, while 33% of sub-contractor project managers reported low or very low investment, against 19% at main contractors.

Investment also scales with organisation size. 60% of respondents at businesses with 10,000 or more employees reported high or very high investment, including 25% reporting very high. At businesses with fewer than 50 employees, just 16% reported high (15%) or very high (1%) investment.

This matters because it means people working alongside each other on the same project can arrive with very different levels of training. Take contract management: those who have had the training understand how the contract's mechanisms shape day-to-day decisions and project outcomes; those who have not, do not. That gap in understanding can affect delivery and increase the risk of disputes.

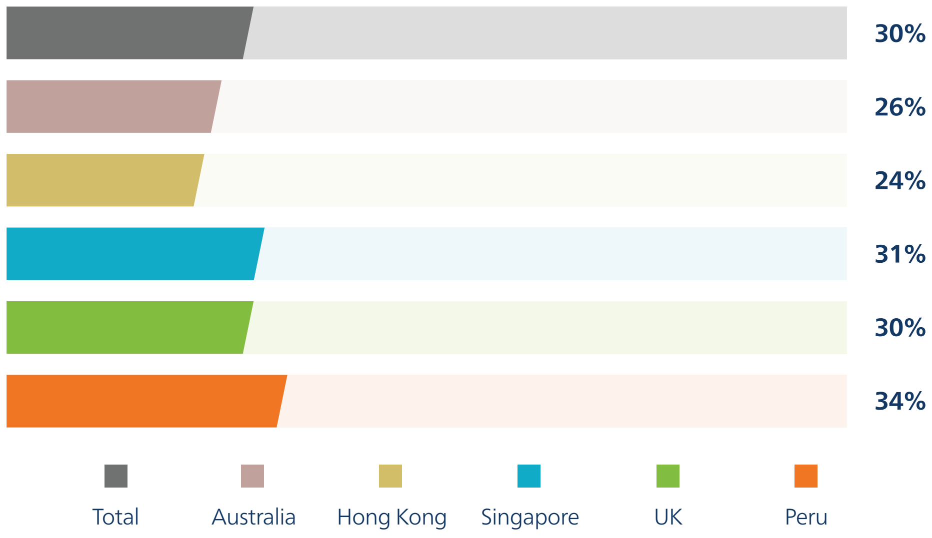
## Training for career building

The research also looked at whether professionals feel supported to build their careers through training. Opinion splits roughly into thirds: 38% said they have good or excellent access to the training they need to further their career, though only 9% call it excellent against 29% good; 32% described access as moderate, and 30% said it was limited or very limited.

Australia reported the strongest access, consistent with its stronger investment levels: 49% rated it excellent (12%) or good (37%). The UK was similar overall, at 42% (11% excellent, 31% good). Hong Kong and Singapore trailed, with only 4% and 5% respectively rating access excellent, and the largest groups in both markets, 44% and 43%, describing it as moderate.

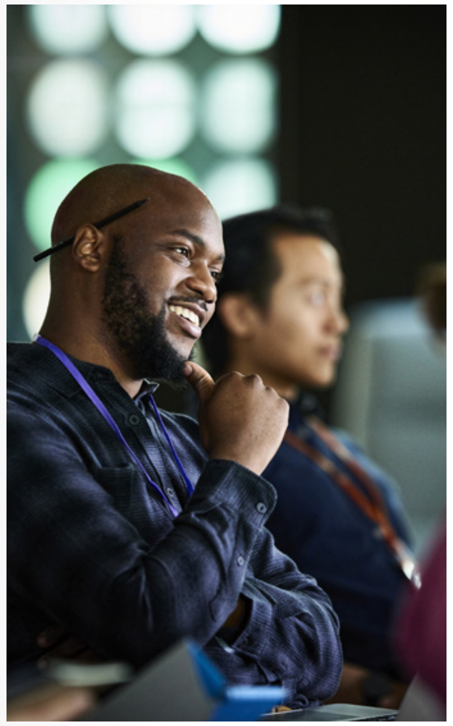
Access also varies by profession. 40% of architects reported good or excellent access, against 24% in facilities management, where only 3% rated it excellent. Civil engineers were the profession most likely to describe access as limited or very limited, at 40%, the highest of any group, suggesting that some professions, architecture among them, have built a clearer formal pathway for training and career progression than others.

### Percentage of respondents who stated they have limited access to the training they need to further their career.






> *Australia's numbers on access aren't a coincidence. When employers treat training investment as core business rather than a discretionary spend, access follows, and usually retention does too. It's the clearest example in this research of what happens when the two move together, instead of one lagging behind the other.*
>
> **Renee Paik, Head of Asia Pacific NEC Contracts**



## Training for early career professionals

Ongoing training matters most for those earliest in their careers, both to build capability and to help them find the direction that suits their strengths. That depends on employers providing the opportunity, and on early career professionals recognising the value of continual, career-long learning.

The research points to a consistent gap. 79% of early career professionals (those in the first five years of their career) agreed that lifelong training is essential, against 86% of their more experienced colleagues. In the UK the gap was wider still: 60% of early career professionals agreed, against 84% of non-early career respondents.

Singapore showed the strongest early career agreement anywhere in the research on one specific measure: 86% of early career professionals there agreed the correct training is important in their role, against 81% of non-early career respondents. On soft skills, the gap ran the other way, though narrowly: 77% of Singapore's early career professionals agreed soft skills training matters as much as technical training, against 81% of their more experienced colleagues.

On contract management specifically, early career professionals were also less convinced of the benefits. 70% agreed that organisations with trained contract management professionals have a competitive advantage, against 85% of non-early career respondents. The UK gap was again the widest: 51% against 80%.

A lack of access to training compounds the problem. In the UK, only 32% of early career professionals reported good or excellent access to career-building training, against 50% of non-early career respondents. Australia showed a similar pattern (40% against 55%). In Hong Kong, only 14% of early career professionals reported good or excellent access, against 39% of their more experienced colleagues, itself a relatively low figure. For an industry already struggling to attract and retain young talent, a gap this consistent across every market and almost every measure is one worth taking seriously.

### The intention-implementation gap

One of the more telling findings is that almost half (48%) of those in executive leadership or strategic management roles believe their business invests highly or very highly in training, a markedly more positive picture than the one reported further down the organisation. Investment intended at the top is not always reaching the people delivering the work.

Leaders' own experience may shape that view. 56% of those in executive leadership or strategic management roles reported excellent (15%) or good (41%) access to the training they need. Among early career professionals, just 32% said the same, and 40% of 18 to 24 year olds described their access as limited or very limited. Organisations may well be investing in training. What this shows is that the investment is not yet reaching every level, or every role, equally.



### Training frequency

77% agreed with the statement 'I regularly undertake professional development throughout my career', including 34% who strongly agreed. Half (50%) said their most recent training was within the last six months, and 79% within the past year. Under 1% had never undertaken formal in-job training.

Peru had the highest proportion training recently: 65% within the last six months, and 86% within the past year. Singapore had the lowest recent uptake, at 37% within six months.

In the UK, the overall picture was close to the average: 13% trained within the last month, 47% within six months, 75% within the year. Within specific professions the figures were considerably higher. 75% of UK architects had trained within the last six months, and all had done so within the year, reflecting the CPD requirements to maintain Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) membership, currently a minimum of 35 hours annually for Chartered Members. UK surveyors showed a similar pattern (63% within six months, 75% within the year), likely reflecting the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors' (RICS) own minimum CPD requirements, though not all UK surveyors hold chartered status.

Australia and Hong Kong were closely matched on this measure, both at 48% within six months, just under the global average of 50%. Across all five markets, training frequency broadly tracks the belief and access findings elsewhere in this report: Peru trains most often, Singapore least, and the UK sits close to the middle.

### When was your most recent training course undertaken?

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| #1 | 1 to 6 months ago | 38% |
| #2 | 7 to 12 months ago | 29% |
| #3 | 1 to 5 years ago | 15% |
| #4 | Within the last month | 11% |
| #5 | More than 5 years ago | 4% |
| #6 | Can't remember | 1% |
| #7 | N/A - Never had any formal in-job training | 1% |

> *With 75% of Singapore professionals undertaking training in the past year, our priority is ensuring that learning is applied in the workplace, where knowledge is transformed into capability, confidence and better project outcomes.*

**Sybil Tan, Group Director of Strategic Engagement, Singapore Building and Construction Authority**

### Selecting the right training matters as much as undertaking it

Asked to choose up to three of the most important factors, respondents ranked certification or accreditation at the end of training and course content joint highest, each selected by 45%, followed by relevance to real-world projects (43%). Cost (32%) and convenience of delivery (23%) mattered less.

Priorities varied by market. In the UK and Hong Kong, course content led; in Hong Kong, 58% ranked it among their top three, with CPD accreditation second (40%) and the provider of the training more important than anywhere else in the research, at 38%, against 11% in Peru, 17% in Australia and 18% in Singapore and the UK. In Australia and Singapore, relevance to real-world projects led (48% and 51% respectively), followed by certification or accreditation, then course content.

Together, these findings point to a simple test: training needs to be relevant to the work someone actually does, and it needs to lead to a recognised certification that proves their competence. Either without the other is a weaker investment. Content with no accreditation cannot be proved; accreditation with no real-world relevance is not worth the time.

## What are the most important factors in choosing training?

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| #1 | Certification / accreditation at the end | 45% |
| #1 | Course content | 45% |
| #2 | Relevance to real world projects | 43% |
| #3 | Cost | 32% |

On delivery, hybrid training, blending online and in-person elements, was the most popular (38%), ahead of fully in-person, classroom-based delivery (34%). Only 2% had no preference. Hong Kong and the UK bucked the pattern, preferring in-person delivery (42% and 40% respectively). In the UK, hybrid trailed at 24%, despite 35% of UK respondents saying they prefer online delivery, tutor-led or self-directed. UK professionals appear to prefer one mode or the other, rather than a blend.

Preference for online delivery falls with age: 36% of 18 to 24 year olds favour it, against 26% of 35 to 44 year olds and just 14% of those aged 55 to 64. Training providers need to design around the preferences of the people actually doing the learning, not a single default format.



### Factors driving training requirements

A wide range of factors are pushing the need for ongoing training, and no single factor dominates. New construction practices (63%), addressing skills gaps (61%), industry recognition or reputation (61%), client requirements (60%), and project complexity (60%) all rated as having a major or significant impact for a similar proportion of respondents. Commercial pressures rated lowest overall (52%), with workforce continuity, industry expectation, and evolving legislation close behind, each around 58%.

> *With client requirements driving training needs for 60 per cent of respondents, it's clear that training delivers the greatest value when it equips people to meet client expectations and apply their learning directly on the job.*
>
> **Jonathan Cartledge, CEO, Consult Australia**

## To what extent do you feel the following factors influence the need for training?

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| #1 | New construction practices | 63% |
| #2 | Addressing skills gaps | 61% |
| #2 | Industry recognition or reputation | 61% |
| #3 | Client requirements | 60% |
| #3 | Client requirements | 60% |

The sharpest differences appear at market level. Peru rated these factors far higher than other markets: 80% said the use of digital technology on projects has a major or significant impact, 79% said the same of project complexity and 76% of new construction practices. None of the three ranks among Hong Kong's leading or lagging drivers, suggesting Peruvian professionals see training as far more central to navigating change than their counterparts elsewhere.

In the UK, the leading drivers were addressing skills gaps (57% major or significant impact), new construction practices (55%) and evolving legislation (50%, tied with industry recognition or reputation, and client requirements). Supply chain collaboration ranked among the lowest, with 23% of UK respondents saying it has a minor or no impact, perhaps reflecting how much of the UK industry remains wedded to traditional forms of contract, despite recognising the case for collaboration.

Commercial pressure showed one of the clearer contrasts: just 9% of UK respondents said it has a major impact on training needs, against 21% in Australia.

Overall, 42% of UK respondents said commercial pressure had a major or significant impact, against 57% in Australia, suggesting Australian professionals draw a closer link between the right training and managing commercial pressure than their UK counterparts do.

This continues a pattern NEC Contracts identified in its 2025 research into digital transformation and sustainability, Transforming Construction: Smarter, Greener, Together. That study, surveying UK professionals, found that 80% agreed workers will need to be flexible and keep pace with fast-changing digital tools, and 79% agreed that upskilling will need to be continuous throughout a career rather than a one-off event. Two years of research now point in the same direction: change in this industry is constant, and training is the mechanism the industry itself already says it needs to keep up with it.

> *AI could be both a massive positive and a massive negative to both the industry and the collaborative environment. It's positive because it helps level the playing field where there used to be higher barriers to entry. By the same token, it can create laziness, because people aren't willing to read things to develop a deep understanding of what different elements mean.*
>
> **Procurement Manager**



## Percentage who say investment in training clearly improves project outcomes


## The impact of training

Investment in training only pays off if organisations can see what it delivers. 46% said their business uses project performance metrics to measure the impact of training, and the same proportion selected employee feedback. 40% cited formal assessment or testing. 16% said their employer looks for a link between training and outcomes without formally measuring it, and just 4% said there is no measurement at all.

Australian respondents reported the most rigorous measurement: 51% cited project performance metrics, 49% employee feedback and 46% formal assessment. UK respondents reported the least, at 38%, 43% and 30% respectively, the lowest of any market on each measure. Hong Kong respondents were the most likely to cite formal assessment, at 56%.

## The link between training and project success

Respondents were also asked directly about the relationship between training investment and project outcomes, and the response was decisive. 45% said it clearly improves outcomes, and a further 44% said it leads to somewhat improved performance. Only 7% saw little or no impact, and just 1% thought training could distract from project outcomes. On a question this consequential, that is about as close to consensus as survey data gets.

Peru saw the clearest link: 96% said training improves outcomes, including 65% who said it does so clearly. Hong Kong was the most equivocal, with only 66% agreeing training improves outcomes and 22% saying it has little or no noticeable effect. Singapore's support was high (90%) but softer, with 60% saying it only somewhat improves outcomes. The UK sat in the middle: 36% said training clearly improves outcomes, 50% said it somewhat does.

Architects and civil engineers were the strongest advocates, with around half of each group (51% and 50% respectively) saying training clearly improves outcomes, likely reflecting the direct, technical link between their knowledge and their results. Encouragingly, executive leadership and strategic management respondents were also strongly convinced of the link, suggesting the case for training investment is understood at the top of organisations, even where the investment itself is not always reaching the people delivering the work.



# Contract Management Training

## Have you undertaken any training in contract management, for example on the effective delivery of NEC or JCT contracts?


Just over half the industry, 54%, has undertaken training specifically in contract management, on the effective delivery of NEC or JCT contracts, for example. Just under half have not. This question was put to everyone, not only delivery-facing roles, and interest in it is growing, driven in large part by the wider use of collaborative contracts on public sector and large infrastructure projects. The UK had the lowest uptake of any market, at 43%.

**46%**
**nearly half the industry has never had contract management training**

Contract management training behaves differently to most other professional development because a contract is not background knowledge, it is the operating system a project runs on. An early warning only works if the person who spots the trigger event knows to raise it immediately, not after the fact. A compensation event only gets assessed fairly if the person managing it understands the specific mechanism, not just the general principle of change control. Generic project management training teaches the principle. Contract-specific training teaches the mechanism, and it is the mechanism, applied correctly and on time, that determines whether a dispute is avoided or a claim is still being argued over six months later.

### Contract training uptake by age

Contract management training is, perhaps counterintuitively, more common among younger professionals. 64% of 18 to 24 year olds have undertaken it, falling to 59% among 35 to 44 year olds, 38% among 45 to 54 year olds and just 19% among those aged 55 to 64. The people with the most authority over how a contract is administered are the least likely to have been taught how it works. That places the risk at the senior end of the industry, not the junior end where it's usually assumed to sit. The same pattern shows up by career stage: 66% of those in their first five years have had contract management training, against 44% of those with more experience. It is younger professionals leading the shift toward formal contract training, not older ones catching up.

## What are your primary reasons for undertaking contract management training?

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| #1 | To improve my industry knowledge | 33% |
| #2 | To improve my competence and confidence | 32% |
| #3 | To support my career development | 31% |

93% believe it is beneficial to receive contract management training that is approved or accredited by the publisher of the contract, a view that was very nearly universal in Peru (99%) and Singapore (98%). It was less unanimous, though still a strong majority in the UK, at 80%, the lowest of the five markets. Given the choice, most of the industry does not just want training. It wants training with the contract publisher's own name on it.

*"The findings demonstrate the importance respondents place on receiving training from the publishers of the contract, ensuring alignment with intended contractual principles and best practice. Equally encouraging is the recognition of the value that formal accreditation brings to individuals, organisations, and projects by providing a structured and measurable approach to competence development."*

**Barry Trebes, Consultant, Trebes Consulting Limited**

### Benefits of contract management training

Among those who have undertaken contract management training, the perceived benefits are wide-ranging.

77% agreed that training across a project team contributes to successful outcomes, and 75% agreed that the level of contract management training correlates directly with project success.

On the business case, 77% agreed organisations with trained contract management professionals have a competitive advantage, and 76% agreed that investment in this training leads to better commercial outcomes. Opinion was more divided on whether the benefit is confined to those working directly with the contract: 57% agreed contract management training only benefits individuals working directly with contracts, 20% disagreed and 22% were neutral.

That split is worth examining. There is a strong case for training a wider circle of the project team, with content tailored to each role. This is because understanding how contractual obligations and mechanisms work day to day helps people recognise how the contract can support, rather than obstruct, a successful outcome.

Country-level variation was significant. UK respondents were consistently less convinced of the benefits: only 64% agreed contract management training across a project team contributes to successful outcomes, against 77% globally and close to Hong Kong's 65%. In Peru, 85% agreed, including 51% who strongly agreed, the highest of any market.

*"I would say, from low level to high level, it makes life so much easier when everyone understands the way the contract works."*

**Site Manager**



## Top reason for contract management training by profession

| | |
|---|---|
| **Construction** | Improve industry knowledge (37%) |
| **Civil engineer** | Avoid issues encountered on previous projects (34%) |
| **Facilities management** | Improve industry knowledge and support career development (46% each) |
| **Executive leadership / strategic management** | Improve competence and confidence (41%) |
| **Private sector client** | Support career development (33%) |
| **Public sector client** | Improve industry knowledge (47%) |
| **Project manager, main contractor** | Improve competence and confidence, and support collaboration (33% each) |
| **Project manager, sub / specialist contractor** | Improve competence and confidence, and support career development (33% each) |
| **Property developer** | Improve competence and confidence (44%) |

*"Anybody can run an accreditation scheme, and a buyer then has to judge between the accreditors. A standard form has only one publisher, so accreditation by that publisher gives one reference point which holds across firms and across borders. The publisher also carries the consequences when its form is administered improperly, and an independent trainer does not. This incentivises the publisher to provide quality training."*

**Gabriel Kor, Associate Professor, Department of the Built Environment, College of Design and Engineering, National University of Singapore, NEC4 Trainer and Accredited NEC4 ECC Project Manager**

UK respondents also reported lower agreement that training correlates with project success (63%, against 75% globally and 81% in both Peru and Australia), delivers competitive advantage (63%, against 77% globally and 82% in Peru) or leads to better commercial outcomes (64%, against 76% globally and 81% in Peru).

Interestingly, despite their overall positivity, a slightly higher proportion of Peruvian respondents (63%) agreed that contract management training only benefits those working directly with the contract, a more conservative view of its reach than their other answers might suggest.

The UK has the lowest level of contract management training in the research, at 43%. Part of the explanation may be that UK respondents see a weaker link between this training and successful delivery: fewer than two-thirds agreed it contributes to improved project success, better commercial outcomes, or competitive advantage.

UK respondents were also less likely to connect contract management skills gaps to problems on their own projects. The UK reported the lowest proportion of any market linking such gaps to cost overruns (36%), disputes (32%), inadequate risk management (28%) and misinterpretation of contract terms (24%).

Agreement that training accredited by the contract's publisher is beneficial was lower too, at 80%, against a global average of 93% and near-universal agreement in Peru and Singapore. Agreement that training matters more with collaborative contracts than traditional ones was also lower in the UK, at 71% against 80% globally, with only 29% saying it is much more important.

This lines up with findings from NEC Contracts' Trust, Contracts and Outcomes report, which found that 20% of UK respondents had never heard of collaborative contracts, the highest figure of any market surveyed, and that only 27% had worked on projects using them, against 40% in Hong Kong and 38% in Australia. Lower exposure to collaborative contracts may be leading some UK professionals to underestimate how different they are from traditional forms, and in turn to undervalue the training that supports them.

Given how directly contract understanding shapes project outcomes, the case for wider exposure to contract management training in the UK is strong. Greater exposure would likely also build a stronger appreciation of the link between training and results, closing a gap the rest of the research suggests is holding the UK back.

> *Training is one of the few levers that can actually change behaviour, not just knowledge, and that's exactly what Hong Kong's government is trying to do at multiple levels. The market is ready for hybrid and blended formats. We need to make that case, to government and to industry, that this transition is necessary.*
>
> **Renee Paik, Head of Asia Pacific, NEC Contracts**



## Skills gaps in contract management

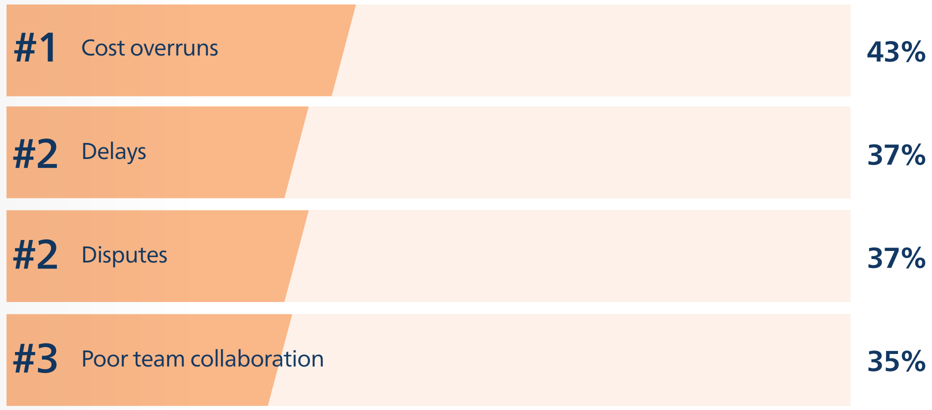
The research also uncovered clear and consistent skills gaps in contract management, present in all five markets. Across every area of contract management tested, no more than 7% of respondents reported no skills gaps at all, whether their own, their immediate team's, their organisation's or the wider industry's. Training uptake and skills confidence, in other words, are not the same thing. Plenty of people who have done the training still feel exposed in specific areas.

Sizeable proportions of trained respondents reported skills gaps within their organisation on contract selection and preparation (42%), understanding contract-relevant events (38%), the impact of contract clauses on day-to-day operations (42%), and dispute resolution within the framework of the contract (39%). Risk sharing mechanisms (41%), and payment and compensation mechanisms (44%) showed similarly wide gaps.

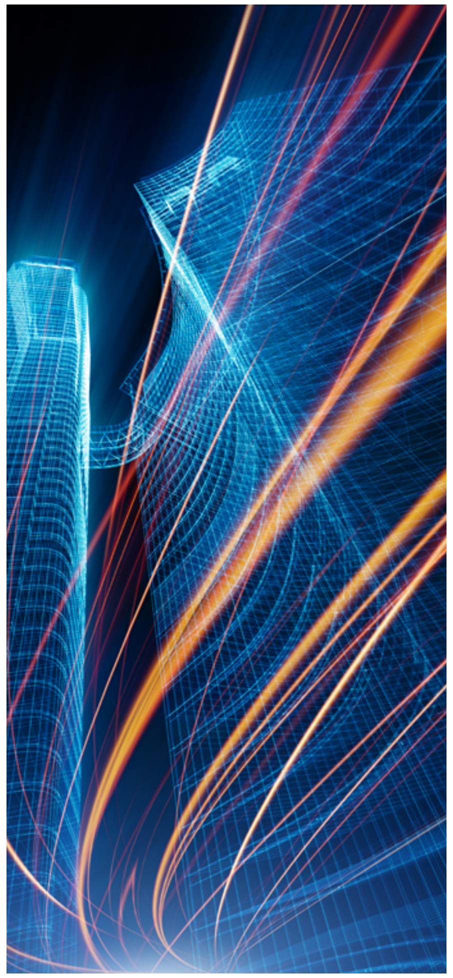
**Globally, across every area tested,**
**<7%**
**of trained professionals report zero skills gaps**

**On average,**
**25%**
**of trained professionals report gaps in their own skills in one area or more**

### What impact have contract management skill gaps had on projects you've worked on?




> *The benefits that NEC seeks to deliver are not achieved through the contract form alone... This expectation is embodied in Clause 10.1, which requires the parties to 'act as stated'. This fundamental principle demands active engagement with the contract from the outset.*
>
> **John Sherry, Practice Lead for NEC Contracts, Stantec UK**



## Which specific aspects of collaborative contracting do you find most challenging?

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| #1 | Risk allocation and sharing | 45% |
| #2 | Dispute avoidance procedures | 39% |
| #3 | Communication protocols | 35% |

### Around a quarter of respondents reported gaps in their own knowledge:

- Contract selection and preparation: **26%**
- Understanding contract-relevant events: **29%**
- Impact of contract clauses on day-to-day operations: **25%**
- Dispute resolution within the framework of the contract: **26%**
- Risk sharing mechanisms: **24%**
- Payment and compensation mechanisms: **23%**

These are not soft or general failings. Each one maps to a specific, learnable mechanism, a compensation event process, a risk allocation clause, a dispute resolution procedure. This is exactly why they are addressable through targeted training rather than left to learn 'on the job'. A professional does not close a gap in understanding compensation events by working on more projects that never happen to trigger one. They close it by being taught the mechanism directly, which is the basis on which NEC Training's own accreditations – AccPM, AccS and AccSM – are built by role rather than as a single generic course.

On almost every measure, a greater proportion of respondents from Hong Kong admitted gaps in their own skills than those from other markets, including on contract-relevant events, where more than half (54%) said they did not understand this area as well as they would like.

> *What this tells me is that generic training isn't closing the gap, and it was never going to. Knowing that a contract has a compensation event mechanism is not the same as knowing how to spot one forming on your own project, on your own timescale, and act on it correctly. That second part is what role-specific, contract-specific training has to deliver, and it's exactly where we see the biggest jump in confidence among people who've been through it.*

**Renee Paik, Head of Asia Pacific, NEC Contracts**

> *Hong Kong reports the highest skills gaps of any market, with 54% saying they don't understand contract-relevant events as well as they'd like. That is why contract-specific, publisher-accredited training matters: it turns contract awareness into confidence and better project outcomes.*

**Siu-Yuen Chan, Lecturer and former Adjunct Professor, the University of Hong Kong**



### Skills gaps contributing to industry challenges

These gaps are not abstract. Respondents linked them directly to problems they had experienced on real projects. The most commonly cited impacts were cost overruns (43%), delays (37%), disputes (37%), and poor team collaboration (35%), with inadequate risk management close behind (34%).

Cost control and on-time delivery have challenged the built environment sector for years, and disputes and poor collaboration have long been recognised as drivers of higher costs, slower delivery and constrained innovation. The research suggests that closing the contract management skills gap is a meaningful part of the solution to problems the industry has struggled with for decades.

> *One definitely cannot summarise NEC as simply 1. risk management, 2. project management and 3. financial management. However, the statistics show such a mindset. Assuming they are competent in these three areas, something is still missing… I would argue this is leadership from the top management, and proper behaviours in the middle management. The rest will follow.*

**Gordon Kwok, Director, Gordon & Partners Ltd / Associate Director, JCP Consultancy International Limited**

## Collaborative versus traditional contracts

Collaborative contracting represents a genuine shift in how supply chains operate. Rather than the adversarial dynamic that has long characterised relationships between clients, contractors and suppliers, collaborative contracts build in shared risk and responsibility, open communication and a commitment to working in the best interests of the project.

> *This shift is driven by a clear objective: to improve project performance, enhance value for money, strengthen collaborative behaviours, and create more efficient and resilient supply chains. NEC contracts are specifically designed to support these outcomes through proactive risk management, transparency, effective communication, and the early resolution of issues, replacing the reactive and often confrontational approaches associated with more traditional forms of contract.*
>
> **John Sherry, Practice Lead for NEC Contracts, Stantec**

That shift in ethos means even experienced professionals need specific training to implement collaborative mechanisms properly, and this view holds across the industry. 80% agreed contract management training is more important with collaborative forms of contract, including 37% who said it is much more important.

> *2026 has marked a significant step forward for NEC capability in Peru, with 250 official training places and nearly 6,000 hours of structured training delivered across the three NEC learning levels. This is on course to increase to 8000 hours by the end of 2026, showing the increasing demand for deeper NEC expertise in the market.*
>
> **Julio Cabrera, Country Manager, Peru**

Peru showed the strongest agreement (86%, including 53% who said much more important), consistent with the value Peruvian respondents place on training generally. Civil engineers were among the professional groups most convinced, at 85%, alongside those in executive leadership and strategic management roles, at 86%.

Asked which aspects of collaborative contracting professionals find most challenging, risk allocation and sharing led (45%), followed by dispute avoidance procedures (39%), communication protocols (35%) and early warning procedures (33%).

Risk allocation and sharing was the top challenge in Australia (53%), Hong Kong (47%), Singapore (47%) and the UK (33%). In Peru, dispute avoidance procedures ranked highest (50%), with risk allocation second (43%). Hong Kong was the only market where compensation events featured in the top three. In both the UK and Peru, communication protocols and early warning procedures were selected in equal proportion (29% in the UK, 35% in Peru). This is an intuitive pairing, since clear communication is essential to the early warning mechanism, which requires any party to notify the others immediately if it becomes aware of anything that could affect time, cost or quality.

As more public and private clients move toward collaborative procurement, and as pressure builds in every market in this research to specify it more consistently, the professionals who understand these mechanisms today will be the ones setting the standard on tomorrow's major projects. Training is not catching up with that shift. It is what will determine who leads it.



## Focus on the public sector

Public sector clients are often at the forefront of adopting collaborative approaches, including alliancing, frequently as a result of government endorsement or mandate, which makes their attitudes to contract management training particularly relevant.

57% of those working within public sector client organisations have undertaken contract management training, against 44% of their private sector counterparts. 94% of public sector respondents believe training accredited by the contract's publisher is beneficial.

Public sector respondents were also more likely to cite improving industry knowledge as their main reason for training (47%, against an overall average of 33% and 29% in the private sector).

On skills gaps, public sector respondents reported the highest levels around the impact of contract clauses on day-to-day operations and dispute resolution (both 47%), but notably lower levels elsewhere. Just 22% reported gaps in risk sharing mechanisms, against an overall average of 41% and 43% among private sector clients, and only 33% identified gaps in collaborative contract and term drafting, against 48% in the private sector. This likely reflects the public sector's leading role in specifying collaborative approaches: these organisations already have stronger grounding in preparing collaborative contracts, even where further training is still needed on implementation.

Public sector respondents found risk allocation and sharing (41%) and communication protocols (34%) the most challenging aspects of collaborative contracting, followed by dispute avoidance procedures, early warning procedures, programme management requirements, and compensation events, each selected by 25%.
All four of these were rated more challenging by private sector client professionals, a further sign of the public sector's relatively advanced position.

> *NEC contracts place an explicit obligation on both parties to act in a spirit of mutual trust and co-operation. That's not a sentiment, it's a mechanism, and mechanisms only work if the people using them know how. Training on a collaborative contract isn't an optional extra. It's what makes that obligation mean something in practice, rather than sit on the page.*
>
> **Rekha Thawrani OBE, Global Director, NEC Contracts**

> *Singapore is moving towards more collaborative approaches to procurement and project delivery, but collaboration does not happen simply because a collaborative contract is selected. The people delivering the project need to understand how the contract's mechanisms work in practice, particularly around risk allocation, early warning and communication. Building that capability across the wider project team will be critical if Singapore is to realise the full benefits of collaborative contracting.*
>
> **Himashi Soriano, Country Manager for Singapore**



# Regional spotlights

## Focus on Hong Kong

Hong Kong's numbers describe a market where demand has never been the issue. 92% say the correct training is important in their role and 88% agree lifelong training is essential in the built environment industry, both among the highest results in this research. What separates Hong Kong from a market like Peru, where conviction and practice move together, is what happens next: 58% say the industry underinvests in training, and only 32% report good or excellent access to it. The market knows what it needs. Delivery and investment have not caught up.

Collaborative forms of contract raise the bar further. 78% agree contract management training is more important when contracts are collaborative, and the areas Hong Kong professionals find hardest, risk allocation (47%), dispute avoidance (42%) and compensation events (36%), are exactly the mechanics NEC is built around. Collaborative contracts only deliver if people are trained in the hard parts.

NEC's own presence in Hong Kong speaks to the scale of that stake. Since the Hong Kong Development Bureau (DEVB) introduced NEC to public works in 2009, the contract has been used on more than 850 public works projects worth over HK$550 billion, and DEVB now recommends NEC for suitable mega-scale projects above HK$1 billion, a decision that has to be justified and signed off by officers at D2 rank or above. The Airport Authority Hong Kong and MTR Corporation have adopted NEC independently and the Hong Kong Edition, developed with DEVB and adapted to local governance and legislation, is now a complete suite across engineering, term service and professional service contracts. A 2021 government review found NEC projects delivered 10% faster and 2% cheaper than the standard General Conditions of Contract.

Publisher-approved training matters more here than almost anywhere else in this research: 89% of those who have taken contract management training want it accredited by the contract's own publisher, a preference sharpened by years of competing against a local, non-NEC accreditor in this market.

On delivery, 42% still prefer classroom-based training, but 30%, not a small number, prefer hybrid. Hong Kong is currently the only market in this research not running NEC's Blended training programme.

> *"The survey results suggest that traditional training, focusing largely on project manager accreditation, while remaining important, may not be enough for Hong Kong's market. To further raise performance, it is equally important to ensure that frontline officers and supervisors administer contracts in accordance with NEC principles and have a firm grasp of the relevant contractual mechanisms. What we need is not knowledge alone, but practical, case-based skills drawn from real project experience."*
>
> **Ir Tony Ho, Deputy Secretary for Development (Works), The Government of the HKSAR**

## Focus on Singapore

Singapore is not yet a mature NEC market. The first NEC pilot only went live in 2026, and the Building and Construction Authority has published its own form of collaborative contract, distinct from NEC. That distinction matters commercially: where this research asks about collaborative contracting in Singapore, respondents may well be thinking of BCA's own form rather than NEC specifically.

The numbers still make the case for NEC. 73% agree that skills gaps in contract management hold back collaborative approaches, well above Hong Kong, and those gaps hit real projects: cost overruns (46%), poor team collaboration (42%) and disputes (40%) all follow from them. Specifying a collaborative contract form is not enough on its own if the people using it are not trained in it.

Access, not attitude, is the constraint here. Only 27% report good or excellent access to the training they need, the weakest figure of any market in this research, even though 59% have already undertaken contract management training, similar to Hong Kong's 57%. That training is unlikely to have been NEC-specific, given how recently NEC arrived in this market, which suggests Singapore is willing rather than saturated. 30% say training clearly improves project outcomes, ahead of Hong Kong's 22%, the clearest evidence in this research that when people do get trained, they see it work.

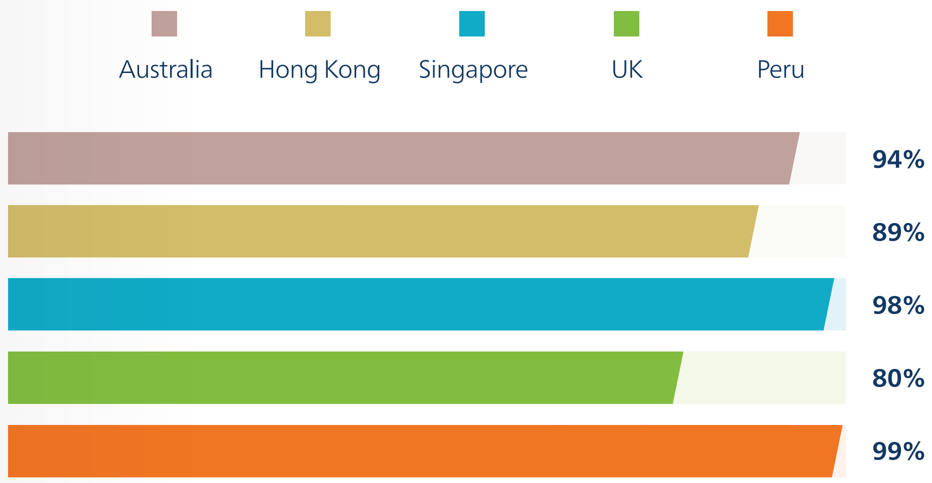
> *Singapore is the one market in this research where young professionals are more convinced than their senior colleagues that the training they're getting is the right training. That's not an accident. It's what happens when early exposure to structured, accredited training becomes normal on major projects early in a career, rather than something people only catch up on ten years in.*
>
> **Renee Paik, Head of Asia Pacific NEC Contracts**

> *Singapore's own findings in this research shows why The BCA Academy partnership exists: because professionals here want training that's directly relevant to the projects they're actually delivering, not a generic overview. Bringing NEC accreditation into an established local institution means people get both, contract-specific depth and a route that's recognised right across the industry here.*
>
> **Himashi Soriano, Country Manager, Singapore**

The clean number for NEC is publisher accreditation: 98% of those who have undertaken contract management training in Singapore want it accredited by the contract's own publisher, the highest figure of any market surveyed.



### Percentage of trained professionals who want training accredited by the contract's publisher, by market




## Focus on Peru

Peru stands out for the strength and consistency of its attitudes to training. 91% of Peruvian respondents agreed lifelong training is essential, and 96% agreed training investment improves project outcomes, both the highest of any market in the research.

That conviction is reflected in the workplace: almost nine in ten (89%) agreed training and development are a core part of their organisation's culture. Yet Peruvian respondents also feel more should be invested: 71% agreed there is a lack of investment across the industry, and a quarter (25%) described their own organisation's investment as low or very low.

This is not a contradiction. It reflects a market that holds training to a high standard, and where, despite genuine organisational commitment, many professionals feel spending has not yet caught up with the value they place on it day to day. That view fits with the finding that more Peruvian respondents than any other market see factors such as digital technology, new construction practices and sustainability as driving a growing need for training.

NEC's own presence in Peru speaks to the scale of that need. Since 2019, NEC has worked with the Peruvian Government through the government-to-government initiative with the Ministry of Economy and Finance, formalised by MoU in 2024, and has delivered structured training on the ground throughout. That commitment was extended in September 2025 through a training partnership with SNCI, providing training at SNCI's Lima facilities, quarterly webinars and a member discount.

> *What this research captures is something we see on the ground here every day. Peruvian professionals don't need persuading that training matters, they've already decided that. Our job through the SNCI partnership and the work with the Ministry of Economy and Finance is to make sure the training available actually matches that ambition, because right now the appetite is ahead of the supply.*
>
> **Julio Cabrera, Country Manager, Peru**



# NEC Training: Closing the Gap

Three things are true at once in this research. Professionals believe in training. Organisations do not always invest enough in it. And even the people who do get trained specifically in contract management still report real gaps in exactly the mechanisms that determine project outcomes. NEC Training exists to close that third gap in particular, with courses developed and accredited by the publisher of the contract itself, rather than generic third-party provision.

More than 19,000 professionals are now accredited through NEC Training and listed on the NEC Accreditation Register, recognised through the NEC AccPM, NEC AccS and NEC AccSM designations by role. That infrastructure sits behind partnerships including the BCA Academy in Singapore, launched in August 2025 with a four-day practitioner programme, and SNCI in Peru, formalised in September 2025. In Australia, the Consult Australia partnership gives its more than 30,000 members access to NEC contracts and training, with product and training discounts.

> *The standout finding is that the core issue lies not only in the awareness of the value of contract management training, but also in the capability gap in its practical application. In both Hong Kong and Singapore, respondents link these gaps to cost overruns, weakened collaboration, and disputes. Notably, 78% of respondents in each market believe that training becomes even more critical under collaborative contracts. For NEC, this underscores the need for practical, publisher-accredited training that equips the broader project team to manage risks, early warnings, and payments transparently—before issues escalate into formal claims.*
>
> **Betty K Y Lo, NEC APAC Tutor**

> *The research is a useful check on something we see every day in the classroom. People do not lack the ambition to work collaboratively. What they often lack is exposure, the chance to work through how a compensation event or an early warning actually plays out on a live project, before it matters. That is what proper contract training gives them, and it is why we built NEC Training around people who have used these contracts, not just taught them.*
>
> **Rekha Thawrani OBE, Global Director, NEC Contracts**

> *The NEC suite is founded on the principles of collaboration, communication, and effective project management... effective contract administration is far more than a contractual obligation or compliance exercise; it is a critical enabler of successful project delivery. For this reason, maximising the value of NEC contracts requires a sustained commitment to developing competence across all parties... Comprehensive NEC training is therefore not optional but essential.*
>
> **John Sherry, Practice Lead for NEC Contracts, Stantec UK**

# Conclusion

Training is central to how the built environment industry meets the challenges ahead of it. Contract management training in particular is clearly linked, in the eyes of those who have experienced it, to better project outcomes and stronger commercial performance.

Yet the research also shows where more work is needed: ensuring investment in training is sufficient, consistent across every level of the organisation, and genuinely aligned with individuals' career development. There is a real gap between how much individuals value training, especially for their own progression, and how well that value is translated into practice.

For the UK specifically, the findings are a warning. The benefits of training are less widely recognised there than in the other four markets, at a time when the UK industry faces an ageing workforce, a persistent skills gap and ongoing difficulty attracting young people into construction. Building a stronger training culture is not optional. It is part of how the industry delivers on everything from housing to decarbonisation, and it starts with making sure the right training reaches the right people, consistently, throughout their careers.

None of this is really about training in the abstract. It is about whether the industry can deliver on commitments it has already made, to net zero, to better value for public money, to fewer disputes and faster, safer delivery, with a workforce that understands the tools it is being asked to use. Collaborative contracting only works if the people signing up to it know what they have signed up to. That is not a training problem sitting at the margins of the industry's challenges. It sits close to the centre of most of them.

> *"While the results show positive progress, they also reinforce the need for greater investment in training across the industry. Developing and maintaining competence should not be viewed as a cost, but as a strategic investment that improves project outcomes, reduces risk, enhances organisational capability, and supports professional growth. There remains a significant opportunity for organisations to invest further in their people, ensuring they have the skills, knowledge, and confidence required to meet the challenges of increasingly complex projects and programmes."*
>
> **Barry Trebes, Consultant, Trebes Consulting Limited**



## About the research

This report draws on the same research programme behind NEC Contracts' Trust, Contracts and Outcomes: A Global Study of Construction Supply Chain Relationships, surveying more than 1,000 industry professionals across the built environment in the UK, Australia, Singapore, Hong Kong and Peru, including civil engineers, main contractors, subcontractors, private and public sector clients and legal and procurement professionals. Alongside the questions explored in that report, this survey included a further module of questions specific to training, professional development and contract management capability.

Two groups of questions sit behind this report. Whether someone has undertaken contract management training, and everything that follows from that, was asked of the full sample. The broader questions on attitudes to training, employer investment, training frequency and what drives the need for training were directed to professionals in delivery-facing roles – architects, civil engineers, executive leadership and strategic management, facilities management, project managers, property developers, and surveyors – on the basis that these questions were most directly relevant to their day-to-day experience of training. Private sector clients, public sector clients, procurement and legal professionals moved directly to the contract management training questions, which they answered along with everyone else.

The quantitative survey was conducted by OnePoll between 23 February and 4 March 2026. Qualitative depth interviews were also conducted with UK-based procurement and commercial professionals, as well as NEC contract training tutors. Full research results are available on request.

## About NEC Contracts

NEC Training, part of NEC Contracts and published by Thomas Telford Ltd (the commercial arm of the Institution of Civil Engineers), provides training in the effective use of NEC contracts, delivered by tutors with direct experience of the contracts they teach. NEC Training courses lead to the NEC AccPM, NEC AccS and NEC AccSM accreditations, held by more than 19,000 professionals on the NEC Accreditation Register.

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