

Atlantic Apprenticeship Harmonization Project (AAHP) Questions and Answers

General

1. What is the Atlantic Workforce Partnership (AWP)?

In June of 2012, the Council of Atlantic Premiers (CAP) “...agreed a skilled and stable workforce is key to economic opportunities”. The Atlantic Workforce Partnership is a working group that was created as a 3 year initiative led by Nova Scotia as a response to growing common issues around major projects, skills and people shortages for small and medium enterprises, training gaps and immigration. There are 6 priorities of the Partnership: Apprenticeship Harmonization, Immigration and Attraction, Labour Market Information, Labour Market Development Agreements (federal programs), Business Supports, and Youth.

At the May 2014 CAP Meeting, the Premiers requested to accelerate apprenticeship harmonization and to collaborate on regional labour market supply/demand forecasting.

2. What is the Atlantic Apprenticeship Harmonization Project (AAHP)?

The AAHP will align the rules, processes and standards for apprenticeship in the four Atlantic Provinces so there is more consistency and efficiency in the way people enter the trades and work toward certification. Over the next three years, the goal of the project is to have 10 trades harmonized throughout the region.

The objectives of AAHP are:

- To meet industry demand for a skilled workforce
- To maximize access to training (in both official languages, as appropriate by jurisdiction) to meet the needs of employers, apprentices and trade qualifiers
- To facilitate labour mobility and create a better training and working experience for apprentices
- To maximize operational efficiencies
- To maximize employer and apprentice awareness and engagement

3. Why are apprenticeship programs in the Atlantic Provinces changing?

Right now, each province has a different approach to training requirements. This impedes labour mobility, and results in lower completion rates and lower employer participation. The AAHP will increase the number of employers for apprentices to choose from and there will be more apprentices for employers to choose from as well. It will be easier for apprentices to train and work within Atlantic Canada, and, in turn, support a stronger economy. With a harmonized system, there may be reduced timelines to complete programs across jurisdictions.

4. Why is this project focusing on just Atlantic Canada? Why not harmonize with every province?

Apprenticeship has been working by different rules and standards in the four Atlantic Provinces, and that has created barriers for both apprentices and employers. Harmonizing apprenticeship will make a significant difference in strengthening our workforce and our economy. We are also committed to making sure that our system aligns with the rest of Canada, and we are working with leaders in other provinces to keep well-informed on national harmonization projects, such as the New West Partnership (<http://www.newwestpartnershiptrade.ca/>). Along with harmonization, we are also committed to working with western provinces in recognizing apprentice credentials and hours, and

to that end, two important agreements have been signed between Nova Scotia and Alberta, and New Brunswick and British Columbia.

From Government of Nova Scotia website: <http://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20140828004>

From Government of New Brunswick website:
http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2014.08.1114.html

5. What changes are being made to apprenticeship programs in Atlantic Canada?

The AAHP will implement common processes and standards to have a more mobile and engaged workforce. A common Engagement and Awareness Program for employers and apprentices will improve participation and completion rates. A shared Information Technology (IT) system will improve efficiency through enhanced reporting capabilities and increased functionality. The following table highlights the key activities to harmonize:

Administration of Exams	Trade Name
Low Registration Trades	Hours
Fees	Curriculum Standards
Compulsory Certification	Exam Data Bank
Marketing/Promotion	Log Books
Employers and Apprentice Incentives	Atlantic Trade Advisory Committees
Training Provider Compensation	Curriculum Sequencing
Completion Rates	Registration/Entry Requirements
Communication Plan	Completion Requirements
Recognition of Prior Learning	IT System

6. What are the benefits of a shared IT system?

A shared IT system will streamline the process of applying for, working towards and completing an apprenticeship program, saving time for apprentices, businesses and administrators and making it easier for apprentices to transfer from one province to another. There will be a variety of online services available for apprentices, journeypersons, and employers. Apprentices will be able to manage an online profile and learning plan; they will be able to register online, update work hours and see exam results faster. Employers will have access to this online portal to manage their apprentices and sign off on skills and hours. The shared IT system will foster greater mobility for apprentices in our region.

7. What trades are being harmonized? How were they chosen?

The first four trades chosen for harmonization are: Bricklayer, Cook, Instrumentation and Control Technician (ICT), and Construction Electrician. The first three trades were chosen due to their lower volume and demand in order to use as a model before harmonizing the higher demand and higher volume trades. To that end, Construction Electrician was chosen as a higher volume trade to include in the first four trades for harmonization.

The next six trades chosen for harmonization are: Welder, Metal Fabricator, Industrial Electrician, Carpenter, Plumber and Steamfitter-Pipefitter. They were chosen by criteria including (but not limited to): trade mobility, number of registered apprentices, related trades that can be harmonized at the same time, the age of curriculum standards, and proactive industry endorsement.

The schedule for when each trade will undergo harmonization activities may change over time and is dependent on alignment with national harmonization plans and apprenticeship authority reviews. As of October 2014, the first trades to undergo harmonization are Bricklayer, Cook, Welder and Metal Fabricator.

It is the AAHP's goal to reach approximately 60% of Atlantic apprentices by harmonizing these ten trades by the end of 2017.

8. When will these changes come into effect?

The Apprenticeship Harmonization Project working group has a goal of harmonizing the first four trades by the end of 2015, and the next six trades by the end of 2017. Implementation will be dependent on each province receiving approvals from decision-making authorities.

9. Who will benefit from this initiative?

Employers will benefit because they will have better access to apprentice trades workers without dealing with mismatched program requirements. Large employers will also have the ability to staff apprentices seamlessly across jurisdictions.

Apprentices will benefit because there will be more companies hiring apprentices. Apprentices will be able to take advantage of work and learning opportunities anywhere in the region. They will be able to progress toward certification more easily and quickly through consistency in training programs and sequencing, in recognition of prior learning and consistencies in administration of apprenticeship programs.

Training institutions will benefit through common processes, training guides and other collective resources leading to more efficient and cost-effective training.

Journeypersons will benefit through the common process for Recognition of Prior Learning. The use of a consistent and common process will aid in earning related trades certifications.

The public will benefit through a renewed effort to keep skilled apprentices in the region, and, in turn, result in a stronger local economy.

10. Who is supporting this initiative? How will the government get more companies involved in hiring apprentices?

This project is supported by Atlantic provincial and federal governments, the Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship (CCDA), industry representatives and trade unions. Engagement with trade industries and businesses is a part of our communication plan, and it is hoped that the increased mobility of apprentices across the region will encourage employers to take on apprentices. *(See "How will apprenticeship harmonization impact me?" below for benefits to apprenticeship programs.)*

11. Who is funding this project?

This project is funded by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) totaling \$4.3 million, as well as the four Atlantic Provinces totaling \$3.5 million (through cash and in-kind contributions). Approximately \$5 million is going towards the design and development of the shared IT system.

How will apprenticeship harmonization impact me?

Industry

1. What is the role of the employer in apprenticeship harmonization?

Employers in trade occupations are encouraged to support apprentices with the new processes and standards that will be put in place. Employers are highly encouraged to participate in an apprenticeship program. According to the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF), there are many important benefits to engaging in an apprenticeship program:

“There is a strong business case for setting up an apprenticeship program. According to our [Return on Training Investment](#) research, apprenticeship shows a positive return on investment, for many trades within the first two years. Employers also have the opportunity to develop a new generation of workers with the skills they need, who understand their systems and know their clients. The knowledge passed along from journey person to apprentice helps ease the impact of retirements from the skilled trades and ensures employers have skilled employees trained to their own standards. Good apprenticeship experiences create loyal and productive employees, giving businesses a competitive advantage and helping them attract and retain excellent employees.” (http://caf-fca.org/index.php?page=apprenticeship-101&hl=en_CA).

Additional information in participating in an apprenticeship program can be found at http://caf-fca.org/index.php?page=apprenticeship-101&hl=en_CA#question_3.

2. I am an employer who hires apprentices. How will changes affect my business? What will be different?

Apprenticeship harmonization will allow employers to choose from an increased number of apprentices. By streamlining the program's requirements and sequencing across four provinces, apprentices will be more mobile.

3. How do we begin the process of harmonizing a trade specific to my business/industry?

There is a set of criteria and considerations that is applied to each trade in order to decide which will be harmonized next. Industry can also approach government directly, which is part of the ranking criteria under proactive industry endorsement.

4. Is it going to cost me more money to hire and train an apprentice?

The cost to hire and train an apprentice will not change due to harmonization.

5. Do all employers who hire apprentices know about apprenticeship harmonization in Atlantic Canada?

There have been a number of communications to make companies aware of this exciting project, including press releases on government websites, industry consultations and speaking events.

Training Institutions

1. Are all training institutions changing their curriculum to align with harmonization efforts?

One of the goals of the project is to have a common curriculum standard for the chosen trades. Certified training institutions will be provided with these new standards in order to ensure curriculum requirements are the same in all four Atlantic Provinces.

Apprentices

1. I am an apprentice. How will changes affect me?

Apprentices will have the option of training and working in any of the four Atlantic Provinces with no interruption to their progress as each jurisdiction will have common processes and standards for the completion of the program. So apprentices will have more choice in where they work and the program will be more efficient.

2. Is it going to cost me more to become an apprentice?

Harmonization will not result in increased costs to apprentices. As each Atlantic province will have the same training and work requirements, there will be no need to repeat courses or work additional hours.

3. If my family moves out of province, will I be able to continue my training?

Yes, you will be able to continue your training under that province's apprenticeship agency. Part of harmonization includes the recognition of prior learning and transfer of credits within the Atlantic Provinces.

Where do I go for more information or to provide feedback?

For more information on the Atlantic Apprenticeship Harmonization Project, you can contact your local apprenticeship agency.

Prince Edward Island

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