

# Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency

## 2024-25 Business Plan

### INTRODUCTION

It is a time of great change, innovation, and transition. With growth comes opportunities. Nova Scotia is growing and adapting rapidly to a changing economic and social landscape. To meet these opportunities, we need to modernize and adapt the apprenticeship and trades qualification system.

This year marks the final year for the [current strategic plan \(2020-2025\)](#) and the [Building Equitable Pathways II plan](#), the first full year of implementing the new [\\$100 million investment in the skilled trades](#), and the launch of our new strategic planning process.

On October 19, 2023, the Province announced the Actions to *Accelerate Skilled Trades Growth* [strategy](#). This \$100 million investment will modernize the apprenticeship and trades qualification system focusing on recruiting, training, retaining, and certifying more people in the skilled trades.

In 2024-25, the focus of the Agency is to develop and implement these actions. The Agency and the Apprenticeship Board are working collaboratively to listen and respond to industry's needs and create a robust skilled trades workforce. Collectively, we will work with our partners and community to transform the apprenticeship and trades qualification system.

Growing our skilled trades capacity requires an updated modern apprenticeship system. One that breaks down barriers to becoming apprentices and journeypersons; a system that listens and responds to apprentices, industry, community, and partners; and a system that is welcoming, safe, and inclusive.

Professionals who work in the skilled trades have always been vital to Nova Scotia's success. We need them now more than ever.

Collectively, this work is guided by three main goals which stem from the Actions to Accelerate Skilled Trades Growth strategy:

- We will add 5,000 new apprentices in three years (2023-2026).
- We will certify 1,000 people annually.
- We will increase our apprentice retention to certification rate from 43% to 60% in five years (2023-2028).

## ABOUT NSAA AND BOARD

The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency (NSAA/Agency) and Apprenticeship Board (Board) are governed by the *Apprenticeship and Trades Qualification Act, General Regulations and Operating Charter*.

### NSAA's Mandate

The Agency is responsible for stewarding and operating a relevant, accessible, and responsive industry-led trades training and certification system. NSAA is committed to improving access to and participation in the system for Indigenous Peoples, African Nova Scotians, Persons with Disabilities, Newcomers, Women, and members of equity-deserving groups.

### Vision

An industry-led apprenticeship system that builds and maintains a highly skilled, diverse, and inclusive workforce, contributing to the economic success of Nova Scotia.

### Mission

As advocates and stewards, the Agency, industry, and its partners will build a leading-edge apprenticeship system by:

- Creating more opportunities to enter and successfully progress through to certification
- Expanding access to training and certification
- Committing to continuous improvement.

### Values

As we advance the apprenticeship and trades qualifications system, we will build on successes and reach new milestones by adhering to the following principles:

- **Diverse and inclusive:** We embrace diversity and encourage participation across a broader range of trades. Our goal is to help apprentices and employers understand the value of a diverse and inclusive workforce.
- **Partnership-based:** The employer/apprentice relationship is central to the trades training system. As the primary trainers and beneficiaries, employers must lead and drive the system.
- **Service excellence:** We aim to deliver efficient and responsive services to clients and employers, leveraging technology to enhance access to resources and information.
- **Innovative and strategic:** We will make system- and trade-level decisions with industry and be open to multiple and flexible solutions while recognize the dynamic nature of industry.
- **Flexible and accessible:** We will provide system supports and training, such as bridging programs and essential skills initiatives, to ensure success for all participants.

## Commitment to Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility

The Agency is dedicated to fostering a culture of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility in all its operations. A diverse and inclusive environment strengthens our relationships with industry, partners, community, and staff while enhancing the quality of the programs and services we deliver. Our efforts are guided by the [Building Equitable Pathways II](#) strategy.

## RATIONALE

The Minister of Labour, Skills, and Immigration is responsible for modernizing the Apprenticeship and Trades Qualification System.

In 2022, the Minister of Labour, Skills, and Immigration established the Minister's Panel on Pre-Apprenticeship Training at the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC). The panel provided 18 recommendations to improve the recruitment and retention of skilled trades students. Many of these recommendations align with the Actions to Accelerate the Growth of Skilled Trades in Nova Scotia.

By adopting a holistic approach to skilled trades training and enhancing industry responsiveness, we are collectively modernizing the apprenticeship and trades qualification system.

## 2024-2025 PRIORITIES

NSAA is collaborating with partners, government, industry, and community organizations to lead the way in apprenticeship. The following priorities have been identified to help achieve the goals of the current strategic plan and advance the implementation of the *Actions to Accelerate the Growth of Skilled Trades*:

1. We will become a skilled trades leader in Canada by modernizing the apprenticeship system through innovative technologies, enhancing our organizational excellence and striving for continuous improvement.
2. We will raise awareness and remove barriers for those interested in a career in the skilled trades.
3. We will provide incentives, supports, and opportunities for people that are entering the skilled trades.
4. We will increase the number of apprentices who are successfully retained to certification by providing dedicated programs for those in the apprenticeship system.
5. We will build capacity within the skilled trades by supporting journeypersons, employers, and industry in their role as the primary trainer of apprentices.
6. We will reimagine skilled trades training to increase the number of offerings and access to training across the province.
7. We will continue to connect and respond to industry through outreach, engagement, communication, and committee involvement.

The Actions to Accelerate the Growth of the Skilled Trades strategy is guided by three main goals:

- A. Add 5,000 additional new apprentices to the system over the next three years.
- B. Increase the certified skilled tradespeople actively mentoring and progressing apprentices to 1,000 a year.
- C. Increase our apprentice completion rate from 43% to 60% within five years., one of the highest in the country.

## PRIORITIES DETAILS

1. We will become a skilled trades leader in Canada by modernizing the apprenticeship system through innovative technologies, enhancing our organizational excellence, and striving for continuous improvement. We will achieve this by:

Action	Measure
a. Plan, develop and consult on a new five-year strategic plan for the Agency.	Hire a facilitator to lead the strategic planning and conduct industry and community roundtable discussions.
b. Enhancing our service standards by continually seeking efficiencies and system improvements with a client centric lens.	Explore technological enhancements for client services.
c. Being intentional with our engagement with industry and communities to ensure that their voices are part of the conversation to modernize the apprenticeship system.	Develop an industry and community engagement strategy.
d. Striving to meet the goals and objectives set out in the Building Equitable Pathways II.	All work at the Agency to have an equity and inclusivity lens.
e. Continue to update trades and training standards and examinations to keep up with technology and other trends in the skilled trades industry.	Review and update trades on the review cycle.
f. Work with labour market experts to analysis data on supply and demand in the skilled trades. Work with our training providers and industry to create plan to develop a comprehensive 3-year skilled trades strategy for the province	Build the framework for the 3-year skilled trades strategy for the province.

2. We will raise awareness and remove barriers for those interested in exploring the skilled trades. We will achieve this by:

Action	Measure
a. Creating easier paths to the skilled trades for newcomers by improving the process for recognizing their international credentials	Perform an environmental scan and make recommendations on a process going forward.
b. Expanding the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) Workplace Practical Assessment (WPTA) Program to add wage subsidies for newcomers outside of HRM.	80 additional newcomers in the WPTA program in rural areas.
c. Creating enhanced direct entry to apprenticeship programs. This will speed up onboarding and upskilling of people entering the trades. The program will provide wrap around supports for the under-employed and under-represented groups.	It will help 100 people per year (5 sessions a year) and be offered throughout NS.
d. Raising awareness and recognition of skilled trades by creating and launching a multi-year, multi-channel marketing campaign highlighting real apprentices and journeypersons, with a specific emphasis on equity-deserving professionals.	# of people reached, and traffic to the websites.
e. Working with our partners to create a joint resource online landing page that links to multiple resources and is organized by audience, making it easier for people to be able to explore the skilled trades.	Develop and launch a joint website with multiple resources by audience.
f. Working with the secondary level school systems to increase the availability of technical education courses and resources available.	Support 10 public middle schools and 7 Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey middle schools.

3. We will provide supports and opportunities for people that are entering the skilled trades. We will achieve this by:

Action	Measure
a. Offering upfront Level 1 training to help people get the basic theory and skills needed to be job ready before they find an employer to take them on for their apprenticeship. The funds will provide wrap around supports.	It will support 40 new apprentices a year.
b. Launching a new tool grant of up to \$1,000/apprentice for those entering the trades. The cost of tools, equipment, uniforms, etc. is often a barrier to entry for many – this will ease that burden.	This will support 1,000 apprentices a year.
c. Working with NSCC, offer temporary NSCC Tuition bursaries and dedicated supports (with a preference for equity-deserving groups) entering high demand construction trades, such as carpentry and plumbing.	It will help over 320 students a year. This will be a two-year pilot.

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| d. Working with NSCC to develop a plan to create mandatory skilled trades orientation program that will help ensure students better understand the realities, conditions, and day-to-day expectations of their chosen trades before they begin their program at NSCC. | Ensure that NSCC develops a plan to introduce mandatory orientation training in 2025. |
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4. We will increase the number of apprentices that are being successfully retained to certification by providing dedicated programs for those in the apprenticeship system. We will achieve this by:

Action	Measure
a. Offering a new laptop and technology support grant of \$900/apprentice. Trades are increasingly more technical, and so is the technical training with many resources and teaching tools online.	This will support 1250 apprentices per year.
b. Develop a plan to introduce online exams to make the apprenticeship exams more accessible, secure, and easier to write.	Plan to introduce online exams created.
c. Expanding the provincial Apprenticeship Progression and Completion Award program. This is a supplement to the federal government Apprentices Progression and Completion Grants. Apprentices will receive incentives for every level they successfully complete, encouraging them to reach certification.	300 apprentices will receive the grant per year.
d. Providing a suite of customized learning supports specific for apprentices with learning disabilities and exam anxiety (currently 33% of our apprentices). This includes supports like tutors, assessments, digital readers, etc.	800 apprentices per year with various learning supports.
e. Creating a technologically enabled client support service centre which will provide more immediate answers and improve our service standards.	Response time within 48 hours.  Exam results within 10 days.  Implement technology enabled phone system.

5. We will build capacity within the skilled trades by supporting journeypersons, employers, and industry with their ability to better support apprentices through to certification. We will achieve this by:

Action	Measure
a. Developing a Journeypersons Financial Incentive that will recognize the vital role they have in the apprenticeship system and provide funds as they help progress their apprentice through a level.	1000 journeypersons will receive the incentive annually.
b. Encouraging individuals that have worked in their trades for years to challenge the certification exam and become journeyperson. We will expand the waiver for the Trade Qualifier fees and exam fees for all construction related trades until October 2026.	100 trade qualifiers per year.
c. Expanding the funding available for the employer START program. This is specific for small and medium sized enterprises in Nova Scotia. There are extra incentives for employers that hire apprentices from equity-deserving groups.	2,500 employers per year.
d. Working with NSCC to offer March break and summer skilled trades camps for youth and youth newcomers so they can explore skilled trades careers.	500 youth registered for camps per year.

6. We will reimagine skilled trades training to increase the number of offerings and access to training across the province. We will achieve this by:

Action	Measure
a. Reimagining apprenticeship technical training to increase access to and availability of training throughout the province. We will accelerate technical training by having longer days and fewer weeks. We will offer more technical training to reduce waitlists. We will expand technical training to more rural areas of the province by increasing virtual delivery and part-time options.	We will be able to schedule an additional 100 offerings of technical training a year.
b. Launching a new hybrid apprenticeship model, where the apprentice works 3-days a week and attends school 2-days a week. This funding is to provide wage subsidies for the two-days they are in school to complete their level training.	Pilot 2 offerings in 2024-2025 and 20 in 2025-2026 training year  30% increase in training capacity per year.
c. Working collaboratively with NSCC to shorten pre-apprenticeship programs to respond to the increased industry demand. These funds are to take their highest demand construction programs change their one-year certificate to a 6-month certificate and take their two-year diploma to 12 months.	# of students going through accelerated pre-apprenticeship training
d. Bringing the training to the apprentice. We will implement a 'hub and spoke' distributed training model where the instructor is in one location, beaming out across the province to multiple	Six hub and spoke apprenticeship training



locations. The apprentices will be grouped together in communities and supported by virtual conferencing technology and teacher assistants.	in 2024-2025 training year
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7. We will continue to connect and respond to industry through outreach, engagement, communication, and committee involvement. We will achieve this by:

Action	Measure
a. Implementing four industry sector committees (construction, motive power, industrial manufacturing and service) that provide industry- wide expertise and feedback to the apprenticeship system and Apprenticeship Board.	Develop and implement four industry sector committees.
b. Develop an industry and community informed Engagement Strategy for the Agency that will guide how we communicate, engage, and collaborate.	Industry and Community Engagement Strategy created (1C)
c. Develop an industry and community recruitment plan for roles throughout the system. Including Board, Trade Advisory Committees, Industry Sector Committees, Curriculum Review Committees, etc.	Industry and Community Recruitment Plan created.
d. Develop the framework for an Apprentice Advisory Committee of the Board to give apprentices a direct line into the decision-making process	Framework completed and approved by the Apprenticeship Board.

## METRICS AND MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Measure	Strategic Plan Key Indicators 2020-2025	Actuals for 2023-24	Target for 2024-25
<b>Employer Engagement</b>			
Number of new employers taking on apprentices in the apprenticeship system	Maintain 2,500 active employers in the system per year by ensuring that 200-250 (1,000 over five years) new employers are engaging in the apprenticeship system annually.	353	200
Compliance rate	95% of employers complying with the apprenticeship regulations	95%	95%
<b>Inclusiveness</b>			
Percentage of apprentices who self-identify as part of an equity-deserving group, not including women	25% of all apprentices self-identify as a member of an equity-deserving group	23.0%	25%
Percentages of women and gender diverse individuals in the apprenticeship system	25% of all apprentices self-identify as women or gender diverse individuals	8.8%	10%
Percentage of certifications issues to individuals from equity-deserving groups	15% of all certifications issued will be to individuals from equity-deserving groups	18.5%	20%
Percentage of certifications issued to women or gender diverse individuals	15% of all certifications issued will be to women or gender diverse individuals	5%	10%
<b>Labour Market Responsiveness</b>			
Progress on labour market demand – Motive Power Sector	Certifications required by 2026: 2,469*	1,111	1,500
Progress on labour market demand – Construction Sector	Certifications required by 2026: 5,283*	2,566	3,500
Progress on labour market demand – Service Sector	Certifications required by 2026: 2,405*	184	250

Measure	Strategic Plan Key Indicators 2020-2025	Actuals for 2023-24	Target for 2024-25
Progress on labour market demand – Industrial Manufacturing Sector	Certifications required by 2026: 1,544*	660	1,000
<b>Successful Completion</b>			
Average time to complete the apprenticeship program		3.9 years	<4
Number of clients (including apprentices, journeypersons and employers) that receive support through the NSAA grant programs	Ensure that all eligible clients are accessing relevant supports and grants. Annually there are 5,000 grants available.	2,525	5,000
Percentage of individuals who successfully pass certification examinations	Increase the percentage to 75% for all individuals writing the certification exam	66%	75%
Number of active apprentices in the Apprenticeship System	Increase the number of apprentices to 10,000/year by ensuring apprentices are progressing through the system in a timely manner	8,960	9,000
<b>Actions to Accelerate the Growth of Skilled Trades</b>			
Number of new apprentices registered in the Apprenticeship System	5,000 new apprentices between 2023-2029	2,524	1,650
To increase the number of apprentices in the system, we need to increase the number of certified trades professionals available to train apprentices on the job sites.	increase the number of journeypersons 1000 a year	821	1,000
All priorities will collectively increase the apprentice retention to certificate rates	increase our retention rate from 43% to 60% within five years - the highest in the country.	43%	48%

\*Labour Market demand numbers were based on a 2018 PRISM Economics study.

## CONCLUSION

This ambitious business plan aims to address and respond to the needs of apprentices, journeypersons, employers, community groups, and industry. Together, we will build a modernized apprenticeship and trades qualification system. Our focus is on successfully retaining apprentices through to certification, enabling them to contribute to the growth and prosperity of Nova Scotia.