



NOVA SCOTIA
APPRENTICESHIP
AGENCY

BUSINESS PLAN

2025 - 2026



Introduction

The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency (NSAA or Agency) has embarked on a major transformation for the skilled trades and that work continues into 2025-2026. We are training and certifying more skilled trades professionals and continue to modernize the apprenticeship system.

Our Strategic Plan (2020-2025) and the Building Equitable Pathways II plan (2020-2025) have been completed. We have engaged with over 300 participants including apprentices, journeypersons, employers, industry partners, organizations, community members, and training providers over the past 6 months and will launch the new Strategic Plan in the Fall of 2025.

We are in the second full year implementing the \$100 million investment in incentives, programs, and services to grow the skilled trades and meet the goals of the province. Since the launch of the **Actions to Accelerate Skilled Trades Growth (Actions)** on October 19, 2023, the Agency has been working to enhance opportunities for apprentices through new programming, stronger partnerships, new training delivery models, and more inclusive examinations. We continue to focus on targeted initiatives to improve inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility throughout the apprenticeship system.

As we move forward, our commitment is to continue to enhance communication and engagement with trades professionals, industry and community. By actively listening to the voices, it will help us better understand the challenges and opportunities to grow and improve the system.

We are trying new things and will continually monitor, evaluate and adapt our methods. We will take a data informed approach to meet the needs of the province.

This work is driven by three core goals:

- 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 43% to 60% by 2028.

We are committed to creating a cohesive, innovative and responsive skilled trades training and certification system that aligns with the efforts of all our partners and apprentices. By leading collaboration and service excellence throughout this work, we aim to foster enhanced partnerships among skilled trades professionals, industry leaders, training providers, communities, unions, and educators. Together, we will ensure that apprenticeship training is evolving to meet the needs of the province.

About NSAA

Governance

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

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 creating a system where all are welcome, supported in their learning, experience respect and inclusion throughout their journeys and achieve certification in their trade.

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.

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 apprentices, journeypersons, industry, partners, community, and staff while enhancing the quality of the programs and services we deliver. By actively integrating these principles into the apprenticeship system, we aim to create a more equitable and supportive environment for all participants.

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, journeyperson and apprentice relationship are 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 recognizing the dynamic nature of various sectors.
- **Flexible and accessible:** We will provide system supports and training, such as bridging programs and essential skills initiatives, to ensure success for all participants.

2025-2026 Priorities

Looking ahead to the future, the Agency's priorities remain the same. We will continue collaborating with partners, government, industry, and community organizations to lead the way in apprenticeship for the province. The following list of priorities will ensure we achieve the goals outlined in the **Actions**:

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 all those interested in a career in the skilled trades.
3. We will provide incentives, supports, and opportunities for people who are entering the skilled trades.
4. We will increase the number of apprentices who become certified in their trade by providing dedicated programs for those progressing through 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 and mentors of apprentices.
6. We will reimagine skilled trades training to adapt our training to emerging needs of the participants and increase the amount of technical training offered across the province, closer to where the apprentices live and work.
7. We will continue to connect and respond to industry through outreach, engagement, communication, and committee involvement.

Priority 1

Becoming a skilled trades leader in Canada by modernizing the apprenticeship system through innovative technologies, enhancing our organizational excellence and striving for continuous improvement.

Action	Measure	Goal
Finalize, launch and begin to implement the Agency's new multi-year strategic plan.	Develop the actionable plan and evaluation matrix.	Supports Apprenticeship, Certification and Retention Goals.
Continue to enhance our service standards by improving systems with client-focused lens.	Update NSAA's service standards and implement a new online chat functionality to better support clients.	Supports Apprenticeship, Certification and Retention Goals.
Launch the Apprenticeship Management System (AMS), an online solution that allows all clients to manage their apprenticeship journey online.	Launch AMS and implement the change management plan.	Supports Apprenticeship, Certification and Retention Goals.
Continue to update the trades and training standards and examinations to keep up with technology and other trends in the skilled trades.	Review and update trades on the review cycle.	Supports Apprenticeship, Certification and Retention Goals.
Research and produce a workforce development projection report.	Develop a 10-year forecast of apprenticeship demands and trends within the province.	Supports Apprenticeship, Certification and Retention Goals.
Conduct a fraud risk assessment and implement risk mitigation strategies.	Create and implement a robust Fraud Risk Assessment and strategy for the Agency	
Ensure an inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility lens is used throughout the Agency	Develop an inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility policy for the Agency.	Supports Apprenticeship, Certification and Retention Goals.
Assess and evaluate the quality standards for apprenticeship technical training and working with training providers to enhance the success rates of apprentices.	Create Technical Training Quality Assurance Standards and procedures.	Supports Apprenticeship, Certification and Retention Goals.

Priority 2

Raising awareness and removing barriers for all those interested in a career in the skilled trades.

Action	Measure	Goal
Create skilled trades paths for newcomers by implementing new processes for the recognition of international credentials, including transfer credits, trade qualifications, and equivalencies.	New processes will increase the number of newcomers entering the skilled trades system.	Supports Apprentice Goal.
Continue the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) Workplace Practical Assessment (WPTA) Program to add wage subsidies for newcomers.	80 newcomers in the WPTA program throughout the province.	Supports Apprentice Goal.
Continue to grow enhanced direct entry apprenticeship programs to accelerate onboarding and skill development while providing wrap around supports for under-employed and equity-deserving groups.	Collaborate with industry to launch 4 new short, direct entry pathways for the motive power and construction sectors. These will provide 60 participants with wrap-around supports.	Supports Apprentice, Certification and Retention Goals.
Continue to enhance and evaluate the exploretradesns.ca website.	Analytics report on website performance.	Supports Apprentice Goal.
Audit the Agency's website for usability and accessibility. Make improvements and adjustments as required	An accessible, engaging and informative Agency website that meets the needs of the user.	Supports Apprentice, Certification and Retention Goals.
Continue to offer March break and summer skilled trades camps for youth, in partnership with NSCC.	500 youth registered for camps per year throughout the province.	
Through all the communications channels available to the Agency, continue to profile the opportunities for direct entry into apprenticeship.	Number of direct entry apprentices into the system.	
Collaborate across government (Dept of Advanced Education and Dept of Education and Early Childhood Education) to increase awareness of the skilled trades within the Nova Scotia schools.	Increased awareness and understanding of the skilled trades careers in the secondary and post-secondary systems.	Supports Apprentice Goal.

Priority 3

Providing incentives, supports and opportunities for people entering the skilled trades.

Action	Measure	Goal
Offer additional innovative training models to help people achieve foundational theory and skills required to be job ready.	Providing three Upfront Level 1 apprenticeship training opportunities for a total of 50 participants.	Supports Apprentice Goal.
Continue to administer and monitor the Apprentice Tools Grant program to new apprentices.	Provide the tools grant to 1,000 new apprentices.	Supports Apprentice Goal.
Continue tuition bursaries and dedicated supports for those entering high demand construction trades at NSCC.	Supporting 320 students a year. This is the last year of the pilot.	Supports Apprentice Goal.
In partnership with NSCC, implement the mandatory orientation program tailored for new skilled trades students.	Number of NSCC students completing the orientation and number of students that continued in their program.	Supports Apprentice Goal.

Priority 4

Increasing the number of apprentices who become certified in their trade by providing dedicated programs for those progressing through the apprenticeship system.

Action	Measure	Goal
Continue to offer the apprentice laptop and technology support grant.	This will support 1,250 apprentices per year.	Supports Retention Goal.
Establish an online plan which makes exams more accessible, secure, and easier to write.	Develop an online exam plan.	
Monitor the provincial Apprenticeship Progression and Completion Award program.	370 apprentices will receive the grant per year.	Supports Certification and Retention Goals.
Monitor the suite of customized learning supports, specifically for apprentices with learning differences and exam anxiety.	800 apprentices per year with various learning supports.	Supports Certification and Retention Goals
Continue to monitor our enhanced client support services centre which will provide more immediate answers to questions which will help to improve our service standards.	Monitor service standards and provide a progress report on the client support services.	Supports Apprentice, Certification and Retention Goals.

Priority 5

Building capacity within the skilled trades by supporting journeypersons, employers, and industry in their role as the primary trainer and mentors of apprentices.

Action	Measure	Goal
Monitor and evaluate the Journeypersons Financial Incentive program.	1,200 journeypersons accessing the funding program annually.	Supports Retention Goal.
Implement mentoring content into technical training to prepare apprentices for their new role as journeyperson mentors.	All apprentices complete mentoring training during the final level of technical training.	Supports Retention Goal.
Expand access to online mentorship awareness training for certified journeypersons.	1,000 journeypersons completed training.	Supports Retention Goal.
Waive the Trade Qualifier and exams fees for all construction-related trades until October 2026.	250 trade qualifiers annually.	Supports Certification Goal.
Monitor and evaluate the Apprenticeship START program for small and medium-sized enterprises in Nova Scotia.	2,500 employers accessing the funding program annually.	Supports Apprentice, Retention and Certification Goals.

Priority 6

Reimagining skilled trades training to adapt our training to emerging needs of the participants and increase the amount of technical training offered across the province, closer to where the apprentices live and work.

Action	Measure	Goal
In consultation with partners, introduce service standards for apprenticeship technical training to increase the quality assurance for apprenticeship training across the province.	Create and implement a service standard expectations policy and procedures for all apprenticeship training providers.	Supports Apprentice, Retention and Certification Goals.
Continue to provide innovative apprenticeship technical training models to help increase system capacity and reduce waitlists.	Schedule an additional 100 offerings of technical training.	Supports Retention and Certification Goals.
Expand the hybrid technical training model (2 days in the classroom, 3 days on the job per week) to accommodate 300 apprentices across various industry sectors.	An additional 20 hybrid training sessions.	Supports Retention and Certification Goals.
Expand the distributed technical training model across the province.	Increase the number of distributed technical training offered throughout the year.	Supports Retention and Certification Goals.

Priority 7

Continuing to connect and respond to industry through outreach, engagement, communication, and committee involvement.

Action	Measure	Goal
Create better ways to provide clear, inclusive, accessible communications and marketing material.	Develop a Communications and Marketing Strategy.	Supports Retention Goals.
Monitor the effectiveness of the four Industry Sector Committees (Construction, Motive Power, Industrial Manufacturing and Service) and make necessary adjustments.	Develop a report on the outcomes of the committees and implement changes as needed.	Supports Apprentice, Certification and Retention Goals.
Implement the Industry and Community Engagement Strategy which guides how we engage and collaborate.	Progress report on the Industry and Community Engagement Strategy.	Supports Retention Goals.
Implement the Industry and Community Recruitment Plan for roles throughout the system. Including Board, Trade Advisory Committees, Industry Sector Committees, Curriculum Review Committees, etc.	Progress report on the Industry and Community Recruitment Plan.	Supports Apprentice, Certification and Retention Goals.
Establish the Apprentice Advisory Committee to help amplify the voices of apprentices, offering them a forum to express their views and actively participate in shaping the apprenticeship system.	Recruit and launch the Apprentice Advisory Committee.	Supports Apprentice, Certification and Retention Goals

Metrics and Measures of Success

Measure	Goal Description	Actuals for 2023-24	Target for 2025-26
Employer Engagement			
Number of new employers taking on apprentices in the apprenticeship system.	Maintain 2,800 active employers in the system per year by ensuring that a minimum of 250 new employers is engaging in the apprenticeship system annually.	353 (increased number due to additional incentives offered)	250
Inclusiveness			
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%	25%
Percentages of women and gender diverse individuals in the apprenticeship system.	10% of all apprentices self-identify as women or gender diverse individuals.	8.8%	10%
Percentage of certifications issues to individuals from equity-deserving groups.	20% 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.	10% of all certifications issued will be to women or gender diverse individuals.	5%	10%

Measure	Goal Description	Actuals for 2023-24	Target for 2025-26
Enrolments and successful completions			
Number of active apprentices in the Apprenticeship System.	Maintain the number of apprentices at 9,000 by ensuring apprentices are progressing through the system in a timely manner.	8,960	9,000
Percentage of individuals who successfully pass certification examinations.	Increase the percentage for all individuals writing the certification exam.	69% for Apprentices. 58% for Trade Qualifiers.	70% for Apprentices. 60% for Trade Qualifiers
Actions to Accelerate the Growth of Skilled Trades			
Number of new apprentices registered in the Apprenticeship System.	5,000 new apprentices between 2023-2026.	2,524 of the total 5,000 new apprentices goal	2,000 additional new apprentices towards the 5,000 goal
To increase the number of apprentices in the system, we need to increase the number of certified trades professionals to train apprentices on the job sites.	Increase the number of certifications of journeypersons to 1,000/ year.	821	1,000
All priorities will collectively increase the apprentice retention to certification rates.	Increase our retention to certification rate from 43% to 60% by 2028 – one of the highest in the country.	43%	48%

Conclusion

The 2025-2026 business plan reflects our unwavering commitment to transforming the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency into a modern, dynamic system that meets the evolving needs of apprentices, employers, journeypersons, training providers, community, industry partners and our province. By focusing on our priorities, we aim to drive innovation, foster excellence, and continue to build a robust skilled trades workforce that contributes to economic growth and prosperity.

Together, we will continue to advance a system that empowers apprentices, supports industry, and strengthens Nova Scotia's position as a leader in apprenticeship and skilled trades development.