

2026-2027

BUSINESS PLAN



Introduction

The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency (NSAA) is committed to training and certifying more skilled trades professionals while modernizing the apprenticeship system to meet the needs of a growing province. As Nova Scotia's population expands and communities evolve, the demand for homes, infrastructure, and essential services continues to rise - and the Agency is ready to respond.

Our 2025–2030 Strategic Plan serves as a clear roadmap, a shared vision for building a stronger, more resilient future. The 2026–2027 Business Plan translates that vision into action, outlining how we will achieve the ambitious goals set for 2030. The year ahead is about impact and turning momentum into measurable progress.

We have set bold, forward-thinking priorities that will guide our work through 2026–2027 as we build on progress made in recent years.

PRIORITY 1: ENGAGEMENT

Build and grow stronger relationships

Strategic Plan Expected Outcomes	Business Plan Actions & Deliverables 2026/2027
Expected Outcome #1	
<p>A skilled trades system that is balanced to ensure that the number of people becoming certified in a timely manner meets the industry's needs.</p>	<p>Create a process to work closely with and respond quickly to industry when urgent training needs or challenges are identified anywhere in the skilled trades system.</p> <p>Gather labour market information from industry to better inform Agency decisions, creating one trusted source of industry validated data that guides provincial skilled trades decision making.</p>
Expected Outcome #2	
<p>Engage and inform industry and community partners to actively and meaningfully contribute to the skilled trades system, province wide.</p>	<p>Engage with partners and industry to build stronger connections and a supportive ecosystem through the implementation and monitoring of the NSAA Engagement and Recruitment Plans.</p> <p>Establish regular trade specific industry groups that input into training, curriculum, standards and trends.</p>
Expected Outcome #3	
<p>A skilled trades system that is reflective of the skills and talent needed in industry and the diversity within the province.</p>	<p>Connect employers with training to enhance workplace culture and implement a comprehensive employer orientation program.</p> <p>Engage Mi'kmaw and Indigenous people, African Nova Scotians and underrepresented* groups about programs that support those entering or already in the trades be successful.</p>

PRIORITY 2: RECRUITMENT

Raise awareness and remove barriers to entry opportunities for the skilled trades

Strategic Plan Expected Outcomes	Business Plan Actions & Deliverables
	2026/2027
<p>Expected Outcome #1</p> <p>More informed and engaged people entering the skilled trades to increase the potential of a successful career.</p>	<p>Provide current, inclusive, relevant information and communications materials on the benefits, opportunities, and pathways to enter the skilled trades.</p> <p>Leverage and promote skilled trades pathways for Mi'kmaw and Indigenous people, African Nova Scotians and other underserved and underrepresented* groups.</p> <p>Develop a video series explaining the individual trades and redesign the NSAA website. Promote the <i>Build On</i> multi-channel marketing campaign and increase social media engagement for the skilled trades.</p> <p>Continue to enhance and evaluate the exploretradesns.ca website, resulting in a redesigned platform that better supports users exploring careers in the skilled trades.</p> <p>Work with Labour, Skills and Immigration to support internationally educated workers to enter the workforce quicker.</p>
<p>Expected Outcome #2</p> <p>Individuals feel empowered to pursue and identify their own path to the skilled trades with the NSAA's support and guidance.</p>	<p>Create a pathway map that clearly guides an individual from exploration, to training, to employment and certification, including all the supports and touch points along the way. Make them available and accessible for youth, those that influence youth and those looking to enter the skilled trades.</p> <p>Promote awareness and education about the skilled trades to pre-apprentices, those considering the skilled trades and their influencers by hosting Info sessions throughout the year.</p> <p>Launch the Enhanced Direct Entry apprenticeship program to accelerate onboarding and skill development while providing wrap-around supports.</p>

PRIORITY 3: OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Transform the apprenticeship system to reach operational efficiency, service excellence, and build capacity

Strategic Plan Expected Outcomes	Business Plan Actions & Deliverables
	2026/2027
Expected Outcome #1	
<p>One seamless skilled trades case management approach, within a well-resourced, inclusive, and responsive apprenticeship system that is meeting the needs of the province by producing high-quality, certified skilled trades professionals.</p>	<p>Collect and apply input from clients, partners, the Apprenticeship Board, Industry Sector Committees, and the Advisory Council of Apprentices to drive continuous improvement of the apprenticeship system.</p>
	<p>Work with industry to develop service standards, programs, supports and key performance indicators to show relevant, responsive, and reliable progress to filling labour market needs now and into the future.</p>
	<p>Refine and implement a client service delivery model that leverages technological advancements by introducing online chat functionality and continuing support for the Apprenticeship Management System and establish baseline client satisfaction of the system.</p>
	<p>Ensure a Social Equity lens is applied throughout the Agency by developing and implementing a comprehensive IDEA policy.</p>
Expected Outcome #2	
<p>Strong and direct connection between what is being taught and authentically assessed in the workplace and classroom, so that more individuals are workforce-ready to meet industry needs.</p>	<p>Leverage exam data and KPIs to establish a continuous improvement process that strengthens testing standards and quality assurance across both pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship levels. Work collaboratively with NSCC and instructors to ensure alignment on curriculum, equipment, and delivery models while developing service excellence guidelines.</p>
	<p>Continue to work with industry to update and audit trades and training standards and examinations to keep pace with technology and industry trends by reviewing and updating trades with industry on the established review cycle.</p>
	<p>Assess and evaluate the quality standards for apprenticeship technical training by working with training providers to enhance apprentice success rates, through the implementation of Technical Training Quality Assurance standards and procedures and monitoring and improving exam outcomes.</p>
Expected Outcome #3	
<p>A new technology-enabled service delivery model that better supports apprentices and employers in their role as learners and teachers.</p>	<p>Implement the new Apprenticeship Management System (AMS) to enable clients to manage their apprenticeship journey online and implement a new apprentice orientation program.</p>
	<p>Continuously monitor and adapt the enhanced client support services centre to provide more immediate answers and improve service standards, complemented by a client satisfaction survey to measure effectiveness.</p>

	Develop an exam administration plan to improve accessibility, security, and user experience.
Expected Outcome #4	
Nova Scotia is a place that has addressed labour mobility barriers to welcome individuals from across Canada and around the world to come and be successful in the skilled trades here.	Contribute to advancing national labour mobility efforts by reducing barriers, recognizing training and experience, and collaborating with partners to secure the workforce needed quickly for provincial growth.
	Explore innovative best practices across Canada that helps fill labour needs and gets people working faster.
	Define what workforce-ready means to industry and implement assessment processes for newcomers that meet industry needs.

*Underrepresented includes women, newcomers, racialized people, people with disabilities, 2SLGBTQIA+ and others who are traditionally underrepresented in the skilled trades.

PRIORITY 4: RETENTION

Lead from a learner-centered lens: putting apprentices and their needs at the heart of our services.

Strategic Plan Expected Outcomes	Business Plan Actions & Deliverables 2026/2027
Expected Outcome #1	
Nova Scotia is a leader in terms of producing high-quality and industry-ready skilled trades professionals and certified journeypersons.	Continue to offer and promote responsive, accessible, and timely learning and financial supports to clients through monthly “Ask Us” sessions.
	Provide clear communication around the apprenticeship process to ensure all apprentices fully understand each step while training to industry standards, supported by annual education and outreach activities that reinforce consistent messaging on apprenticeships and industry expectations.
	Increase direct engagement with apprentices in the community and industry by having the Advisory Council of Apprentices (ACA) informed and engaged in the decision-making process by feeding in directly into the Apprenticeship Board.
Expected Outcome #2	
A robust and efficient skilled trades training system where everyone feels included, supported, and able to progress to certification in a timely manner.	Innovative and adaptable apprenticeship training delivery to improve client success by expanding technical training offerings in rural locations, remote, throughout the year, and through creative technical training models.
	Continue to develop and deliver learning support resources to increase success of apprentices and trade qualifiers, including more supports for exam preparation.
	Continue to engage with industry and actively listen to ideas and solutions to increase retention by hosting regular industry engagement sessions.
Expected Outcome #3	
Employers and journeypersons are supported to provide high-quality skill development in the workplace.	Collaborate with employers, journeypersons, apprentices, and training providers to ensure awareness of current programs and available financial and learning supports by hosting information sessions for employers, apprentices, and other partners.
	Continue to provide mentor training for journeypersons to ensure they have the tools and supports to guide the next generation of trades professionals.
	Provide better resources and supports to employers and journeypersons to be able to train apprentices on the practical skills required to have authentic logbook sign off, by integrating occupational standards into the job site.

MEASUREMENTS

Our goals and measures of success

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Baseline	2026-27 Target
Level Exam Pass Rate	2024:2025: 72%	75%
Achieve an average mark of 70% or higher on Level Exams	46.4%	50%
Certification Exam Pass Rate	2024-2025: Apprentices: 56% Trade Qualifiers 47%	Apprentices: 60% Trade qualifiers: 50%
Number of certifications per year	2024-2025: 1054	1000
Percentage of Apprentices eligible for technical training who attend training	NEW MEASURE: Baseline to be established in April 2026	NEW MEASURE: Once baseline measures are established, targets will be identified
Average time to certification	4.1 years	< 4 years
Number of apprentices accessing learning supports	2024-2025: 592	800
Number of apprentices accessing financial supports	2024-2025: 6320	7000
Number of new apprentices registered	2024-2025: 2429	2000
Number of youth apprentices registered	2024-2025: 301	350
Percentage of pre-apprentices registered	NEW MEASURE: Baseline to be established in April 2026	NEW MEASURE: Once baseline measures are established, targets will be identified
Number of trade specific committees operational	New as of 2026-2027 Business Plan	Eight trade specific committees created
Number of trades that have been fully audited by industry (curriculum, standards, equipment, practical)	NEW MEASURE: Baseline to be established in April 2026	6 per year

Industry validated Labour Market Information established through employer surveys	NEW MEASURE: Baseline to be established in September 2026	4 surveys per year
Plan for full analysis of transitions from youth programming, pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship to certification	NEW MEASURE: Baseline to be established in September 2026	NEW MEASURE: Once baseline measures are established, targets will be identified
Number of learning support participants receiving certification	2024-2025: 144 Learning Supports participants earned certification	175
Percentage of active apprentice users of AMS	Feb 2025: 22.4%	75% of all users
Website hits to the digital credential verification tool	NEW MEASURE: Baseline to be established in April 2026	NEW MEASURE: Once baseline measures are established, targets will be identified
Service delivery standards are achieved 95% of the time	NEW MEASURE: Baseline to be established in September 2026	NEW MEASURE: Once baseline measures are established, targets will be identified