

Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency  
Business Plan

2017-2018



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## Strategic Direction and Context

### Strategic Direction

Viewed as a key component of a successful economy in Nova Scotia, apprenticeship and trades certification is a rewarding post-secondary option for youth and those interested in practical, hands-on careers. The Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Act and General Regulations and the Community Colleges Act provide the legal framework for the trades training system. The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency (NSAA) facilitates the system within the parameters of the Agency's Operating Charter and is comprised of the Board, Board Committees, Trade Advisory Committees, the Chief Executive Officer, and the NSAA staff.

The NSAA Board is made up of ten trade sector seats, four members at large and the Nova Scotia Community College Vice President, Academic. The NSAA governance model is based on accountability and industry involvement in strategic planning, oversight, resource allocation, and program outcomes.

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

The NSAA Strategic Plan 2015-2020 was developed in partnership with industry, interested stakeholders, Board members and NSAA staff and provides direction for Agency activities in five key areas:

- Changing the culture: Inclusive, connected and industry-led
- Changing the outcome: Apprentice success
- Changing the outcome: Employer success
- Strengthening delivery: Connecting training and workplaces
- Making certification an economic driver

The full Strategic Plan is available at

<http://www.nsapprenticeship.ca/sites/default/files/docs/pubs/Strategic-Plan-2015-2020.pdf>.

This Business Plan details the goals, strategies, measures and targets for 2017-18.

### Operating Environment

The NSAA operates in an environment with significant population challenges, namely, declining birthrates, youth, and others who are leaving the Province to seek employment, and an aging population currently working but planning to retire in the near future. With a declining and migrating population, large commercial/industrial projects like the National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy and the Maritime Link requiring a significant workforce have identified labour shortages in relevant skilled trades occupations have been identified. In addition, employers in Nova Scotia also find it challenging to retain certified journeypersons when other jurisdictions offer higher wages and consistent employment.

Currently, the Nova Scotia apprenticeship system recognizes 69 designated trades; 13 of these trades are compulsory certified requiring that one is an apprentice or certified in the trade in order to work legally; 8 trades are compulsory certified under another regulatory authority. Technical training is provided in 33 trades for apprentices and the remaining trades are certification-only, meaning trades practitioners, who meet the requirements, may challenge to write the certification exam. Atlantic and National initiatives

are ongoing, leading to the harmonization of apprenticeship technical training across jurisdictions, and improving mobility for apprentices who work in other jurisdictions in order to continue their training. Provincial and Atlantic Trade Advisory Committee participation is critically important to the success of this work.

Most apprenticeship training takes place on the job site under the supervision of a certified journey person. Currently, too few employers participate in the system, limiting apprenticeship opportunities for those who want to live and work in Nova Scotia. Another hurdle to a successful apprenticeship system is the general lack of understanding of the value of working in a skilled trade career. Today, most apprentices are Caucasian male and few are women or from diverse groups.

The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency was created by Government in response to industry demands for greater involvement in the strategic and operational decisions required in order to improve outcomes across the apprenticeship system, from pre-apprenticeship to post-journey person training.

### Risks, Opportunities, and Response Strategies

In order to position the apprenticeship and trades certification system to operate effectively within this environment, the NSAA regularly looks for opportunities to engage industry. NSAA makes operational and strategic decisions based on advice from the Board and the Trade Advisory Committees, labour market information, best practices, knowledge of the Nova Scotian culture and climate, and guidance from relevant Acts and Regulations.

Given the demographic challenges facing our Province, and without fundamental change in how the system operates, we risk a continued miss-match of graduates and potential apprentices with employers in high demand sectors, as well as a lack of new employers in the apprenticeship system who could increase employment opportunities for our youth.

In response, the NSAA proposes to:

- Implement a stakeholder engagement plan to ensure that employers are heard and receive good communication, and that they participate more fully in the apprenticeship system;
- work with government entities to ensure procurement practices support the use of apprentices where relevant;
- lay the ground work for expanded Youth Apprenticeship Programs to attract more apprentices;
- develop more training pathways to meet the changing needs of apprentices and employers;
- implement the recommendations from the Diversity and Inclusion Framework and Action Plan to promote and increase diversity in the apprenticeship system and ensure appropriate supports for all Nova Scotians who want to participate in the system; and
- increase mobility and harmonization in the Atlantic Provinces and across Canada for apprentices to have greater opportunity to complete their training without disruption.

Unlike most other Canadian jurisdictions, the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship System relies heavily on entrants with community college training. Relying on pre-apprenticeship training as the most common approach to apprenticeship shifts the dialogue on apprenticeship to include discussion of the relevance and capacity of the current pre-apprenticeship training, and its linkage to the labour market and to employers.

## Action Plan (2017-2018)

### Goals, Strategies, Measures, and Targets

When the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency (NSAA) was created, significant amendments were made to both the Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Act and the Community Colleges Act and these changes paved the way for more coherent and inclusive industry engagement across the trades training system. In particular, it was recognized that to be successful the Agency needed to build strong relationships with Industry and the Nova Scotia Community College. Apprenticeship technical training was extended to include the planning and delivery of those trades programs for which the Agency maintains industry standards and issues certificates of qualification.

#### Strategic Direction: Change the Culture: Inclusive, connected, and industry-led

NSAA is working with industry to redefine the scope of the apprenticeship system to make it a more comprehensive system spanning youth trades initiatives, bridging programs, pre-apprenticeship programming, apprenticeship, and post-journey certification.

Diversity and inclusion are core values of NSAA. The Agency is mandated to improve access to and participation in the apprenticeship and trades certification system by members of diverse groups.

Key Action from Strategic Plan	2017-2018 Action Plan
Implement a <b>marketing and communications strategy</b> to promote apprenticeship and educate apprenticeship partners on their roles and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue the implementation of the communications and marketing strategy, including the development of tools to engage employers in the apprenticeship system and to attract youth to the skilled trades, further enhancing the Agency's web presence and promoting the skilled trades through various media.</li> </ul>
Implement a <b>stakeholder engagement plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a sector-based approach to employer engagement and expand our outreach to unengaged employers by working with partners and stakeholder organizations to identify and contact employers who have not registered an apprentice in the past 5 to 15 years.</li> <li>Identify events and activities to recognize and promote champion employers in the apprenticeship system, including employers who embrace diversity in the workplace.</li> <li>Provide opportunities for all stakeholders in the system to participate and provide continuous input and feedback.</li> </ul>
Support successful Board and Trade Advisory Committee leadership and participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish TACs in the Farm Technician, Powerline Technician, and Welder trades.</li> <li>Established TACs to continue to work on priorities as set out in their respective Terms of</li> </ul>

Key Action from Strategic Plan	2017-2018 Action Plan
	<p>Reference (Elevator Constructor, Heavy Duty Equipment Technician, Plumber and Steamfitter/Pipefitter).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a listserv for our stakeholders to receive up-to-date information and announcements.</li> </ul>
<p>Implement a <b><i>Diversity and Inclusion Framework and Action Plan</i></b> to guide increased diversity, both in the Agency and in the system</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to work with partners to promote the skilled trades in the aboriginal community.</li> <li>• Implement a culturally appropriate bridging pilot in First Nations communities.</li> <li>• Create a pilot project with Women Unlimited to support women and employers through trades training and certification.</li> <li>• Continue to support the East Preston Empowerment Academy who are working with community members to get their certification in a number of trades.</li> <li>• Create a plan for the differently-abled to succeed in the trades.</li> </ul>
<p>With our education partners, expand Youth Apprenticeship Programs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review results of the Youth Decision Survey and adapt youth programming as necessary.</li> <li>• Expand the successful Serve it Up!, Building Futures for Youth and TestDrive youth programs across the Province.</li> </ul>
<p>Create partnerships to increase the use of apprentices in public sector procurement practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement the expansion of the successful procurement pilot to all public sector infrastructure projects.</li> <li>• Work with the Federal government to ensure apprenticeship is a key indicator of success with the Federal infrastructure projects.</li> </ul>
<p>Implement a <b>Trade Regulation Framework</b> for designated occupations that are regulated under the <i>Technical Safety Act</i>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue the implementation of streamlined regulatory programs for power engineers, crane operators, communications technicians, and elevator mechanics.</li> </ul>
<p>Create a Joint Stewardship Initiative with the Nova Scotia Community College that recognizes the important relationship between the NSAA and the NSCC in the delivery of an effective apprenticeship program.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the first year, develop a Plan that includes a strategic longer-term vision for program alignment, industry engagement, a technical training plan and any other special initiatives.</li> <li>• Review and respond to the recommendations of the Transition Task Force</li> </ul>

Performance Indicators

Description of Measure	Benchmark	2017-2018 Target
Increased number of employers with apprentices	1867 (2015-16)	1900
Increased percentage of diverse apprentices	9.79% (2015-16)	10.0%

Discussion

The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency recognizes that a successful apprenticeship system should acknowledge and provide for the various needs of each trade, establish relevant and integrated training pathways and enable trade direction and advice regarding each program, all the while moving apprentices along their journey without interruption. The number of apprentices from diverse populations has increased slightly from the previous year and an increasing number of women are choosing to become apprentices in non-traditional trades. NSAA is striving to develop an apprenticeship system that is driven by excellence, responding to the labour market needs of the Nova Scotia economy while remaining flexible and adapting to changing economic and industry conditions.

**Strategic Direction: Changing the Outcome: Apprentice Success**

Apprentice success is a documented goal of the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency. In order for apprentices to successfully complete training (from entry point to journey person status), they must accomplish the following: accumulate required hours of on-the-job training, attend classroom technical training, obtain sign-off on skills achieved and pass a certification exam upon completion of training. Supporting apprentices to complete training in a timely manner is one facet of apprentice success which in turn supports the Nova Scotia labour market.

Key Action from Strategic Plan	2017-2018
Develop a culture of customer service, including service standards for all Agency programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collect benchmark data on the Agency's service standards.</li> <li>Review the results of the satisfaction surveys and make adjustments as necessary.</li> </ul>
Help students link career exploration in the skilled trades to effective career decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create links between partner organizations and facilitate collaborative approaches wherever possible in our youth programs.</li> <li>Evaluate the new in-school components of our youth apprenticeship programs to determine effectiveness and value.</li> <li>Conduct ongoing maintenance and rollout of social media and informational materials.</li> </ul>
Expand and improve training pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement the nine (9) certification-only trades where flexible apprenticeship training pathways were developed in 2016-2017.</li> <li>Select the next set of certification-only trades to develop pathways to apprenticeship.</li> </ul>

Key Action from Strategic Plan	2017-2018
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create alternative training pathways for undersubscribed trades.</li> <li>• Develop log books for all trades.</li> </ul>
Develop outreach/bridging activities and programs to increase participation by diverse groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with ISANS to connect skilled immigrants to employers.</li> <li>• Work with First Nations communities to promote the skilled trades in aboriginal communities.</li> </ul>
Increase outreach to students in relevant pre-employment programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver an apprenticeship module or learning unit in pre-apprenticeship programs that will provide information on the apprenticeship system, requirements, skilled trades, and career paths.</li> </ul>
Review and improve incentive programs for completion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore opportunities to sustain the Apprenticeship Award Trust after 2018.</li> <li>• With our partners, identify recognition opportunities for newly certified journeypersons.</li> </ul>

Performance Indicators

Description of Measure	Benchmark	2017-2018 Target
Percent of apprentices who complete their training within 6 years	47%	50%
Increase number of Red Seal Certifications Issued	713 (2015-16)	900
Increased percentage of trades with training pathways	45% (2015-16)	65%

Discussion

Although the number of employers and apprentices in the system fluctuates and is strongly influenced by economic conditions, the numbers are increasing. Nova Scotia is in the process of updating programs, including curriculum, examinations, and policies and processes to align with both the National and Atlantic harmonization recommendations and timelines. In addition, work is well underway to create training pathways for an additional 10 trades. The number of certifications issued over the past couple of years has fluctuated but remains fairly constant.

**Strategic Direction: Changing the Outcome: Employer Success**

NSAA is working to demonstrate employer success by having an industry-led apprenticeship system that builds and maintains a highly skilled and diverse workforce contributing to the economic success of Nova Scotia, while remaining flexible and adapting to changing economic and industry conditions.



Key Action from Strategic Plan	2017-2018
Develop supports to help employers find apprentices and to help apprentices find jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with the Job Bank to promote apprenticeship job postings.</li> <li>• Work with the Aboriginal Apprenticeship Committee and host our 3<sup>rd</sup> annual conference to inform partners and connect youth with employers.</li> </ul>
Promote direct entry into apprenticeship to employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embed messaging regarding direct entry in meetings and communications with employers and stakeholders.</li> <li>• Explore pilot programs in trades where a significant labour market need exists to promote direct entry options.</li> </ul>
Improve and promote START incentive program for employers who hire apprentices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-brand the Apprenticeship START program to promote apprenticeship progression and completion with a focus on incenting employers to hire direct-entry and diverse apprentices.</li> </ul>
Transform services, structures, and supports to ensure success of the apprentice/employer relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate client responsibilities of the program support staff and training consultants to ensure that our current staffing assignments align with the mandate of the Agency.</li> <li>• Explore opportunities to increase the hours of operation for our front-line service.</li> <li>• Enhance all policies, procedures and activities to ensure efficiencies are being realized to increase service to clients.</li> </ul>
Increase and enhance Joint Registration Agreements with other sectors, First Nations and other diverse groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number of JRAs implemented in Nova Scotia.</li> <li>• Work with current JRA holders to establish and maintain joint apprenticeship training committees.</li> </ul>
Make mentoring resources more widely available to enable better skill transference from the journey person to the apprentice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with SMU to implement a mentoring program for journeypersons and create a mentoring endorsement for journeypersons.</li> <li>• Enhance mentoring programs in technical training programs to focus on future journeypersons and enhancing the mentorship experience for apprentices.</li> </ul>

### Performance Indicators

Description of Measure	Benchmark	2017-2018 Target
Increasing the number of direct entry apprentices	47% (2015)	50%
Increasing the number of employers who are participating in the apprenticeship system for the first time	175	300
Increasing number of pre-apprentices registering as apprentices in compulsory trades	New Benchmark	New target

### Discussion

The NSAA is committed to increasing stakeholder engagement in the apprenticeship system and is working to encourage employers who are eligible to register and train apprentices. Nova Scotia needs to continue building a well-educated and highly-skilled workforce and the apprenticeship system plays a unique and critical role in this process. Direct-entry apprenticeship, for those entering the apprenticeship program without credit from a college diploma, is an option not well understood by students, teachers, parents, employers, and other stakeholders. Meeting with employers and stakeholders to fully explain the direct-entry apprenticeship option, and reducing barriers, will help to change the culture and move the apprenticeship and trades certification system in the positive direction of inclusiveness and connectedness. Work is ongoing to collect pre-apprenticeship data.

### Strategic Direction: Strengthening Delivery: Connecting Training and Workplaces

Surveys are carried out every 2 years with both apprentices and employers as a way to gather information on apprenticeship training (from apprentices) and technical training (from employers). In 2017-2018, the bulk of the development of the online Apprenticeship Management System will be done and will fundamentally change how we interact with employers and workplaces.

Key Action from Strategic Plan	2017-2018
Develop an pre-entry pathway/assessment for potential apprentices through the NSCC and other providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pilot a pre-entry pathway for two trades in the Motive Power sector.</li> <li>Examine options for improving pre-apprenticeship recruitment and delivery</li> </ul>
Provide resources for pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship technical training, in accordance with industry need, to increase system success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement level exams for carpenter, ICT, plumber, steamfitter/pipefitter, construction electrician and industrial electrician.</li> <li>Implement a Training Quality Measurement Framework for technical training.</li> <li>Consult with stakeholders to ensure the technical training schedule meets the needs of both employers and apprentices.</li> </ul>
Develop and implement a review cycle for pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship technical training programs to increase system success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement review of training outcomes in priority trades.</li> <li>Through the Trade Coordinating Committee, implement review cycle for pre-apprenticeship programs.</li> </ul>

Key Action from Strategic Plan	2017-2018
Develop and implement a new IT system that is cost-shared with the other Atlantic provinces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lead the build of the new Apprenticeship Management System in partnership with MB, NB, PE, and NL.</li> </ul>
Support lifelong learning through post-journey initiatives, include the Atlantic Trades Business Seal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer the Atlantic Trades Business Seal program.</li> <li>Explore post-journey training opportunities with sector partners in the Automotive and Service Sectors.</li> </ul>

*Performance Indicators*

Description of Measure	Benchmark	2017-2018 Target
Increased satisfaction with apprenticeship training by apprentices	68% (2014)	75% (2018)
Increased satisfaction with apprenticeship training by employers	81% (2014)	81% (2018)
Investment in technical training	\$5.3M	\$5.3 M

*Discussion*

The apprentice registration system has become more efficient, allowing employers and apprentices to balance their training needs and work commitments. This streamlined registration process has resulted in the lowest waiting list in 5 years. The Agency recognizes the importance of service delivery to the apprenticeship system. Employers and apprentices are busy and the Agency is reviewing its service delivery approach to ensure we are meeting the needs of clients.

**Strategic Direction: Making Certification an Economic Driver**

Employer engagement and the labour market are integrally linked. Employers fully engaged with the apprenticeship system are essential for continued success.

The NSAA works closely with Stakeholders to promote voluntary compliance; however, there must also be a fair and reactive enforcement component. In order to enhance and improve compliance and enforcement, the NSAA established an Advisory Group. This group, comprised of stakeholders, provides advice and recommendations on all facets of enforcement and as a result, many significant changes to the way enforcement is carried out are under consideration. These changes may include revisions to the Act, revised policies and procedures, improved forms and reports, adding enforcement tools and establishing methods of accountability.

Key Action from Strategic Plan	2017-2018
Implement a capacity-planning tool for the system to better meet labour market needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with Atlantic partners to pilot the CanTraq LMI Qualifications database to assist in labour market planning for the skilled trades.</li> </ul>
Develop and maintain trade profiles and other labour market information for system leaders and users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop HR outlooks in the following trades: Farm Technician, Powerline Technician, and Welder.</li> <li>Update the trade profiles on the Careers Nova Scotia website.</li> </ul>
Achieve system harmonization with our Atlantic colleagues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with our Atlantic Partners to review fee structures, incentive programs, recognition of prior learning and apprentice mobility.</li> <li>Update internal policies to align with Atlantic Provinces.</li> </ul>
Improve mobility of Nova Scotia apprentices, both nationally and regionally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to implement the provincial-territorial agreement.</li> </ul>
Increase enforcement capacity through strategic partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to work with OHS officers on the 'Ask for the Card' campaign.</li> <li>Conduct a pilot project with TIR that ensures all trades hired are in compliance with the Act and Regulations.</li> </ul>
Develop an compliance and enforcement plan and carry out pilots to test new approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Draft proposed legislation to increase the enforcement capacity including the development of new enforcement tools.</li> <li>Develop new policies and procedures to enhance our timely responses to enforcement action, manage cases effectively with our internal partners, and create consistent reporting and responses to non-compliance.</li> <li>Complete inspections on priority trades to obtain 85% compliance.</li> <li>Increase enforcement coverage in Cape Breton.</li> </ul>

Performance Indicators

Description of Measure	Benchmark	2017-2018 Target
Increased compliance	84%	85%
Number of new apprentices registered as a result of enforcement action	New Benchmark	New target
Number of trade qualifiers who attempted the exam as a result of enforcement actions	New Benchmark	New target

### Discussion

There are 13 compulsory-certified trades under the Apprenticeship Trades and Qualifications Act. Ensuring that only apprentices and certified individuals are working in the compulsory-certified trades creates a level playing field for those who are complying with Nova Scotia Trade Regulations and contributes to a compliance culture.

The two (2) NSAA Compliance Officers completed 650 workplace inspections in 2015/16. Targeted compliance initiatives in the Motor Vehicle Body Repairer trade, Sheet Metal Worker trade and Refrigeration and Air Conditioning trade resulted in an increase in the number of apprentices in those trades. In future the apprentices or trade qualifiers registering as a result of enforcement activities will be recorded.

## Links to Additional Information

Additional information can be found on the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency (NSAA) website:

NSAA 2015-2020 Strategic Plan:

<http://nsapprenticeship.ca/sites/default/files/docs/pubs/Strategic-Plan-2015-2020.pdf>

NSAA Annual Report: Staying Connected 2015-16

<https://nsapprenticeship.ca/sites/default/files/docs/pubs/Annual-Report-2015-16.pdf>

Minister's Advisory Panel on Apprenticeship: Reference Group's Report on Employer Engagement in Apprenticeship, 2013

<http://nsapprenticeship.ca/sites/default/files/docs/pubs/RefGroupReportEmployerEngagement.pdf>

Nova Scotia Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Act

<http://nslegislature.ca/legc/statutes/apprenticeship%20and%20trades%20qualifications.pdf>

Operating Charter: Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency, 2014

<http://nsapprenticeship.ca/sites/default/files/docs/pubs/NSAA-operating-charter.pdf>



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