

2020-2021 BUSINESS PLAN

Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency



NOVA SCOTIA
APPRENTICESHIP
AGENCY

2020-2021 Business Plan

Introduction

The 2020-2021 Business Plan for the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency (Agency) represents our first annual plan aligned with the Agency's new 2020-2025 Strategic Plan. This new Strategic Plan builds off of the strength and success of the Agency's first, five-year Strategic Plan (2015-2020 Strategic Plan) with the identification of four strategic directions and associated key actions.

To arrive at this strategic positioning, the Agency has undertaken an extensive, province-wide consultation to better understand and determine the priorities of the four skilled trades sectors, our education and training partners, Indigenous peoples, African Nova Scotians, women, equity-seeking organizations, and under-represented groups in Nova Scotia's apprenticeship system.

Nova Scotia's apprenticeship system has continued to play a unique and critical role in building a well-educated and highly skilled workforce – the workforce we need for our business and communities to prosper. Through a joint stewardship approach to the delivery of apprenticeship, we have seen growth, change, and meaningful involvement by industry and our other partners in the system.

Moving forward, the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency will continue to serve our role as the centre of trades programming in the province – building relationships with industry and equity partners, making information and guidance easily accessible for all apprenticeship clients, and ensuring our legislative and policy framework is responsive to apprentice and employer needs. We will continue our work to improve the perception of apprenticeship as a viable post-secondary career option and career of choice with Nova Scotia's youth, parents, and educators. We will do this in keeping with the following principles:

- **Diverse and inclusive:** We will embrace the need for diversity and encourage entry into a much wider range of trades, helping apprentices and employers understand the value of a diverse and inclusive workforce.
- **Partnership-based:** We will put the employer/apprentice relationship at the heart of the trades training system. The employer is the primary trainer and beneficiary; therefore, the system must be industry-led and industry-driven.
- **Service Excellence:** We will strive to provide efficient, responsive service to clients and employers, leveraging technology to ensure access to resources and information.
- **Innovative and strategic:** We will make system- and trade-level decisions with industry, being open to multiple, flexible solutions and recognizing the dynamic nature of industry.
- **Flexible and accessible:** We will identify and provide system supports and training that will ensure success, including bridging programs and essential skills programming.

→ **Results-focused and accountable:** We will be accountable and transparent to apprenticeship system partners for decisions, resource allocations, and performance, and we will establish standards and accountabilities for all participants — apprentices, employers, joint registration agreement participants, training providers, and service providers.

The full strategic plan is available at:

<https://www.nsapprenticeship.ca/sites/default/files/docs/pubs/Strategic-Plan-2020-25.pdf>

Operating Environment

The results of the work of the Agency's 2015-2020 Strategic Plan are positive. However, we still have work to do.

The Agency has increased its available resources through partnerships with the Federal government and other provincial jurisdictions. The focus of those resources has been the development of the Apprenticeship Management System that will be the catalyst to the new support model to clients, our new Women in Trades office that will provide additional support to employers and female apprentices, and an increase in our technical training budget.

During the last Strategic Plan, the Agency focused on promoting the skilled trades. The first-ever marketing campaign was released and over 85% of our clients believe that the campaign improves perceptions of the skilled trades as a career of choice. Through our youth programming and strategic partnerships, the Agency has engaged over 20,000 youth annually to promote the trades. This work will continue into 2025.

The system continues to grow. Over the last 5 years, the number of apprentices has increased by 16%; the number of apprentices who take technical training has increased by 20%; and the number of active employers in the system has increased by 30%. Our number of certifications per year remains stable and the new strategic plan is focused on providing the necessary environment for apprentices to complete their programs in an effort to increase the trend.

In 2016, the Agency launched its Diversity and Inclusion Framework and the number of apprentices who identify as diverse has more than doubled and the number women in the trades has increased by 44%. However, the number of diverse apprentices who complete their programs remains low. In the coming years, more supports and resources will be available to better support all apprentices to be successful.

Business Plan Priorities for 2020-2021

Attract Skilled Trades Talent

In meeting the labour market needs of the future, the Agency needs to continue attracting Nova Scotians to the skilled trades. Youth, parents, educators need to be aware of the education pathways for the skilled trades, have access to the information and opportunities available and

make informed decisions with appropriate information about the employment opportunities in the skilled trades. In 2020-2021, the Agency will:

- Renew the marketing campaign 'Ready When You Are', including a social media campaign and a website upgrade, aimed at attracting youth to the trades;
- Continue to work with the NSCC, Education and Early Childhood Development and employers to promote the skilled trades in the P-12 system with a focus on Grades 7-9 and pre-apprenticeship training programs;
- Work with our partners to deliver experiential learning and skilled trades awareness programs in the trades to youth;
- Celebrate employers who hire from diverse communities and work with them to educate other employers on their motivations and the benefits of hiring and maintaining a more diverse workforce; and
- Develop skilled trades labour market information resources for system users and leaders.
- Continue to support successful Board, Trade Advisory Committees and Industry and partner participation, including the Aboriginal Apprenticeship Advisory Committee.

Support the Journey to Certification

The number of apprentices in Nova Scotia continues to rise; however, the Agency needs to focus on the experience the apprentice and employer have during the apprenticeship journey. Our efforts will concentrate on supporting apprentices and employers in achieving higher retention and completion rates in apprenticeship programs. This includes access to learning resources, timely service to clients and ensuring our training programs are innovative and responsive to changes in trade practice and technologies. In 2020-21, the Agency will:

- Continue to refresh and update apprenticeship curriculum, pre-apprenticeship programs, logbooks, and examinations through quality engagement with industry;
- Launch an interactive Apprenticeship Learning Commons that meets the diverse needs of apprentices and trade qualifiers by providing supports/resources, such as mathematics modules, study guides, and examination preparation materials;
- Finalize the process with training providers and partners to provide disability and mental health supports for apprentices while they are in training;
- Support apprentices through data analysis of exam results, help with creating individualized learning plans, and provision of additional training; and
- Implement business transformation and achieve a higher level of client service through the re-design of the Agency's support model.

Foster a Culture of Workplace Learning

Employers are the primary training provider in the apprenticeship system. It is important that employers know their role in the system and build a respectful workplace that values learning to

improve the success of apprentices and journeypersons. As change happens faster and faster, it is going to be more important that employers keep their apprentices and journeypersons up to date with new systems and processes. A culture of workplace learning ensures learning is viewed as positive – not only for those who need to improve on a specific task, or who are new to the trade - but as important for everyone and from which everyone benefits. The Agency also has a role to play to ensure government is a model of affirming workplace learning culture. In 2020-21, the Agency will:

- Launch an employer orientation that promotes apprenticeship as a learning program where employers are delivering quality training to apprentices;
- Implement a mentoring training program designed to clarify the roles and responsibilities regarding the skill development of apprentices, increase the ability of journeypersons to transfer their skills knowledge to apprentices, and create positive workplace learning environments that include all apprentices;
- Develop a training program for employers to support them in creating a respectful learning environment for all learners;
- Develop opportunities for employers to engage with Indigenous organizations and other equity-seeking groups to promote a culture of respect and inclusivity in the workplace; and
- Create a new Partner Engagement Plan (2020-2025) to support the Strategic Plan that will increase the number of employers in the system and educate them on their role in training and the importance of diversity and inclusion.

Advance the Value of Certification

Nova Scotians need to believe that workplaces are fair, safe and equitable, and that employers understand the value of certification so they can be confident in the skills of our certified trades workforce. Apprentices and journeypersons need to have pride in their trade and promote it to others as a career of choice to ensure we are meeting the skilled trades workforce of the future. In 2020-21, the Agency will:

- Launch a targeted marketing campaign to promote the value of trade certification and the use of certified tradespersons by all Nova Scotians;
- Develop and implement a province-wide compliance and enforcement plan with input from the Compliance and Enforcement Group, including identified priorities.;
- Work with government partners to identify opportunities for diverse communities to capitalize on apprenticeship opportunities in public construction projects; and
- Recognize and celebrate apprentices who complete their journey.