

Business Plan

2021-2022



NOVA SCOTIA
APPRENTICESHIP
AGENCY

2021-2022 Business Plan

Introduction

The 2021-2022 Business Plan for the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency (Agency) represents our second annual plan based on the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan.

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.

Operating Environment

In 2020, the apprenticeship system was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic – training was moved to a virtual platform, examination administration was cancelled and then restored with significantly smaller numbers, operations were moved quickly to accommodate clients electronically, and enforcement was slowed due to limited access to worksites. However, many of the activities undertaken to pivot our programs and operations have

provided significant opportunities to innovate and created positive experiences for our clients and partners.

Moving forward, the Agency will be exploring more innovative delivery mechanisms for technical training to complement the in-class delivery, administering online level examinations, implementing the Apprenticeship Management System to provide real-time electronic service to our clients and expanding our reach to employers, partners and stakeholders through virtual meeting platforms.

Throughout the past year, the Agency has been working with our largest technical training provider, NSCC, to strengthen our joint stewardship of the apprenticeship and trades qualifications system. The Joint Stewardship Leadership Team has created its own strategic goals and developed workplans to achieve the objectives of the Team – expanding engagement with our joint partners, enhancing the access and experience of equity-seeking groups, increasing teaching and learning quality, promoting the trades as a viable post-secondary option, and pursuing operational efficiency and effectiveness that enables solid communication, clear decision-making and a bias for action and excellence.

2021 also brings a renewed focus on diversity and inclusion. The Agency released its inaugural diversity and inclusion framework: *Building Equitable Pathways in 2016*. With the release of our new Strategic Plan - *Building on Success 2020-2025*, the Agency will renew its diversity and inclusion framework in 2021. The participation of women and equity-seeking communities in the apprenticeship system has increased since 2016 but continues to lag where it should be. The rate of retention is also challenged, with many apprentices not obtaining certification due to negative experiences encountered during their apprenticeship. The renewed framework is essential to positioning the Agency in a strategic manner and solidifying the achievement of outcomes towards a diverse and inclusive system.

Business Plan Priorities for 2021-2022

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, and 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 2021-2022, the Agency will:

- Renew the marketing Awareness Raising Campaign, “Ready When You Are”, including a social media campaign, a refreshed website aimed at engaging employers and attracting youth to the skilled trades, promotion of the new expanded START program and educating Nova Scotians on the value of trade certification.

- Partner with NSCC, EECD, trade associations, community, and equity-seeking organizations to promote careers in the skilled trades to youth, equity groups, and women through innovative experiential learning and skilled trades awareness programs.
- Develop and disseminate 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.
- Renew the Diversity and Inclusion Framework in collaboration with diverse organizations to build on the success of the inaugural framework and improve and advance inclusion in the apprenticeship system for women, Indigenous Peoples, African Nova Scotians, newcomers, Persons with Disabilities and other under-represented groups.

Support the Journey to Certification

The number of apprentices in Nova Scotia continues to rise; however, the Agency needs to focus on the experience of the apprentice and employer during the apprenticeship journey. Our efforts will concentrate on supporting apprentices and employers in achieving higher retention and certification 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 2021-2022, the Agency will:

- Create a set of curriculum resources to be used in apprenticeship technical training to build compassion, empathy and understanding of equity, diversity and inclusion and improve the virtual delivery model for apprenticeship technical training.
- Conduct strategic scans of current and former apprentices to identify apprentices who require additional supports to facilitate apprentice completion.
- Continue to build 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.
- Provide regular, consistent contact and support to participants in the Forestry Sector Apprenticeship Initiative and women and employers participating in the Women in Construction Trades pilot.
- Continue to refresh and update apprenticeship curriculum, pre-apprenticeship programs, logbooks, and examinations in response to harmonization and through quality engagement with industry.
- Develop and implement teaching and learning standards that ensure quality first-tier instruction leading to successful experiences for system participants.

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 where learning is valued, and the success of apprentices and journeypersons is supported. With changing technologies, it is increasingly 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 2021-2022, the Agency will:

- Expand learning opportunities through remote delivery options.
- Develop an employer engagement plan for the forestry sector to improve participation in the apprenticeship system in the sector.
- 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.
- Emphasize the message of workplace learning in our promotion and advertising and develop and deliver a Journeyperson Mentoring Endorsement program, Respectful Workplace Training, and Gender and Inclusion Training to employers and journeypersons in the apprenticeship system.
- Implement business transformation and achieve a higher level of client service through the re-design of the Agency's support model.

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 2021-2022, the Agency will:

- Implement a new Partner Engagement Plan (2021-2025) 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.
- Develop and implement a province-wide compliance and enforcement plan with input from the Compliance and Enforcement Group, including identified priorities.
- Work with partners to identify opportunities to certify existing trades professionals and for diverse communities to capitalize on apprenticeship opportunities in public construction projects.

- Recognize and celebrate apprentices who complete their journey and continue to recognize employers for their contributions to the apprenticeship system with a focus on employers who champion workplace learning and support diverse apprentices and women to complete their journey to certification.
- Continue the review of the legislative framework to improve the flexibility of the apprenticeship program while maintaining the integrity of the certification of journeypersons in Nova Scotia.