

Institutional Cook Designation: Discussion Paper

Introduction

In the fall of 2018, a group of long-term care providers approached the Director, Partnership and Innovation at Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency regarding a shortage of Institutional Cooks to safely staff their facilities. After a number of meetings, the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency designed and administered a survey for long-term care employers, the results of which provided some important insights on the specific needs of the institutional cook trade, including Labour Market Information, Red Seal Cook participation, and employer level of engagement. The survey results indicated long-term care employers support an Institutional Cook specific apprenticeship pathway and potentially see it as a suitable solution to addressing consistent industry issues in institutions needing trained staff for their kitchens.

A working group was formed to discuss the similarities and differences in the scope of the Institutional Cook as compared to the Cook trade. Initially the working group consisted primarily of long-term care employers throughout Nova Scotia. Subsequently, meetings in 2019-2020 expanded to include Red Seal journeypersons in senior management positions in hospitals, prisons, military, and long-term care. After extensive industry discussion on the idea of an Institutional Cook pathway, the culinary industry remained committed to exploring an application to designate Institutional Cook as a trade. In April 2021, the Apprenticeship Board approved new members and a revised mandate for the Cook Trade Advisory Committee (TAC) to specifically look at industry issues and opportunities and make a recommendation to the Board.

The renewed TAC has met six times since June 2021 and has completed the following:

- Developed a workplan
- Reviewed the designation application
- Discussed the trade name and definition
- Discussed policy issues such as, term of apprenticeship, ratio, supervision, and wage schedules
- Reviewed Cook scope documents to identify gaps between the Cook and Institutional Cook trades and started work on an Occupational Standard of skills and a logbook.

Labour Market Demand

Demand for Institutional Cooks exist across many types of institutions all of which are experiencing labour shortages, including

- Hospitals;
- Long-term care homes;
- Educational institutions;
- Military installations; and
- Correctional facilities.

Trade Designation and Training in Nova Scotia

TAC members fully support trade designation, apprenticeship training and certification. The key priorities are establishing industry standards, skill competency, and sustainable recruitment to the occupation/trade. Based on the committee's review of the British Columbia and Ontario programs, the TAC is proposing that Nova Scotia set a term of apprenticeship of 3600 hours (approximately 2 years) of practical training, with 2 levels of technical training to cover the required theory. Trade qualifiers would require a minimum of 5400 hours to challenge the exam. The TAC members also recommend a minimum ratio of 1 Journeyperson to 2 Apprentices (Ratio: 1:2).

Purpose of Consultation

Consultation Main Objective

To determine the level of industry support for the designation of Institutional Cook as a provincial trade under the *Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Act* in Nova Scotia.

Additional Consultation Objectives

The survey will also gather information that will support implementation, if designation is supported. This includes:

- Validating recommendations on a proposed structure for an Institutional Cook apprenticeship program
 - **Definition:**
If designated as a trade, the trade definition of Institutional Cook being considered is as follows:
An occupation consisting of preparing, cooking, and serving small to large quantity meals that meet dietary and health needs of guests and residents in institutional settings, in accordance with institutional budgets, industry standards, food safety requirements, and occupational health and safety regulations.
 - **Term of Apprenticeship:**
The term of apprenticeship recommended by the TAC is 3600 hours or approximately 2 years.
 - **Supervision:**
The TAC is recommending that certified Institutional Cooks and Certified Red Seal Cooks with one year of institutional cooking experience should be deemed eligible to supervise the training of Institutional Cook apprentices.
 - **Ratio:**
The TAC members also support a minimum ratio of 1 Journeyperson to 2 Apprentices (Ratio:1:2).
- Recording any concerns, ideas, or suggestions.
- Recording any further questions to add to a Questions and Answers document.

Initial Questions and Answers

What is Designation?

Designation of a trade under the *Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Act* provides official recognition of the trade and its scope of practice. Designation enables the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency to develop and implement training and certification based on this scope of practice.

What is Apprenticeship?

Apprenticeship is a post-secondary education and training system that leads to certification and provides for quality careers in the skilled trades. Apprentices receive hands-on training from certified tradespeople as paid employees along with in-class and/or online apprenticeship technical training.

The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency (NSAA) partners with industry, community organizations and equity-seeking groups to promote apprenticeship opportunities, and to ensure that trades-specific training is responsive to the needs of industry and the Nova Scotia job market.

What would Institutional Cook Apprenticeship Training and Certification involve?

The TAC is proposing that Institutional Cook be a 2-level trade consisting of 3600 on-the-job hours.

Level 1 technical training will be 5 weeks and the courses and content covered will be common with the existing first level of the Red Seal Cook trade. Level 2 training would be designed to address specific Institutional Cook knowledge and skills based on the Occupational Standard. An apprentice logbook will be created that lists the skills that must be learned on the job.

The development of an Institutional Cook Provincial Certification examination and the Curriculum Standards for technical training will be completed with industry input if the trade is designated.

Can you share information on a typical apprenticeship pathway?

Here is an example of a typical 2-level Apprenticeship Training pathway:



- Employers hire employees to learn as apprentices and sign a formal agreement to train and register apprentices with the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency. Apprentices must be paid minimum wage or more.
- Apprentices work and develop practical skills under the supervision of certified journeypersons/mentors.
- Over 12-14 months, apprentices practice and eventually prepare meals while being supervised by their mentor. Once apprentices can demonstrate competency in a skill, their journeyperson/mentor signs off on that skill in the logbook.
- Apprentices also engage in technical training that can be a combination of online and in-person learning. During this time, an instructor reinforces the theory and helps apprentices to refine their skills. If apprentices attend technical training with an instructor full time, they are 'laid off' by their employer for the purpose of a training leave, so they can receive Employment Insurance benefits.
- After apprentices complete all required hours and technical training for Level 1, they progress to Level 2 and may be eligible for a financial progression award.
- After apprentices complete required hours, technical training, and all the logbook skills have been 'signed off' by the journeyperson/mentor for Levels 1 and 2, apprentices are then eligible to write a Certification Examination.
- If apprentices pass the certification exam, they receive a Certification of Qualification as a journeyperson through the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency.
- Newly certified journeypersons can then be mentors for new apprentices.

Is there a way to become a Certified Institutional Cook without going through an apprenticeship?

Experienced Institutional Cooks can challenge the Certification Examination through a process called Trade Qualification.

The following diagram outlines the path for a trade qualifier.



Consultation Process

The Institutional Cook industry consultation consists of an online survey with an additional option for Institutional Cooks to be contacted by phone to complete the survey. Responses will remain **anonymous**, as names are not being collected. Any identifying information will not be shared with the Cook Trade Advisory Committee or the public.

Link to the survey and consultation support materials: www.nsapprenticeship.ca/consultations#icook

If you have questions or concerns regarding the consultation process or would like to setup a phone interview, please contact the consultation assistant at NSAA.Consultation@novascotia.ca.

We appreciate your involvement and participation in this industry consultation.