



# Building More Equitable Pathways

A diversity and inclusion  
framework for the Nova Scotia  
Apprenticeship Agency





# Contents

- Definitions and terms..... 2
- Introduction and framework development ..... 3
- Framework at-a-glance..... 4
- Goals and objectives ..... 5
  - Goal 1:** Demonstrate commitment to, and accountability for, equity and inclusion within the Agency.....6
  - Goal 2:** Reduce barriers to apprenticeship.....8
  - Goal 3:** Partner to drive change..... 11
- Expected results ..... 13

# Definitions and Terms

A selection of commonly used terms in diversity/inclusion:

## Competency assessment

Measurement of skills, knowledge, and behaviours obtained through formal or non-formal education, work experience, or other means, with the purpose of establishing an individual's possession of requirements for a trade or profession. Competency assessments may be in the form of examinations or task-based performance testing.

## Cultural competence

The attitudes, knowledge, skills, behaviours and policies required to better meet the needs of all the people we serve.

## Cultural safety

An environment, which is safe for people; where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience, of learning together with dignity, and truly listening.

## Diversity

The multiple and intersecting ways in which people can be the same and different. Elements of diversity include race and/or ethnicity, sex and/or gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, abilities, age, socio-economic status, religion/spirituality, or any other personal characteristics, culture or language.

## Equity

A process of recognizing and responding to unfair, avoidable and changeable differences; equity is a process used to support the goal of equality.

## Inclusion

Active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity.

## Intersectionality

A research and policy paradigm based on the idea that human lives cannot be reduced to single characteristics; human experiences cannot be accurately understood by prioritizing a single factor; social categories (such as race, gender, ability and so on) are socially constructed, fluid and flexible; social locations are inseparable, shaped by social processes and structures that are shaped by power; and the promotion of social justice and equity are paramount.

## Social equity

The fair, just and equitable management of all institutions serving the public directly or by contract; the fair, just and equitable distribution of public services and implementation of public policy; and the commitment to promote fairness, justice, and equity in the formation of public policy.

## Under-represented groups

This term refers to identity groups whose representation is well below that of the general population in apprenticeship and trades learning and work settings. In Nova Scotia, this refers to individuals who self-identify in any (or all) of the following ways: Aboriginal, African Nova Scotian, newcomer, individuals who are differently-abled and women. For ease of reading, the term 'diverse' will be used to refer to all under-represented groups.

It is important to note that inequities based on sexual diversity require an expansion of workplace equity concepts and strategies. Ongoing actions must consider all intersections of identity, including sexual orientation, gender identity and youth perspectives.

# Introduction and Framework Development



The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency strives for an apprenticeship system that:

contributes to a fair, consistent, and safe work environment through effective regulations focused on awareness, compliance, enforcement and procurement standards;

is driven by excellence, responding to the labour market needs of the Nova Scotia economy and remains flexible and adaptive to changing economic and industry conditions;

actively engages industry in labour market planning, and apprentice and post-journey person training; and,

provides meaningful opportunities for all population groups throughout the province.

A commitment to diversity and inclusion across the apprenticeship system is embedded in the mandate statement of the Agency's operating charter:

The Agency is responsible to steward and operate a relevant, accessible and responsive industry-led trades training and certification system, and for improving access to and participation in the system by diverse groups.

To further our ongoing commitment, the Agency, with guidance from a project steering committee, developed a diversity and inclusion framework.

The framework is based on the research, engagement, and analysis of best practices. It acknowledges the complexity of apprenticeship pathways, the role and structure of the Agency, systemic barriers and the strengths of partners.

This document provides a summary of the framework, including the vision statement, goals, and objectives.

# Framework At-a-Glance



## VISION

An industry-led apprenticeship system that builds and maintains a highly skilled and diverse workforce contributing to the economic success of Nova Scotia.

## VALUE

We will embrace the need for diversity and encourage entry into a much wider range of trades.

## MANDATE STATEMENT

The Agency is responsible to steward and operate a relevant, accessible and responsive industry-led trades training and certification system, and improving access to and participation in the system by diverse groups.

# Goals and Objectives

## 1.

### DEMONSTRATE COMMITMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY

- Strive for representation.
- Resource the implementation of the diversity and inclusion framework.
- Monitor, evaluate and learn from the results of framework actions.
- Infuse diversity and inclusion into the ongoing work, including the 2015-2020 strategic plan.
- Raise awareness of apprenticeship opportunities for individuals and organizations from diverse communities.

## 2.

### REDUCE BARRIERS TO APPRENTICESHIP

- Continue to remove barriers for those who are differently-abled.
- Recognize the needs of individuals who speak languages other than English.
- Support newcomers in demonstrating their skilled trades competencies.
- Reduce challenges that prevent the completion of technical training.
- Encourage individuals from diverse groups to explore apprenticeship and apply for trade qualification where eligible.
- Encourage employers to hire diverse individuals into apprenticeship positions.
- Enhance supports for diverse candidates along apprenticeship pathways.

## 3.

### PARTNER TO DRIVE CHANGE

- Work with government partners to create apprenticeship opportunities for individuals from diverse groups.
- Create a framework to increase and support women in the skilled trades.
- Support community partners in the development of comprehensive programs for individuals from diverse groups.
- Implement actions identified by the Aboriginal Apprenticeship Advisory Committee.
- Work with the NSCC on joint diversity and inclusion activities.
- Create apprenticeship work environments that respect and celebrate diversity.

# GOAL 1.

Demonstrate commitment to, and accountability for, equity and inclusion within the Agency

The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency strives to reflect the diversity of Nova Scotia, in its own hiring, and within its governance structure and daily work.

## Objective

### 1.1

Strive for representation.

- Continue to expand recruitment, selection, retention and advancement of diverse groups within Agency staff and governance structures.
- Designate diversity positions in work placements and co-op opportunities within the Agency.
- Integrate diversity into representation of Trade Advisory Committees that guide framework actions.

## Objective

### 1.2

Resource the implementation of the diversity and inclusion framework.

- Build a business case for a chief diversity officer. Modify the roles of select field staff to become leaders on apprenticeship for diverse groups. Identify a lead for diverse apprentices and women.
- Identify and secure dedicated resources to support implementation of the framework initiatives.
- Transition the Diversity and Inclusion Steering Committee to a Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee and strengthen the membership of this group.

## Objective

### 1.3

Monitor, evaluate and learn from the results of framework actions.

- Review and revise data systems to ensure the collection and confidentiality of self-identification data.
- Regularly update and share the framework scorecard with the Agency's board, staff and stakeholders, and adjust actions as required.



## Objective 1.4

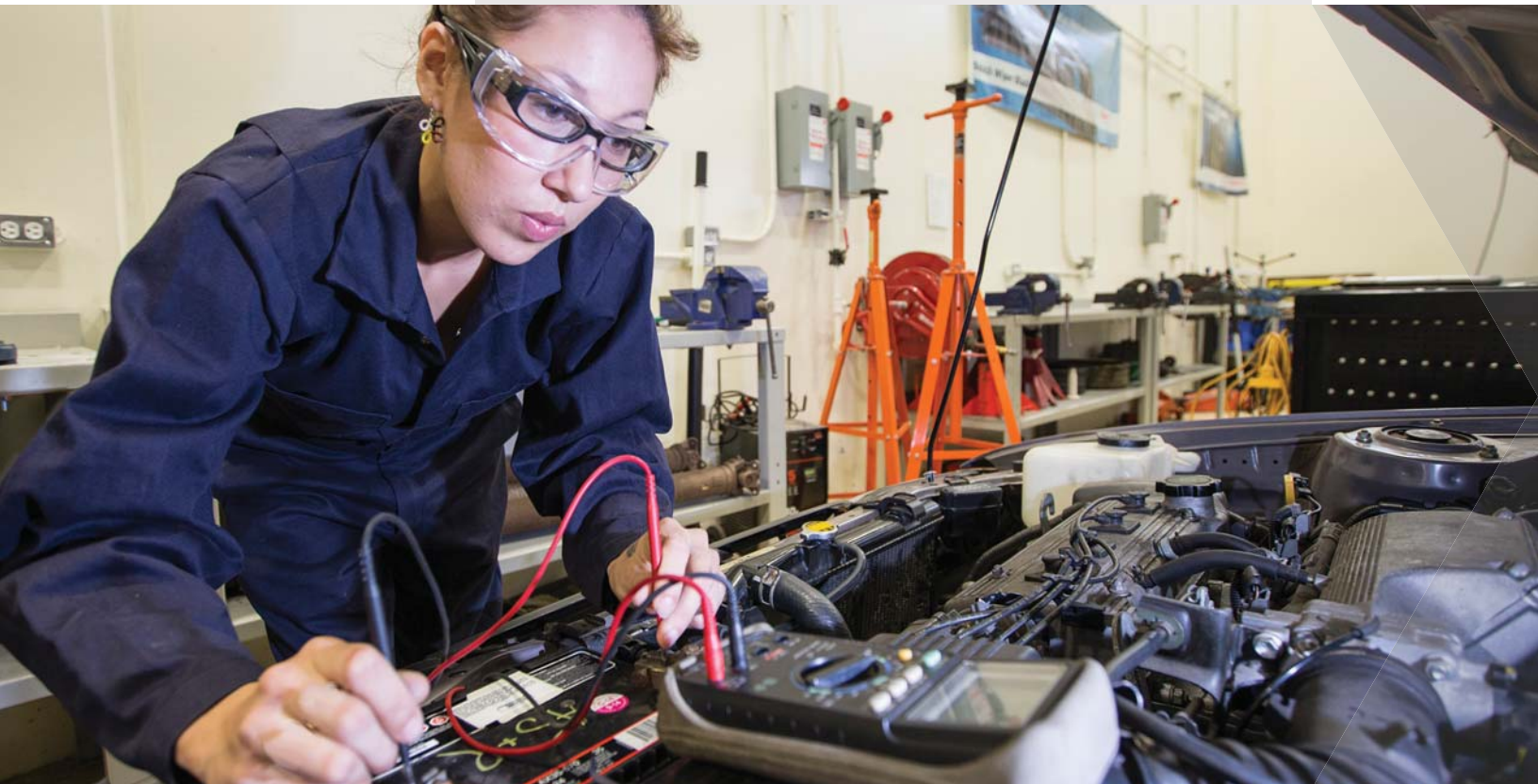
Infuse diversity and inclusion into ongoing work, including the 2015-2020 strategic plan.

- Support participation of staff in related formal and informal learning. Develop and value subject matter expertise amongst staff.
- Develop and implement an equity and inclusion tool to be used by policy and program staff, including those who plan for engagement.
- Support employees to identify three concrete diversity and inclusion actions that align with the framework; and integrate these into performance measurement.

## Objective 1.5

Raise awareness of apprenticeship opportunities for individuals and organizations from diverse communities.

- Create and implement a comprehensive communications and marketing strategy to support all aspects of the framework.
- Integrate diversity and inclusion into communication and marketing materials and strategies.



# GOAL 2.

## Reduce barriers to apprenticeship

The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency, in partnership with stakeholders, identifies and removes barriers to access and inclusion in apprenticeship to support the success of individuals from diverse groups.

### Objective 2.1

Continue to remove barriers for apprentices who are differently-abled.

- Continue to strengthen the assessment and support process for students with differing abilities amongst all partners especially through technical training, agency-regulated exams and the workplace.
- Identify, train and share contact information for practice readers on agency exams.

### Objective 2.2

Recognize the needs of individuals who speak languages other than English.

- Translate trade qualifier, apprenticeship agreements and the renewal application, and make these available in agency communications.
- Investigate the availability and process to access programs in French with New Brunswick and promote this, in French, through agency communications.

### Objective 2.3

Support newcomers in demonstrating their skilled trades competencies.

- Ensure newcomers have access to an effective, individualized skills assessment.
- Identify needs and offer/promote refreshers as required.
- Develop and implement a short-term paid trade work experience program for newcomers.
- Raise awareness of certification options among newcomers.
- Amend challenge exam policy to expand access to non-apprentices, including newcomers.

## Objective 2.4

Reduce challenges that prevent the completion of technical training.

- Expand the number and availability of technical training opportunities in community settings, including alternate delivery.
- Promote the use of apprenticeship grants.
- Integrate abilities into the assessment of technical training and ensure supports are available in advance.

## Objective 2.5

Encourage individuals from diverse groups to explore apprenticeship and apply for trade qualification where eligible.

- Promote the trade qualifier pathway to diverse candidates in an effort to build capacity for mentorship in diverse communities.
- Work with community partners to raise awareness of the trade qualifier process, including refresher courses, among individuals from diverse groups with skilled trades experience.
- Develop a process with community partners to offer refresher courses in a way that works for communities. Pilot this process by partnering with the East Preston Empowerment Association for select trades. With this organization, extend these learning opportunities to other African Nova Scotian community members across the province and to other diverse communities.



## Objective 2.6

Encourage employers to hire diverse individuals into apprenticeship positions.

- Identify, promote and support the completion of applications for financial assistance for individuals from diverse groups.
- Explore, with interested stakeholders, effective solutions to support job matching between employers and diverse employees.
- Develop and implement networking and connector events such as apprenticeship fairs and interview opportunities. Work with organizational and community partners to identify timely opportunities and encourage participation.
- Increase joint registration agreements with diverse organizations as appropriate.
- Pilot an employment program model whereby the Agency partners with a non-profit organization to hire and support diverse apprentices while providing work placements.

## Objective 2.7

Enhance supports for diverse candidates along apprenticeship pathways.

- Create and implement apprenticeship mentoring programs for individuals from diverse groups with community partners.
- Promote the development of apprenticeship affinity groups/ networking groups.



# GOAL 3.

## Partner to drive change

The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency engages with key stakeholders to mobilize apprenticeship opportunities for individuals from diverse groups.

### Objective 3.1

Work with government partners to create apprenticeship opportunities for individuals from diverse groups.

- Engage with government diversity and inclusion leaders and education, employment and immigration departments to develop diversity-focused apprenticeship initiatives.

### Objective 3.2

Create a framework to increase and support women in the skilled trades.

- Formalize the working relationship between the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency and Women Unlimited to ensure trades pathways that work for women are built collaboratively, barriers are identified and addressed, and more opportunities for women to complete apprenticeship exist across the province in an ongoing way.

### Objective 3.3

Support community partners in the development of comprehensive programs for individuals from diverse groups.

- Formalize the working relationship between the Agency and ISANS, including the following: create a task team to address the employment needs of newcomers with trades backgrounds, including Syrian refugees; create an all-trades multi-stakeholder working group and promote the use of ISANS workplace assessment and training tools where newcomers will be apprenticed.
- Undertake ongoing engagements with employment and education organizations supporting individuals from African Nova Scotian communities and individuals who are differently-abled to identify and implement collaborative initiatives.

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**Objective  
3.4**

Implement actions identified by the Aboriginal Apprenticeship Advisory Committee.

- Work with First Nations communities, Aboriginal employment organizations and other employers to prioritize the hiring of Aboriginal apprentices in housing, construction and other projects in First Nations communities.
- Enter into Memoranda of Understanding as appropriate to advance the shared goals of Aboriginal communities and the Agency.
- Prioritize the use of joint registration agreements through raising awareness with band councils and individuals who create economic development strategies on-reserve.

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**Objective  
3.5**

Work with the NSCC on joint diversity and inclusion activities.

- Create a joint diversity and inclusion task team to explore strategies for attracting and retaining diverse pre-apprenticeship trades students and apprentices, data collection and analysis, engagement with key staff, respectful workplace preparation, employer partnerships and potential trade-business learning.

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**Objective  
3.6**

Create apprenticeship work environments that respect and celebrate diversity.

- Develop and implement hiring and respectful workplace initiatives for diverse apprentices in select government workplaces.
- Create a comprehensive diversity hiring and respectful workplace employer strategy that includes education, assessment and feedback, recognition, mentoring training, consumer endorsement and sharing of successes. Link this to the stakeholder engagement framework goals 2, 4, and 6.
- Develop a policy requiring the Agency, apprenticeship, and trade organizations to have diversity action plans.

# Expected Results

## Short-term outcomes:

- 1.** Enhanced ability to address the integration of equity across apprenticeship systems and among agency staff.
- 2.** Strengthened collaboration with partners from equity-seeking organizations that support the success of individuals from diverse groups along apprenticeship pathways.
- 3.** Increased actions to reduce the number of barriers to inclusion facing individuals from diverse groups along apprenticeship pathways.

## Mid-term outcomes:

- 4.** Greater participation of individuals from diverse groups within the apprenticeship system.
- 5.** Enhanced collaboration between the Agency, pre-apprentices/apprentices from diverse groups and equity seeking organizations.
- 6.** Reduced barriers to inclusion facing individuals from diverse groups along apprenticeship pathways.

## Long-term change:

- 7.** The Agency has improved access to and participation in the apprenticeship and trades qualifications system by diverse individuals.

# Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Apprenticeship system definitions: Source: Menard, M. Chan, C and M. Walker (2007). *National Apprenticeship Survey: Canada Overview Report*, pp 65-81. Online, available at: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-598-x/81-598-x2008001-eng.pdf>. Diversity and inclusion definitions are from *Raising the Bar, A strategy to build diversity and inclusion in the public service 2014–2018*.

<sup>2</sup> Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness (n.d.). *Diversity, Social Inclusion and Cultural Competence*.

<sup>3</sup> Nursing Council of New Zealand (2005). *Guidelines for Cultural Safety, the Treaty of Waitangi, and Maori Health in Nursing and Midwifery Education and Practice*.

<sup>4</sup> Hankivsky, O. (ed.) (2012). *An Intersectionality-Based Policy Analysis Framework*.

<sup>5</sup> National Academy of Public Administration, Standing Panel on Social Equity in Governance. Online, available at: <http://www.napawash.org/fellows/standing-panels/standing-panel-on-social-equity-in-governance/>













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**APPRENTICESHIP**  
AGENCY