



Nova Scotia
Apprenticeship Agency

2015–2020 Strategic Plan



NOVA SCOTIA
APPRENTICESHIP
AGENCY



Introduction

Nova Scotia's apprenticeship system plays a unique and critical role in building a well-educated and highly skilled workforce—the workforce we need for our businesses and communities to prosper. However, there is room for improvement with the apprenticeship system. Although it is a viable post-secondary option for Nova Scotians, it is not well known to our youth and their parents. Industry needs to have more involvement in decisions about funding, program design, pre-apprenticeship, technical training, and program entrance requirements. Pre-apprenticeship training—which is currently the main pathway to apprenticeship—needs to align with labour demands, and employers need to know the benefits of hiring apprentices directly out of high school. Once in apprenticeship, apprentices should experience the highest quality of technical training and have adequate pathways to pursue their certification. Although the current system benefits from the active participation of more than 1700 employers who hire and train apprentices, more are needed to ensure that apprentices can get the skills and experience they need to achieve certification and meet the demands of the labour market.

How we got where we are today

The inaugural Strategic Plan of the new Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency is designed to achieve results in these problematic areas. This plan, in development since 2013, is based on connecting with hundreds of apprentices, employers, and industry members to define direction and identify solutions.

Key milestones leading to the creation of the Agency and Strategic Plan:



2011–2012

A review of the Apprenticeship System in Nova Scotia took place, including an evaluation of systems across Canada; an analysis of challenges, opportunities, trends, and projections; a discussion paper; and public consultation sessions held throughout the province.

A Minister's Advisory Panel on Apprenticeship was established to review and make recommendations regarding increasing employer participation in the apprenticeship system. The panel was supported by a reference group that included representatives from the Construction, Service, Motive Power, and Manufacturing sectors, and consisted of individuals representing diverse perspectives in the system.

2013

The decision to create the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency, as recommended by the panel, was announced. A Minister-appointed industry implementation team was established to consider legislative, governance, strategic, and operational components.

2014

Legislation was passed to establish the agency, Cabinet approved the Operating Charter, and new resources were announced in the budget. The industry implementation team created the first draft of the strategic plan and presented it for feedback, both through a discussion paper and at the annual industry meeting.

The agency was officially created July 1, 2014, with an inaugural board and interim CEO appointed. The board held consultation sessions with the public across the province and with staff before finalizing the draft strategic plan.

2015

The draft strategic plan was sent out to all apprentices and employers in the apprenticeship system as well as to all stakeholder organizations prior to the first annual industry meeting of the agency. All participants at the meeting assisted with prioritizing the objectives and activities of the plan.

The Minister approved the inaugural strategic plan.



What kind of apprenticeship and trades certification system do we want?

We want a system that:

- contributes to a fair, consistent, and safe work environment through an effective regulatory regime focused on enforcement and procurement standards
- is driven by excellence, responding to the labour market needs of the Nova Scotia economy and remaining flexible and adaptive to changing economic and industry conditions
- actively engages industry as leaders in the full continuum – from labour market planning to post-journeyman training, from governance to a skilled labour force
- provides meaningful opportunities for all population groups throughout the province

- includes trade career decision making, youth exploration and bridging programs, assessment, pre-apprenticeship, technical training, and on-the-job training for apprentices and for journeypersons
- acknowledges and provides for the different needs of the various trades, establishing relevant and integrated training pathways and enabling trade direction/advice regarding each program
- uses technology to significantly enhance the delivery of the system to all partners, coordinating multifaceted training approaches, optimizing administration, and addressing geographic issues
- operates as an extension of the workplaces that it serves
- moves apprentices along their journey without interruption, achieving higher completion rates through more effective conversion of pre-apprenticeship, youth, and bridging program participants to apprenticeship



Our vision

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

Our mission

As advocates and stewards, the Agency, industry, and its partners will build a leading-edge apprenticeship system, creating more jobs for apprenticeship, giving broader access to training and certification, and exceeding nationally recognized performance.



Our values

As we carry out the goals of the apprenticeship and trades qualifications system, we will build on what is working and reach for new levels of success. We will do this in keeping with the following principles:

- **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.
- **Regionally and nationally aligned:** We will leverage Atlantic and national synergies and efficiencies, maintaining high standards while optimizing program delivery.
- **Innovative and strategic:** We will make system- and trade-level decisions with industry, being open to multiple solutions and recognizing that one size will never fit all.
- **Diverse and inclusive:** Focusing on labour market alignment, we will embrace the need for diversity and encourage entry into a much wider range of trades.
- **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 all stakeholders 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.



Our objectives: What success looks like

Success for the Agency and the system at large will be evident in the following areas.

System influence

The system will successfully influence the full continuum of trades training and regulation, including grades P–12, bridging programs, pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship, post-journey person training, and regulation.

Employer engagement

More employers will provide strategic direction to the system, hire more apprentices, and engage more purposefully in their training.

Inclusiveness

The system will successfully attract and retain more individuals from diverse groups.

Labour market responsiveness

The system will optimize and grow the resources it needs to meet labour market needs.

Successful completion

The system will support apprentices to complete their training in a timely manner, gaining the depth and breadth of skills that employers need.

Our strategic directions

In order to achieve success, the Agency plans to focus its work over the next five years in the following key areas. Each key area is supported by several strategies.

Changing the culture: Inclusive, connected, and industry-led

- Build an Agency led by and accountable to industry stakeholders.
- Embed diversity and inclusion in the apprenticeship system.
- Promote apprenticeship and skilled trades.
- Advocate for change with partners, including the federal government.

Changing the outcome: Apprentice success

- Ensure that training and certification pathways are relevant, integrated, effective, and available.
- Help potential apprentices make more informed career choices.
- Tailor support and planning for individual needs.

Changing the outcome: Employer success

- Develop innovative approaches to suit the capacity and needs of employers.
- Develop partnerships with stakeholder organizations to increase employer engagement.
- Educate and communicate with employers regarding their roles and responsibilities, and support their achievement.



Strengthening delivery: Connecting training and workplaces

- Optimize the allocation of resources across the system and report on performance.
- Develop and promote a comprehensive apprenticeship system.
- Focus on increasing diversity.
- Leverage technology and exemplary practices to enhance program delivery and connectivity.

Making certification an economic driver

- Develop a system that is responsive to labour market needs.
- Promote awareness of the importance of certification.
- Pursue interprovincial initiatives to enhance labour mobility and harmonization.
- Contribute to a fair and safe work environment through an effective compliance and enforcement regime.



Our Key Actions

Strategic Direction: *Change the Culture*

KEY ACTION	PLAN YEAR	IMPLEMENT YEAR	EVALUATE YEAR
Brand the new Agency and develop a marketing and communications strategy to promote apprenticeship.	1	2 - 5	3 and 5
Educate apprenticeship partners on their roles and responsibilities.	1	2 - 5	3 and 5
Develop and implement a stakeholder engagement plan.	1	2 - 5	3 and 5
Develop and implement a Diversity Plan to guide increased diversity, both in the Agency and in the system.	1	2 - 5	3 and 5
Support successful Board and Trade Advisory Committee leadership and participation.	1	1 - 5	Annually
Expand Youth Apprenticeship and summer employment programs across all four trade sectors, with Education partners.	1 - 2	3 - 5	5
Create partnerships to increase the use of apprentices through procurement practices.	1	1 - 5	3 and 5
Develop and implement a Trade Regulation Framework for designated occupations that are regulated under the Technical Safety Act.	1 - 2	2 - 5	5

Strategic Direction: *Improve Apprenticeship Success*

KEY ACTION	PLAN YEAR	IMPLEMENT YEAR	EVALUATE YEAR
Develop a culture of customer service, including service standards for all Agency programs.	1	2 - 5	Annually
Help students link career exploration in the skilled trades to effective career decision making.	1	2 - 5	5
Develop outreach and bridging programs aimed at encouraging stronger participation by diverse groups.	1	2 - 5	5
Increase outreach to students in relevant pre-employment programs.	1	2 - 5	Annually
Expand and improve training pathways through alternate delivery and competency-based approaches.	1	1 - 5	Annually
Create training pathways in certification-only trades.	1 - 2	2 - 5	5

Strategic Direction: *Improve Employer Success*

KEY ACTION	PLAN YEAR	IMPLEMENT YEAR	EVALUATE YEAR
Develop supports to help employers find apprentices and to help apprentices find jobs.	1	1 - 5	Annually
Promote direct entry into apprenticeship to employers.	1	2 - 5	3 and 5
Improve and promote the START incentive program for employers who hire apprentices.	1	1 - 5	3 and 5
Transform services, structures, and supports to ensure success of the apprentice/employer relationship.	1	2 - 3	3 and 5
Increase and enhance Joint Registration Agreements with other sectors, First Nations, and other diverse groups.	1 - 2	1 - 3	Annually
Make mentoring resources more widely available to enable better skill transference from the journeyman to the apprentice.	1 - 2	1 - 5	5

Strategic Direction: *Strengthen Delivery*

KEY ACTION	PLAN	IMPLEMENT	EVALUATE
	YEAR	YEAR	YEAR
Develop a pre-entry pathway for potential apprentices through the NSCC and other providers.	1 - 3	4 - 5	5
Provide resources for pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship technical training, in accordance with industry need, to increase system success.	1	2 - 5	5
Develop and implement a review cycle for pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship technical training programs, to increase system success.	1	1 - 5	3 and 5
Implement trade harmonization for selected trades.	Years 1 - 5, by trade	Year 1 : 2 trades Year 2 : 5 trades Year 3 : 6 trades	3 and 5
Develop and implement a new IT system that is cost-shared with the other Atlantic provinces.	1 - 3	4 - 5	5
Support lifelong learning through post-journey person training initiatives, including the Atlantic Trades Business Seal.	1 - 3	1 - 5	3 and 5

Strategic Direction: *Make Certification an Economic Driver*

KEY ACTION	PLAN YEAR	IMPLEMENT YEAR	EVALUATE YEAR
Develop a capacity-planning tool for the system to better meet labour market needs.	1	2 - 5	3 and 5
Develop and maintain trade profiles and other labour market information for system leaders and users.	1	1 - 5	3 and 5
Achieve system harmonization with our Atlantic colleagues.	1	1 - 5	3 and 5
Improve the mobility of Nova Scotia apprentices, both regionally and nationally.	1	1 - 5	3 and 5
Develop a compliance and enforcement plan, and carry out pilots to test new approaches.	1	1 - 5	3 and 5
Increase enforcement capacity through strategic partnerships.	1	2 - 3	3 and 5

How we will measure success

Performance Indicators

Throughout the first year of the Strategic Plan, the Agency will further define and benchmark the following performance indicators that will assist the Board in monitoring its strategic outcomes:

1.

Awareness of apprenticeship as a viable post-secondary option

Measuring awareness of the apprenticeship system is critical to ensuring increased participation in the system. In 2015, the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency will do a baseline survey of employers, high school students and their parents, current apprentices, and the people who support career decision making. This survey will determine their awareness and understanding of the benefits of participating in the apprenticeship system, including the direct-entry option. Our work with employers, youth, the Nova Scotia Community College, and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will increase awareness of the system, leading to an increased level of participation in the system by both apprentices and employers.



2.

Employer engagement and satisfaction index

The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency is industry-led and industry-driven. As a result, it is critical that industry be engaged in the system. In 2015, an index will be prepared that measures employer engagement and satisfaction that includes

- employee satisfaction with the quality of training
- industry satisfaction with the level of engagement from the Apprenticeship Board and the Trade Advisory Committees
- employer satisfaction with the service level of the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency

Baseline information is available from 2013, and we expect an increase in this index as a result of the creation of Trade Advisory Committees, increased visibility of the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency, and a clear focus on service delivery to employers.

3.

Employer participation rate

The success of the apprenticeship system is dependent on the participation of employers who train apprentices, and the goal of the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency is to increase employer participation. In consultation with our stakeholders, we will set realistic targets and report on those targets annually.

4.

Apprentice satisfaction index

Attraction and retention of apprentices is critical to the success of the apprenticeship system. In 2015, the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency will create an index to measure apprentice satisfaction based on the following information:

- apprentice satisfaction with both technical training and on-the-job training
- apprentice satisfaction with the services provided by the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency

Baseline information was collected in 2013, and we expect to maintain the high level of satisfaction of apprentices.

5.

Apprentice completion index

Many apprentices are not completing their apprenticeship program, and some who do complete are taking too long. In 2015, the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency will create an index that measures the success of apprentices. The index will include

- apprentice completion rates
- length of time for an apprentice to complete training
- the number of individuals who register as apprentices after completing pre-employment training in a designated trade

The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency will develop long-term targets and will report on this information annually.

6.

Diverse groups participating in the apprenticeship system

One of the core outcomes expected of the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency is to have a system that will successfully attract and retain more individuals from diverse groups. In 2015, the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency will change our data systems to collect baseline data on the number of women, African Nova Scotians, immigrants, Aboriginal peoples, and differently-abled persons who are currently participating in the system.





