The Way Forward on WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
Our Vision

The Way Forward on Workforce Development is the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador’s plan for strengthening the province’s workforce, and supporting a productive, knowledge-based economy.

Newfoundland and Labrador is competing for talent nationally and globally. As the provincial economy evolves, the province must determine how our population and labour supply will meet existing labour demands, as well as those of the future.

Through collaboration with industry, labour, and education sectors, government has committed to continued investment to grow the provincial economy, including sustainable employment opportunities that are matched with a skilled workforce. This growth requires access to reliable and up-to-date labour market information that can help people make informed decisions.

The Way Forward on Workforce Development identifies labour market conditions and dynamics in the province, including challenges related to a vast geography, declining population, particularly in more rural and remote areas, and an aging workforce.

The plan considers the unique employment needs of Indigenous people, persons with disabilities, youth, older workers, women and newcomers to the province. We will specifically focus on these needs so we can identify and address barriers to employment and increase labour market participation for those who are underrepresented in the workforce.

The Way Forward on Workforce Development is a five-year action plan. It will prepare Newfoundland and Labrador for future labour market opportunities by identifying anticipated skills gaps. We will work together to address training needs and build recruitment and retention strategies to address those gaps.
Understanding Provincial Demographics and Labour Market Dynamics

Newfoundland and Labrador is made up of many small regions, each with its own unique profile of demographics, community dynamics, economic demands and pressures. Our plan for building strong and healthy labour markets in Newfoundland and Labrador acknowledges the unique characteristics and community dynamics of each of these regions.

Newfoundland and Labrador has a diverse economy consisting of many industries that service local, provincial, national, and international needs. In total, there are almost 16,000 businesses, ranging in size from a single person to over 500 employees (with almost 98 per cent of businesses having less than 100 employees).

Human resource challenges can differ depending on business size. For instance, smaller businesses often have more limited resources than larger ones, making important labour market activities such as recruitment and upskilling more difficult. Regardless of differences, all employers in Newfoundland and Labrador need people that can meet their changing demands and emerging opportunities.
Future Labour Demand

Government’s latest occupation projections, released by the Department of Finance in August 2019, forecast that the main factor affecting employment opportunities in Newfoundland and Labrador over the next decade will be attrition, mostly from retirements. As a result, approximately 62,000 job openings are forecast from 2019-28. Annual employment openings are anticipated to be highest in 2019 and 2024 but will remain high during the forecast period out to 2028.

Separate from attrition, job openings due to new labour market demands are anticipated in sales and service; natural resources, agriculture and related production; and manufacturing and utilities. While contraction is expected in construction-related occupations over this period, this will be countered by opportunities created due to higher levels of attrition in the trades and related occupational groupings, as workers exit the workforce.

With over 62,000 job openings forecasted for the next decade, access to a strong foundation of education, skills and experience will be required for individuals to take advantage of these opportunities.

Sector Growth and Diversification

Government has initiated a number of activities in recent years to support sector growth and diversification, including:

- Bringing a wide range of industry and education stakeholders together with government to discuss sector challenges and determine future actions to address these challenges;
- Sector-specific human resource research activities;
- Greater career exploration programming within the kindergarten to grade 12 (K-12) educational system to better align with future industry demands;
- Initiatives related to immigration, education, and adult literacy to increase and strengthen the province’s available labour supply for future labour demands;
- Actions to build upon the quality, availability, and benefits of labour market information; and
- Steps to support the role of the community sector in improving residents’ labour market outcomes while also contributing to economic development.
Government’s focus is not only on preparing for future forecasted opportunities, but also creating new, unrealized opportunities. For example, government has recently embarked on a provincial economic review, targeting key sectors and identifying priority business opportunities and markets; as well as established the Cabinet Committee on Jobs, working with the aquaculture, agriculture, oil and gas, technology, mining, forestry and community sectors to stimulate new business activity and create new jobs.

The Way Forward on Workforce Development will build upon these important pieces of work and implement further actions that complement these ongoing activities.

Future Labour Supply

For an economy to flourish, it must have enough workers (labour supply) to meet labour demands. Workers must have the necessary skills to carry out the work required in their occupation, industry, or workplace. This assortment of skills can be generated through a number of different pathways, including K-12, post-secondary education systems, and short-term training.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians continue to seek education and training, as shown by the increase in the percentage of people with post-secondary education.

![Chart showing educational attainment in Newfoundland and Labrador for 2006 and 2016](chart.png)

Source: 2006 and 2016 Census, Statistics Canada
education over the past decade compared to the decreasing percentage with less than high school. This indicates that a larger percentage of Newfoundland and Labrador's population aged 15 and older are already better prepared to work in the labour market than in the past.

Today, challenges related to labour supply are more focused on the match between the skills employers need and those which employees bring to their workplaces. Industry representatives frequently note that even new graduates do not always possess the skills required to make their operations successful. This challenge is often identified as the difference between employees' existing hard skills compared to their soft skills.

While hard skills remain necessary for any position, employers are increasingly looking for job applicants with effective soft skills that can be transferred easily from one workplace to another to help these workplaces compete and thrive in today's labour market.

**Hard skills** involve specific knowledge and abilities (e.g., technical proficiencies in trades, mathematics, or procedures for offering medical care).

**Soft skills** focus on attributes and personality traits which can be used to foster greater learning and productivity. Communication, problem-solving, teamwork capacity, and flexibility are all examples of soft skills.

Initiatives such as government's Business Innovation Agenda recognize the value of key skills in meeting industry needs and creating a strong economy. Rapid changes in the economy, and the impact on skill requirements, mean that new approaches are needed to prepare Newfoundland and Labrador's labour supply for the future and maximize labour market potential.

**Increasing the Future Labour Supply**

Efforts to grow Newfoundland and Labrador's supply must include increasing labour market participation of immigrants, women, persons with disabilities, Indigenous people, youth, and older workers. Increasing participation rates for these groups will create benefits for both the community sector and regional economic development.
**Immigrants**
According to Statistics Canada, the number of immigrants living in Newfoundland and Labrador increased from 8,380 in 2006 to 14,780 in 2018. In 2018, Newfoundland and Labrador attracted 1,530 permanent residents, representing 90 per cent of The Way Forward on Immigration in Newfoundland and Labrador target of 1,700 permanent residents annually by 2022.

Newfoundland and Labrador's Immigration Action Plan outlines key actions over five years to build upon recent immigration successes, including a focus on better immigration services and outcomes.

**Women**
A significant gap remains between the labour market participation rates of men and women, especially in some fields, such as the trades. In 2018, while women had a lower unemployment rate than men (11% compared to 16%), there was also a larger number not in the labour force (101,000 women compared to 81,200 men).
Increasing the number of women in the labour market requires a better understanding of the barriers they experience and how these barriers impact their involvement in the workforce. For instance, work-family balance, as well as child care availability, are often cited as barriers to women's full participation.

**Persons with Disabilities**

Persons with disabilities have been traditionally underrepresented in the labour market. In 2016, just under half (29,360) were working out of this group's total labour force (63,550). Participation rates for this group are also lower than for the general population (54% versus 81% for those without disabilities) while the unemployment rate is higher (15% versus 13%).

Research has noted a range of barriers affecting persons with disabilities' involvement with the workforce. To address these barriers, future approaches must consider: earlier intervention, greater transition planning, respectful workplaces, individualized programming, and a coordinated employment and training system that is flexible and responsive to the diverse needs of persons with disabilities.
Indigenous People
The average age of the Indigenous population is significantly lower than the average age of the total provincial population (37 versus 44). According to Statistics Canada’s most recent Census in 2016, those who self-identified as Indigenous in Newfoundland and Labrador made up more than 17,000 employed persons in the labour force; however, the Indigenous population also had an unemployment rate higher than that of the total population (21% compared to 16%). This suggests that there are likely barriers to the full participation of Indigenous people in the provincial labour market.

Youth
Between 2008 and 2018, the number of youth (those 15 to 24 years old) in the labour force either working or available to work decreased by 12% (36,100 to 31,700), and their employment levels (those working) decreased by 12% (29,100 to 25,700). This is due in part to a fewer number of young people in the provincial population. This group is an essential part of the future provincial labour force, and it is important to be aware of any challenges youth are experiencing in the economy and how to best support them.

Older Workers
Employment among older workers (55+) has increased by 45% between 2008 and 2018 (34,300 to 49,700). At the same time, however, the unemployment rate for this group has also increased (from 15% to almost 17%, representing just under 10,000 unemployed older workers available to work in 2018).

We need to focus on opportunities to encourage and support those unemployed older workers. Barriers to successful attachment could include the increased need for digital literacy, combined with employers’ lack of knowledge or experience with older workers, as well as general employer perceptions regarding this group.

Supporting Organizations and Initiatives
As part of its labour market efforts, government is engaged with a variety of organizations that support workforce development throughout the country. Continued engagement with these organizations will help the Provincial Government to accomplish the actions outlined in this plan.
Workforce Innovation Centre
In 2017, government established the Newfoundland and Labrador Workforce Innovation Centre at College of the North Atlantic's Corner Brook campus. The centre's goal is to support research, testing, and sharing of ideas and models of innovation in workforce development that will positively impact people's employability, entrepreneurship options, and attachment to the workforce in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Future Skills Centre
In 2018, the Federal Government announced $225 million over four years, and $75 million per year thereafter, for the Future Skills initiative. Ryerson University, the Conference Board of Canada and Blueprint were selected to partner and operate Canada's new Future Skills Centre, which will fund projects that develop, test and measure new approaches to skills assessment and development on both national and regional levels.
Labour Market Information Council
Established in 2017, with federal, provincial and territorial representation, the Labour Market Information Council’s goal is to improve the timeliness, readability, and accessibility of labour market information in Canada and to facilitate decision-making by employers, workers, job seekers, academics, policy makers, educators, career practitioners, students, parents, and under-represented groups.

Generating Skills: Education and Training in Newfoundland and Labrador

To meet labour market demands, workers must have the right mix of hard and soft skills. The provincial educational system generates a wide variety of skills needed in the labour market, including basic foundational skills for learning (K-12) to specialized skills (university, college, private training institutions), as well as other short-term training opportunities. For this reason, the education system remains one of the primary generators of skilled labour supply.
Pathways to Skills Development

- K-12 education - instrumental in developing a strong foundation of essential skills for future learning success.
- Post-secondary education or training streams – university, college, private training, and other institutions that help develop more specialized skills.
- Short-term training options - offered by employers or through other supporting organizations (catering to both technical and non-technical skills).
- Personal experience and related individual endeavours – trade qualifiers in apprenticeable trades, knowledge accumulated through personal online study.

Economic and labour market requirements are changing, and employees can update their skills and adapt to the workplace to increase their opportunities for employment. Options for upskilling and lifelong learning are becoming more important to strengthen our labour supply and help people thrive in the modern economy.

The public post-secondary education review, announced in 2018, will help ensure our public institutions are well positioned to meet the educational and personal needs and expectations of students into the future, responsive to emerging labour market demands and diversification opportunities, and continue to contribute to the province’s growth.

The Way Forward on Workforce Development Together

Through research and dialogue with stakeholders, this plan is a collaborative approach to respond to labour market challenges and prepare for future opportunities. The Way Forward on Workforce Development will accomplish this through action items that contribute to three main goals:

Better prepare individuals for skills and training needs, by:

- Placing greater focus on increasing the number of available workers with skills that are in demand (e.g., groups such as newcomers, women, persons with disabilities, Indigenous people, youth, and older workers);
- Emphasizing research and focus on skills and occupations (e.g., both hard skills and soft skills, including those related to successful use of current and emerging technology);
- Building a strong foundation of basic skills and lifelong learning; and
- Developing alternate work and training pathways to maximize the workforce’s capacity to respond to rapidly changing labour force needs.
Better inform and share labour market information, by:

- Making more relevant labour market information available that better meets the needs of different users;
- Emphasizing skills research and its applications to the labour market;
- Increasing investment in efforts that make labour market information more responsive to changes in the labour market, including information that is more accurate, relevant, timely, easily understood, and accessible; and
- Establishing new, effective ways to deliver labour market information to students in the K-12 system.

Better support workers and employers to create matches in order to meet the skills demands of the labour market, including:

- Increasing collaboration to better understand regional characteristics;
- Increasing collaboration to better understand industry requirements and challenges;
- Increasing collaboration to better understand areas of demand and the impact of demographics on these demands;
- Building a stronger understanding of the role of technology in making businesses productive, innovative and competitive;
- Emphasizing job processes to help ensure that worker knowledge is maintained in an organization (e.g., mentorship, succession planning); and
- Increasing collaboration between businesses and education providers (K-12 and post-secondary).

Focus Areas and Action Items

The Way Forward on Workforce Development is a five-year plan, with a number of initiatives identified to commence in the short-term (2019-20), and a number to commence in the medium to long-term (2020-24). Appendix A includes a list of short and medium to long-term actions, and who is responsible for leading their implementation.

As labour markets and priority areas continually evolve, this plan will be revisited annually to ensure it remains current and relevant. Significant efforts are already underway to support both human resources activities and workforce development, including the development of labour market recruitment and retention strategies through the Cabinet Committee on Jobs. Activities stemming from The Way Forward
on Workforce Development aim to complement such efforts, supporting and expanding on them where appropriate.

Four priority focus areas have been identified for The Way Forward on Workforce Development:

1) Engaging Locally
2) Attracting Talent
3) Being Better Informed
4) Closing Skills Gaps

Engaging Locally

Through our engagement with key stakeholders including employers, labour, public and private post-secondary training institutions, K-12 school system, community sector, and across government, we heard the need for regular interaction and discussion on labour market needs and priorities.

To accomplish this, we will host a series of labour market forums to facilitate interactions and discussions. These events will allow for both the collection of feedback from stakeholders and the dissemination of labour market information.
1. Establish regular meetings with stakeholders in public and private post-secondary institutions as well as the K-12 school system to discuss priority labour market issues and programming needs.

2. Host Minister’s labour market roundtable with employers, labour, public and private training institutions, K-12 school system, community sector, and government.

3. Engage in discussions on how stakeholders can influence and support career-related activities in the secondary school system, including the redeveloped career education curricula.

4. Determine key labour market information needs of stakeholders and engage in solutions for enhanced information sharing and partnerships.

5. Conduct research and develop a pilot project on how to increase the flexibility and responsiveness of post-secondary education programs for multiple transitions in and out of learning across a person’s lifespan.

We have heard from employers that there is a continued need for human resources, productivity and succession planning supports for small and medium-sized employers, as many employers struggle to perform these functions without dedicated resources.

6. Develop an online human resource tool for small and medium-sized employers to support recruitment and retention efforts.

7. Work with stakeholders to develop modules to support employers in managing diverse workplaces; including supporting newcomers, persons with disabilities, Indigenous people, women, youth and older workers in achieving their full potential.

8. Help employers navigate apprenticeship training and employment requirements through online resource tools.

To enhance discussions and information sharing locally, we will establish regional workforce development committees, which will serve as planning platforms for localized labour market priorities and initiatives.

9. Develop regionally tailored workforce development action plans, including: development and dissemination of labour market information; identifying priority focus areas for training and skills development; and collaborative use of labour market programs and services, including immigration related supports.
Leveraging the newly established regional workforce development committees and in collaboration with the Office of Immigration and Multiculturalism, immigration will be promoted to employers as a solution for hard-to-fill positions, employer’s successes will be spotlighted, and information shared on best practices, such as cultural awareness and competency workshops.

10. Develop a presentation series to highlight immigration as an option for filling skills gaps, spotlight employer successes, and share information on best practices.

11. Increase private sector access to cultural awareness and competency training.

Attracting Talent

Addressing labour market challenges and opportunities facing target labour market groups requires focused engagement. We will engage with underrepresented groups, including: Indigenous people, persons with disabilities, youth, older workers, women, and newcomers to the province.

12. Host an engagement session, coordinated by the Workforce Innovation Centre, with underrepresented groups, exploring labour market challenges and opportunities, as well as research projects to support improved employment outcomes.

13. Work with stakeholders on a pilot to provide enhanced employment supports to clients to remove barriers to employment.

14. Pilot enhanced wage subsidy supports for income support clients, to encourage employer involvement in hiring and increased subsidy and development supports.

15. Identify actions stemming from the work-family policies study\(^1\) completed during 2018-19.

16. Identify actions stemming from labour market practices and products for persons with disabilities study\(^2\) completed during 2018-19.

17. Establish an economic immigration-focused ideas lab within the Workforce Innovation Centre to identify practical approaches to facilitate newcomer participation in the provincial labour market.

18. Enter into partnership with external organizations to manage micro-funding (loans or grants) for internationally trained professionals to challenge exams in their field.

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**Being Better Informed**

We need labour market information that is accurate, relevant, timely, easily understood, and accessible. We will enhance existing labour market information offerings, including government’s labour market information website, as well as develop new products such as occupation and industry profiles.

19. Develop a framework to support sector specific career and education information, including standardized templates and format.

20. Develop provincial career profiles for priority sectors such as aquaculture, agriculture, technology, forestry, mining, oil and gas, and the community sector.

Ensuring students are supported when making informed career decisions, through the delivery of labour market information at different ages and stages of their education, is of continued importance to our government. This will include building upon the work of the Education Action Plan, focusing on priority sectors, in order to improve the career education curricula.

21. Develop sector-specific labour market information for inclusion in the career education curricula.

22. Dedicate resources to work with the K-12 school system to provide relevant career development supports.

Our clients continue to struggle with understanding the availability, features, and benefits of government programs and services. We must do a better job in promoting and providing access to these programs and services. We will work to ensure information is readily available and accessible to clients.

23. Create program champions within provincial government departments and regions who can serve as an initial gateway to information on available programs and services.

24. Explore the creation of a virtual support that assists in matching users (e.g., employers, job seekers, non-profits) with available programs and services through government’s Digital by Design initiative.
Closing Skills Gaps

Exploring how technology is impacting business locally, while examining upskilling options which can strengthen basic skills to better meet the changing operational needs of the workplace, is a current area of focus for many sectors and industries.

25. Engage with the Future Skills Centre and the Newfoundland and Labrador Workforce Innovation Centre on initiatives to explore how technology is impacting local businesses and changing skills requirements.

Significant focus will be placed on understanding the human resource challenges of youth, older workers, Indigenous people, and women job seekers, as well as priority sectors. We will support research examining skills gaps, barriers to employment, and how to address both gaps and barriers.

26. Support underemployed and unemployed apprentices and journeypersons by transitioning them into related trades with ongoing labour market demands.

27. Through the federally funded Women in Trades program, in collaboration with the Atlantic Apprenticeship Authorities, develop programs and resources to address gender bias and build cultural competence in a construction trades context. These resources will be available to workplace partners, equity seeking organizations and other stakeholders interested in changing the outcomes of female apprentices entering male-dominated work environments.

28. Research local skills needs of youth entering the workforce for the first time, as well as mid-career to older workers, especially in light of changing technologies and the increase of social media in today's business environment.

29. Research and pilot experiential learning and entrepreneurial supports for Indigenous women re-entering the workforce.

Employer involvement and collaboration in training is essential. Post-secondary institutions and employers will be encouraged to explore joint curriculum development, including introduction of new sector-specific programming, work-integrated learning, industry-led reskilling, as well as mentorship opportunities.

30. Expand Student Mentorship Program to seven priority sectors (agriculture, aquaculture, technology, aerospace, advanced manufacturing, forestry, and mining).
31. Work with priority sectors to upskill workers, including those industries that require new skill sets to adapt to new technologies.
32. Support employers through an individualized approach focusing on refreshing journeypersons’ skills where they have not been used to full potential but are required for current and emerging labour market demands.
33. Support employers in priority sectors to provide experiential learning opportunities to students, including adult learners through increased work-term opportunities.
34. Provide in-house train the trainer and work-integrated learning opportunities to support ongoing employer training needs.
35. Partner with national labour organizations to avail of their virtual and augmented learning platforms to support apprentices in acquiring the necessary skills to become Red Seal certified.
36. Work with College of the North Atlantic to pilot the delivery of an Entrepreneurship for Trades program with the focus of providing graduates of an Industrial Trades program with the knowledge and skills necessary to start and successfully operate their own business.
## Appendix A

**Short-term: to commence during year one (2019-20)**

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## Medium to Long-term: to commence during years two to five (2020-24)

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