



# **Government of Newfoundland and Labrador Canada-NL Workforce Development Agreement 2020-21 Annual Plan**

## **Labour Market Transfer Agreements Overview**

The Government of Canada provides approximately \$3 billion annually in funding to provinces and territories (P/Ts) to deliver a range of training and employment programming for Canadians. The programs and services funded under labour market transfer agreements are designed by P/Ts to meet the needs of a wide variety of clients, including unemployed workers eligible for Employment Insurance (EI), unemployed workers not eligible for EI, low-skilled employed workers, persons with disabilities, older workers, and other underrepresented groups.

The latest generation of labour market transfer agreements support flexibility in meeting the evolving needs of employers and individuals, including expanded eligibility and increased flexibility for employer sponsored training under Labour Market Partnerships, Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA). Through the Workforce Development Agreement (WDA) we continue to respond to local labour market needs and promote better outcomes for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

As industry and workplace demands evolve, funding provided annually to the provinces and territories under the labour market transfer agreements continues to assist Newfoundlanders and Labradorians seeking employment opportunities. This is achieved by providing clients with more prospects to upgrade their skills, gain experience, start their own business, and plan their careers.

## **Note on the Annual Plan**

Information on Newfoundland and Labrador's labour market is collected from numerous sources, including accessible federal and provincial information on labour market trends, the economy and population statistics.

## **Provincial Labour Market Overview and Conditions**

Newfoundland and Labrador is a place of contrasts: rich resources and innovative people, but also persistent demographic, employment and health status challenges. Newfoundland and Labrador is made up of many small regions, each with its own demographic profile, community dynamics, economic demands and pressures.

Our province 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 one to over 500 employees (with almost 98 per cent of businesses having less than 100 employees).

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 forecasted for 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.

Aside 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.

Through collaboration with industry, labour, community and education sectors, our government has committed to ongoing investment to grow the provincial economy, including sustainable employment opportunities that are matched with a skilled workforce.

Addressing these different challenges requires a multi-pronged set of solutions that consider the interrelated impacts of our economic, social and fiscal policy decisions.

- In November 2016, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador unveiled the first phase of a comprehensive set of policy actions, *The Way Forward: A Vision for Sustainability and Growth*. This strategic plan focused on rapidly implementing initiatives to reduce spending and to support economic growth through four broad objectives: a more efficient public sector, a stronger economic foundation, better services, and better outcomes to promote a healthy and prosperous province.
- Released in March 2017, *The Way Forward: Realizing our Potential* outlined our province's commitments for fiscal year 2017-18 and focuses on actions to reverse negative socio-economic indicators that prevent economic growth and drive up public expenditures.

- Released in April 2018, The Way Forward: Building for Our Future continued the work carried out under the previous two phases to further strengthen our economic foundation and improve public-sector efficiency, while improving services and outcomes for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Through The Way Forward, Newfoundland and Labrador has adopted a government-wide approach to improving outcomes and growing the economy in a manner that facilitates the inherent potential of collaboration.

## **The Workforce Development Agreement**

Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador share a common vision to support the employment and training needs of the Canadian labour market. This is achieved through an integrated, client-centered, outcomes-driven, employment and training model which is responsive to the evolving needs of individuals, employers, and communities.

The consolidation and replacement of the Canada Job Fund (CJF), Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities (LMAPD), and the Targeted Initiative for Older Workers (TIOW) Agreements allows P/Ts to:

- Continue offering programs similar to those that were offered under the previous transfers, but also have the flexibility to adapt these models or create new supports to meet local labour markets' needs;
- Provide improved administrative efficiency and better alignment with the LMDA;
- Remain the primary responsibility of the P/Ts with respect to the design and delivery of the employment and training programs funded under this Agreement;
- Provide eligible clients access to employment and training programming that addresses critical points along the path to full participation in the labour market;
- Highlight the importance of continuous improvement based on strengthened labour market information, sharing best practices, and fostering innovation;
- Provide transparency and accountability in the use of funding and the public reporting of outcomes under this Agreement; and
- Contribute to the development of performance measurement systems to track outcomes and demonstrate results to inform program and policy development.

Objectives of the agreement include:

- Fostering inclusive labour market participation by helping individuals access labour market opportunities and by supporting successful integration of individuals facing obstacles to finding and maintaining employment;
- Alignment of skills with labour market needs to help workers and employers access the skills required to adapt to the changing requirements of jobs and the labour market, and by encouraging employer involvement in training and continuous learning opportunities for workers; and
- Creation of efficient labour markets by supporting strong and responsive labour market infrastructure to allow for timely and effective labour market programming, which contributes to improved productivity and economic growth.

The following principles will guide the agreement:

- Client-centered: Flexibility to meet the needs of unemployed, underemployed, and precariously employed individuals; to meet the needs of employers using the best available labour market information; and minimize barriers in accessing programs and supports;
- Inclusion: Support underrepresented groups who have challenges entering the labour market;
- Outcomes-focused: Track measurable milestones and targets, and develop ways to measure different forms of progress (e.g., improved employability);
- Flexibility and Responsiveness: Flexibility to address local labour market priorities and respond to emerging issues;
- Innovation: Identify and explore collaborative models for innovation, including continuous sharing of best practices and lessons learned; and
- Engagement: Collaboration and partnership between federal and P/T governments; engagement with and services through Indigenous partners; consultation and engagement with stakeholders; and coordination to enhance program complementarity.

Under the WDA, Newfoundland and Labrador provides employment and training supports to eligible beneficiaries to improve their ability to perform their current job, prepare for a new job, enhance their labour market participation, help develop the skills needed to find and keep a job, improve their labour market outcomes, and develop their workforce.

Programs and services may include, but are not limited to, those that support the following activities:

- Skills training, ranging from basic skills such as literacy and numeracy to more advanced skills training;
- On-the-job training and workplace-based skills upgrading;
- Group interventions and job readiness assistance;
- Financial assistance and benefits such as grants and living allowance related to the delivery of an eligible program;
- Employment counselling and services;
- Labour market connections such as services that facilitate matching supply and demand;
- Employment opportunities or experiential learning and development on the job; and
- Employer-sponsored training.



## **The Way Forward on Workforce Development**

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.

On November 15, 2019, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador released The Way Forward on Workforce Development, our plan for strengthening the province's workforce, and supporting a productive, knowledge-based economy. It is a five-year action plan which will prepare Newfoundland and Labrador for future labour market opportunities, by identifying anticipated skills gaps, addressing training needs, and building recruitment and retention strategies to address those gaps.

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

1. Engaging Locally;
2. Attracting Talent;
3. Being Better Informed; and
4. Closing Skills Gaps.

Our Province'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.

As labour markets and priority areas continually evolve, the 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.

### **Development and Delivery of Programs**

While there are differences between client types, and programs and services delivered, results of the previous three agreements (CJF, LMAPD and the TIOW) combined to form the WDA have consistently demonstrated positive outcomes and impacts on clients, employers, and communities in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Investments made through these agreements have enabled Newfoundland and Labrador to capitalize on a variety of economic and training opportunities leading to job creation and growth. Evidence demonstrates that clients develop skills, get jobs, and maintain employment as a result of their participation in employment and skills training programs.

Newfoundland and Labrador's program and service delivery models contribute to a stronger economic and labour environment by:

- Ensuring the province has the skilled workforce and highly educated graduates to participate in and contribute to their communities;
- Strengthening the workforce through education, training, financial and social supports;
- Equipping the province's workforce to meet current and future provincial labour market demands;
- Providing guidance and support to employers to recruit and retain the necessary workforces to grow their businesses;
- Offering guidance and support to residents in order to achieve the greatest benefit from the opportunities that exist in the province;
- Enhancing client case management;
- Supporting residents with career decisions and securing and retaining employment; and
- Providing guidance and support for the development of policy and procedures on employment and training programs.

**NOTE:** COVID-19 continues to impact program and service delivery, as well as priority areas of focus for 2020-21. See Annex A for an overview of service delivery impacts and implications in Newfoundland and Labrador.



### **WDA Investment Plan and Program Expenditure Summary**

Funding is allocated for programming delivered through Department of Immigration, Skills and Labour, Human Resource Secretariat, Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture, and College of the North Atlantic.

<b>Workforce Development Agreement (WDA) - Investment Plan 2020-21</b>				
<b>Program/Service</b>	<b>Focus Area</b>	<b>Target Population</b>	<b>Program/Service Description</b>	<b>Planned Investment</b>
Employment Development Supports and Services	Individual Supports	Underemployed, unemployed	Expands access to employment development programming to provide eligible, unemployed individuals with a range of supports and services to assist them to prepare for, find, and maintain employment. Includes Adult Basic Education, pre-employment supports, short-term training and work supports.	\$1,362,100
Apprenticeship Wage Subsidy (AWS) Program	Employment Partnerships	Apprentices	The AWS program provides apprentices with the opportunity to gain work experience and progress to journeyperson certification by providing a wage subsidy to employers.	\$2,000,000
Wage Subsidy Coordinator	Employment Partnerships	Apprentices, women in non-traditional occupations	Supports the delivery of Apprentice Wage Subsidy Agreements for women in non-traditional occupations	\$200,000
Job Grant Program	Training, Supports, Employment Partnerships and Building Knowledge	Underemployed, unemployed	Financial assistance to private and non-profit employers to offset the costs of providing training to new or current employees.	\$2,060,000
Transitions to Work Program	Training and Employment Partnerships	Individuals in receipt of Income Support	Supports individuals in receipt of Income Support prepare for the transition to the labour market by providing in-class training followed by intensive job search.	\$600,000
Student Mentorship Program (SMP)	Employment Partnerships	Unemployed youth	The SMP brings students and mentors together for the opportunity to practice industry-specific, transferable, and	\$350,000

Workforce Development Agreement (WDA) - Investment Plan 2020-21				
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			self-management skills to improve the student's chances of future employment. The program provides valuable work experience that will facilitate future labour market participation. Employers will match the student with an industry professional connected to the student's field of study or area of interest.	
Labour Market Integration for Newcomers	Employment Partnerships	Newcomers	Provides funding to support employers, employer or employee associations, community groups and communities in developing and implementing labour market strategies and activities for dealing with labour force adjustments and meeting human resource requirements.	\$400,000
Supports to individuals to further their education and training	Training and Supports	Underemployed, unemployed, apprentices	A range of employment supports designed to provide funding to support various benefits and financial supports to clients in continuing their apprenticeship or educational assessments.	\$180,000
Permanent Closure of Fish Processing Facilities	Supports and Employment Partnerships	Unemployed	Supports the labour market reintegration of fish plant workers affected by permanent closure of their processing facility	\$500,000
Office of Employment Equity for Persons with Disabilities	Supports and Employment Partnerships	Persons with Disabilities	<p>The Office has a mandate to increase the number of persons with disabilities employed in the public service through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Opening Doors Program which establishes full time, permanent positions designated for persons with disabilities and limited to members of this employment equity group;</li> </ul>	\$1,108,800

Workforce Development Agreement (WDA) - Investment Plan 2020-21				
Program/Service	Focus Area	Target Population	Program/Service Description	Planned Investment
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Student Summer Employment Program which provides career-related work experience for post-secondary students with disabilities for their future entry into the labour market; and,</li> <li>Career support services which provide practical job search and career counseling assistance to persons with disabilities registered with the Office.</li> </ul>	
Post-Secondary Programs (General Vocational)	Training and Supports	Persons with Disabilities	In cooperation with the public college system, dedicated College of the North Atlantic staff, via selected campuses, assist persons with disabilities through the process of acquiring a post-secondary education.	\$1,537,885
Grants to Community Organizations to Support Persons with Disabilities	Training, Supports, Employment Partnerships and Building Knowledge	Persons with Disabilities	Funding provided to community-based organizations to support opportunities for persons with disabilities to prepare for, attain and maintain employment.	\$1,296,300
School to Work Transitions	Training and Employment Partnerships	Persons with Disabilities	Provides high school students with intellectual disabilities the support necessary to assist with making the transition from school to work by providing access to after school or summer work opportunities with the assistance of a job trainer.	\$250,000
Supported Employment Program	Employment Partnerships	Persons with Intellectual Disabilities	Community Employment Corporations offer supported employment services to adults with intellectual disabilities to allow these individuals to participate in meaningful, integrated, employment within their communities. Supports for	\$7,630,100

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			individuals are provided to ensure the success of the individual in the employment setting and can include support up to and including the provision of one-on-one support by a Job Trainer in the workplace.	
Training Services Program and Grants for High Needs Students	Training	Persons with Disabilities	Provides supports and services to eligible individuals with disabilities to pursue post-secondary training as part of a collaboratively developed employment plan.	\$200,000
Work Related Disability Supports	Supports	Persons with Disabilities	Responds to the disability related support needs of adults with disabilities who wish to participate in or maintain employment.	\$50,000
WDA Administration			Operating expenses and funds for system upgrade to meet reporting requirements.	\$669,800
<b>Total Investment</b>				<b>\$20,394,985*</b>

**\*Note: With Federal revenue of \$12,719,511.**

## **Stakeholder Engagement**

The Department of Immigration, Skills and Labour works to ensure the province has a highly educated and skilled workforce to meet evolving labour market demands. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador regularly engages with a broad array of general public and client groups to inform policy and budget priorities and to ensure programs and services are effective and relevant. This includes creating and sustaining a collaborative climate which is conducive to economic growth, competitiveness and prosperity.

Partnerships and collaboration with the business sector will continue this year as the Provincial Government works with the mining, forestry, and community sectors to generate new economic activity and foster job creation. This work will follow the new model of engagement established in previous years with the province's aquaculture, agriculture, and technology sectors.

Much of this work has been coordinated through the Cabinet Committee on Jobs where the government of Newfoundland and Labrador partners with industry in joint decision making aimed at stimulating new business activity and creating new private sector jobs for residents throughout the province.

The 2020-21 LMDA and WDA annual plans have been informed via ongoing strategic planning and information sharing with key partners as part of normal program and policy development. Key partners include:

- Employers such as Verafin, Anaconda Mining, DF Barnes Fabrication, Corner Brook Pulp and Paper, and Newco Metals;
- Community groups such as Community Sector Council, Vera Perlin, Stella's Circle, Choices for Youth, and Supported Employment Newfoundland & Labrador;
- Official language minority representatives such as Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador (RDÉE TNL), and La Fédération des francophones de Terre-Neuve et du Labrador (FFTNL);
- Indigenous partners such as Labrador Aboriginal Training Partnership, St. John's Native Friendship Centre, and Nunatukavut Community Council;
- Labour organizations such as Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour, Fish, Food and Allied Workers, and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers;
- Business and industry associations such as Newfoundland and Labrador Construction Association, Community Business Development Corporations, Newfoundland and Labrador Employers Council, Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses, techNL, Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Agriculture, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters – Newfoundland and Labrador, and Newfoundland Aquaculture Industry Association;

- Educational institutions (private and public) such as Memorial University, Marine Institute, College of the North Atlantic, Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Career Colleges, Association of Building Trades Educational Colleges, and Academy Canada;
- Youth groups such as Premier's Youth Council, Conservation Corps, and St. John's Boys and Girls Club;
- Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, towns, and local service districts;
- Federal Government departments such as Employment and Social Development Canada, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada; and
- Other Provincial Government departments such as Departments of: Education; Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture; Industry, Energy and Technology; Children, Seniors and Social Development; and Executive Council.

Examples of engagement and other related activities that have informed the development of the annual planning process to date include:

- 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.
- Public Engagement and Planning Division - A unique and innovative Provincial Government entity, which engages the public in dialogue about sustainability issues and challenges, and supports collaboration between and among rural stakeholders including governments.
- Pre-Budget Consultations - As part of the budget process, the Department of Finance engages with people and organizations throughout Newfoundland and Labrador to help identify government spending priorities, and how to strike a balance between the province's financial situation and the need to deliver programs and services.
- The Way Forward on Adult Literacy - A five-year action plan developed through engagement with key stakeholders such as adult learners, adult literacy service providers, community organizations, public libraries, and Indigenous, industry, labour, and post-secondary education institutions. Supported by a \$60 million investment, the plan identifies 30 actions government and its partners will take to make sure Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have the opportunity to acquire and enhance these skills.

- The Way Forward on Workforce Development - Through the Way Forward, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador committed to the development of a Comprehensive Human Resource Plan to support sector diversification and foster a productive and knowledge-intensive economy.
- The Way Forward on Immigration - Launched in March 2017, the Immigration Action Plan outlines 39 actions Government is taking to achieve better outcomes in attracting and retaining skilled immigrants, as well as international students and graduates.
  - In April 2019, a further 24 new initiatives were launched from year three of the Immigration Action Plan. These 24 new initiatives further complement the 39 existing initiatives launched in 2017.
- The Way Forward Sector Specific Plans - As part of The Way Forward, industry and the Provincial Government have partnered, through the Cabinet Committee on Jobs, to support economic growth and foster private sector job creation.
  - Agriculture - The Provincial Government and the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Agriculture have jointly developed the Agriculture Sector Work Plan. It includes actions that each of the partners will take to achieve the collective goal of growing the agriculture industry and stimulating new private sector employment.
  - Aquaculture - The Provincial Government and the Newfoundland Aquaculture Industry Association have jointly developed the Aquaculture Sector Work Plan. The Aquaculture Sector Work Plan includes actions that each of the partners will take to achieve the collective goal of growing the aquaculture industry and stimulating new private sector employment.
  - Technology - The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, techNL, the Newfoundland and Labrador Environmental Industry Association, the Atlantic Canada Aerospace and Defense Association, and the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters Newfoundland and Labrador have led the development of the Technology Sector Work Plan.
  - Advance 2030 - A Plan for Growth in the Newfoundland and Labrador Oil and Gas Industry - The continued growth and development of Newfoundland and Labrador's oil and gas industry requires collaboration and the collective actions of governments, industry, labour, education, training and research institutions, and other stakeholders.
  - Mining The Future 2030 - A Plan for Growth in the Newfoundland and Labrador Mining Industry - Newfoundland and Labrador currently ranks fifth in Canada for value of mineral production and contributes 46 per cent of iron ore and 26 per cent of nickel nationally. Mining in Newfoundland and Labrador offers a variety of opportunities for careers requiring different levels of training and education. The future of our industry depends on educating, training, recruiting and retaining people, building technical and leadership skills, and strengthening Indigenous and women participation rates.
  - Forestry - The forestry sector work plan includes actions that each of the partners and other industry stakeholders will take to achieve the collective goal of growing the forest industry and stimulating new private sector employment.
  - Community - Often called the voluntary, non-profit sector, or social profit sector, this work plan includes actions that each of a number of public and community sector partners will take, individually and jointly, to achieve the collective goal of recognizing and strengthening the social and economic contributions of the community sector.



- Autism Action Plan - Developed with the Autism Action Council, representatives include individuals and families with lived experience, the Autism Society of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Newfoundland and Labrador Association for Community Living, health care and education professionals, as well as the departments of: Health and Community Services; Children, Seniors and Social Development; Education; Immigration, Skills and Labour; and Justice and Public Safety. The plan will provide increased services and supports for individuals living with autism spectrum disorder. The Autism Action Plan has 46 actions which will be completed over the short, medium, and long-term. The majority of actions will be completed by March 2021.

**Engagement Themes:**

The Department of Immigration, Skills and Labour has participated in numerous engagement activities towards the development of the various phases of The Way Forward, including specific to the Immigration Action Plan, the Adult Literacy Plan, and the Comprehensive Human Resource Plan (now The Way Forward on Workforce Development), through the activities of the Workforce Innovation Centre, as well as through day to day program and service delivery. A number of key themes and focus areas have emerged specific to workforce development, including:

- Increased collaboration and partnerships;
- Continued emphasis on immigration and attracting talent;
- Improved access to labour market information;
- Closing skills gaps through skills development and mentorship opportunities;
- Enhanced awareness and access to programs and services; and
- Promotion of inclusive and diverse workplaces.

## **ANNEX A – COVID-19 Implications and Perspectives**

The ongoing impacts and disruptions arising from COVID-19 have affected millions of Canadians and their jobs, with some regions, sectors, companies, and workers hit especially hard. While all areas of Canada have been affected by the economic fallout of COVID-19, the situation in Newfoundland and Labrador is particularly challenging and distinct.

Prior to the emergence of COVID 19, Newfoundland and Labrador was and continues to face challenges associated with fiscal realities, anticipation of declines in labour force due to an aging population and out-migration, and a labour force which is spread across a large geography.

COVID-19 has affected many key industries in Newfoundland and Labrador, with significant impacts not yet fully understood. These disruptions continue to impact the oil and gas, hospitality, and retail sectors. In some cases, the impacts are compounding existing drivers of change such as the use of digital technologies, the automated creation and application of technology to monitor and control the production and delivery of products and services, outsourcing and offshoring. These effects are reshaping the landscape of skills demands with potential far-reaching consequences for workers, employers, and overall labour market.

In order to better understand the long term impacts of COVID-19 and develop plans for recovery we must first acknowledge challenges such as overall job losses, the ability for individuals to be rehired and therefore re-enter the workforce, job search (effectively connecting people with jobs and employers with people), and the provision of opportunities to inform, retrain, and reskill for maximum relevance and impact as the province seeks to recover.

### **Service Delivery**

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, access to employment assistance was traditionally a combination of online, telephone, and in-person delivery structure to access services. However, the primary engagement tool for individuals was in-person services. The pandemic shut down brought forth challenges in program and service delivery with the suspension of in-person access for the general public and working from home arrangements for staff. All program delivery models had to be reviewed and revised to accommodate an individual's ability to access a complete, alternative, on-line delivery process for both internal and external stakeholders. The transition included online forms; policy and procedural change; and a virtual approach to case management. Notably, post-secondary training institutions in Newfoundland and Labrador were nimble to transition to online courses. This permitted many individuals to continue studies towards their employment goals during these unprecedented times.

In May 2020, in a response to COVID-19, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador implemented the Students Supporting Communities program under the Canada – Newfoundland and Labrador Workforce Development Agreement. The intent of the program was to assist community organizations to create summer employment for youth to help seniors and other vulnerable groups facing social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic. This program has had a number of positive effects, projects included:

- Establishing an innovative friendly visiting program for seniors while respecting social distancing regulations.
- Implementing a delivery program to include groceries, medications and other essential items.
- Creating how-to videos to order prescriptions online.
- Teaching seniors and those with special needs how to use technology via videos or socially distanced visits. For those with no access to electronic devices, a schedule would be set to loan a device to the individual so they could reach out to family and friends.

*The Students Supporting Communities Program provided Madison and Jaden employment to assist with garden work, delivering of groceries, and helping people stay connected with family and friends. After hiring, they helped develop new ideas for the program, including having young children become pen pals with senior citizens in the region and providing the seniors with added human contact, something that's often been in short supply during the pandemic.*