



# Business Plan

2020–21

*Department of Labour  
and Advanced Education*



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Budget 2020–21: Business Plan  
Finance and Treasury Board  
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## MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

We are pleased to present the 2020-21 Business Plan for the Department of Labour and Advanced Education (LAE).

LAE's mandate is broad and diverse, focusing on key areas such as post-secondary education, skills and training, workplace health and safety, and labour services.

All Nova Scotians deserve equal access to fair, safe and productive environments where they can learn, work and live. Our department's top priority is to foster a workforce that is inclusive and representative of our diverse communities, which in turn creates an innovative and thriving economy for all.

We have had many successes over the past year, and we will continue to build on these successes by challenging ourselves and working collaboratively across government and with community partners and stakeholders in 2020-21.

Over the next year, we will continue to focus on our mandate and work to ensure we align our strategic directions with government's key priorities. We will do this by:

- Collaborating with the research community, businesses and other partners to continue strengthening the province's innovation agenda, growing the economy and creating jobs for young Nova Scotians.
- Ensuring workplace and public health and safety remains at the forefront of our ongoing work related to labour standards, labour relations, worker's compensation, occupational health and safety, and technical safety.
- Growing and investing in programs that are strategically designed to attach young people and those from underrepresented communities to the workforce.
- Continuing to strengthen our partnerships with post-secondary institutions and those delivering skills and learning programs to maximize opportunities for all Nova Scotians.
- Continuing to expand strategic growth sectors, which will help drive innovation and economic growth, expand exports, create jobs and generate workforce attachment.

We encourage you to take some time to review our business plan and learn more about our department and what we do by visiting [novascotia.ca/lae](http://novascotia.ca/lae).

## DEPARTMENT MANDATE

The Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education (LAE) works to contribute to a competitive workforce by making strategic investments in people, programs, services and partnerships.

### *Vision*

Every Nova Scotian has an opportunity to thrive.

### *Mission*

We work as a trusted partner to help all Nova Scotians live, learn and work to their highest potential.

### *Mandate*

Our mandate is to provide a fair, equitable, safe, productive, and inclusive environment in which to live, learn and work. The broad mandate of the department includes:

- Regulatory responsibility for occupational health and safety, technical safety, the Workers' Advisers Program, labour relations, and labour standards.
- Improving access among Nova Scotians to labour market information, employment and career planning services, work experiences and quality learning programs that support their labour market attachment and growth.
- Strategic action to align the needs of employees with those of employers to help all Nova Scotians prepare for, find, and keep employment while creating more productive workplaces.
- Providing opportunities for individuals to advance in the community, or in the workplace through adult learning, literacy and essential skills, and skills development programs.
- Working closely with post-secondary institutions and post-secondary students to ensure Nova Scotia provides a quality post-secondary education and training experience, that is accessible and affordable.

To deliver on this mandate in 2020-21, LAE will continue to undertake the following actions:

- work on improving workplace health and public safety, while reducing unnecessary regulatory burden;
- strengthen the collaborative partnership with the Workers' Compensation Board;
- work across departments, and in partnership with the research community to strengthen and expand the innovation agenda;
- focus attention on start-up supports, such as the Nova Scotia Sandboxes, to spur economic growth and create jobs for young Nova Scotians;
- collaborate with employers and industry sectors to improve the workforce and workplace;
- help recent graduates connect with jobs in Nova Scotia through the Graduate to Opportunity and Innovate to Opportunity programs;
- deliver consistent, timely, and inclusive labour market programming so that Nova Scotians can better understand, prepare for and fill the needs of the province's job market, and so

that employers can find, hire, manage, develop, and retain the talent they need to be more productive in a global economy;

- collaborate with the province's post-secondary institutions in achieving the One Nova Scotia Commission's ten-year targets and the shared priorities as identified in the Memorandum of Understanding (2019-24);
- take the lead on coordinating youth programming and supports that connect more young people, especially those from underrepresented groups, with jobs; and
- work collaboratively with the Minister and Ministerial Assistant on Youth to ensure a horizontal government approach.

## NOVA SCOTIA APPRENTICESHIP AGENCY

The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency (NSAA/Agency), established July 2014, is responsible for stewarding and operating a relevant, accessible, and responsive industry-led trades training and certification system. It is an agent of the Crown and has developed its own Business Plan for 2020-21. While the Agency is separate, its actions that align with the mandate for LAE are reflected in the department's Business Plan for this year. More information about the Agency can be found at [www.nsapprenticeship.ca](http://www.nsapprenticeship.ca).

## KEY INITIATIVES FOR 2020-21

LAE continues to align our efforts with clear and measurable investments in innovation, education, training, skills development, as well as investments in our youth. These investments will directly support the prosperity of the province, where people will find good, sustainable jobs and are empowered to create, expand and strengthen Nova Scotian businesses. This is the foundation for a bright future.

We are committed to working collaboratively across government, with our federal, provincial and municipal partners, as well as with our stakeholders in the private sector.

In 2020-21, LAE's Key Initiatives will advance the following strategic directions:

- Advance inclusion and employability for all
- Foster responsive and sustainable learning systems
- Enable safe, fair, diverse and productive workplaces
- Create opportunities for growth

### *Advance inclusion and employability for all*

LAE will demonstrate a commitment to advancing inclusion and employability for all Nova Scotians through a continuum of supports and programs that maximize participation in the labour market. This will be achieved with strategic collaborations with employers, educators, under-represented groups, and through the advancement of the following key initiatives:

#### **Nova Scotia Works Employment Services System and NS Works Digital Service**

LAE will maintain its investment in the development and operation of the employment services system to ensure client-focused service delivery, service excellence, and maximum reach and access. This includes implementing a cutting-edge, user-focused digital service delivery channel in support of both web-based and in-person delivery of employment and labour market services. This service delivery channel, which includes digital, web-based platforms, will enable Nova Scotians to have maximum access to employment services and career planning tools. Diversity and inclusion approaches and initiatives will be developed so that the system meets the employment services needs of all Nova Scotians. This includes a NS Works Diversity and Inclusion Program – Phase 1 for Persons of African Descent/African Nova Scotians. Another initiative for 2020 will see youth and students given summer employment opportunities in the career development sector through investments in a NS Works Summer Internship Program.

#### **Training and attachment programs for Nova Scotians**

LAE supports employment training programs that assist Nova Scotians to participate and attach to the labour market as well as providing employers access to training and the skilled workforce

that they need. LAE will promote these programs to all Nova Scotians including those who are under-represented in the labour market or face barriers to employment.

### **Workplace-based learning**

Workplace-based learning is a vital investment in the Nova Scotia workforce. By making this investment, LAE, employers and industry contribute to productive, growing businesses and thriving communities. Increasing the essential skills of working Nova Scotians is key for the province to be competitive in an ever-shifting, global economy. LAE continually promotes work-based learning through the following programs and tools:

- Workplace Education Initiative (WEI);
- Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive (WIPSI);
- SkillsonlineNS; and
- One Journey Initiative (OJI).

### **Employer diversity bonus**

LAE will extend a diversity bonus option to its two student employment programs: the Co-operative Education Incentive and the Student Summer Skills Incentive. The diversity bonus provides an additional incentive to encourage employers to hire youth that are underrepresented in the workforce and face additional barriers to employment, including those who identify as African Nova Scotian, racially visible, Mi'kmaq or Indigenous, as a person with a disability, a woman in an underrepresented occupation or an international student. A diversity bonus has and will continue to be available to employers through the Innovate to Opportunity (ITO) program, and the Graduate to Opportunity (GTO) program.

### **Youth horizontal collaboration**

A Corporate Youth Structure, involving 13 provincial departments and offices, remains in place to support a coordinated effort and collaboration for youth. Senior Officials are working collaboratively on removing employment barriers and priority areas include: working with communities to improve African Nova Scotian (ANS) youth employment, working with indigenous and ANS communities to improve the long-term outcomes of children in care and at risk, newcomer youth, youth engagement, amplifying education and providing government work experience for youth facing barriers.

### **Diverse and inclusive apprenticeship initiatives**

The NSAA will develop and support initiatives to increase the participation of women, Indigenous Peoples, African-Nova Scotians and other groups currently underrepresented in the apprenticeship system. This includes promoting the Apprenticeship START program to employers who hire diverse and female apprentices.

### **Apprentice Award Trust**

The NSAA will work with the trustees of the Apprentice Award Trust to maintain progression and completion awards to help offset the costs apprentices incur during their apprenticeship. Progression awards are available to apprentices who successfully complete their third level of apprenticeship training in Red Seal and provincial-only trades and completion awards are available to apprentices who successfully complete their apprenticeship in a provincial-only trade.

### *Foster responsive and sustainable learning systems*

LAE will support and foster learning systems that are relevant, effective and aligned with Nova Scotia's labour market needs. Working in partnership with stakeholders, LAE will support the design and delivery of programs that directly address the education and training needs and economic realities of communities across Nova Scotia. This strategic direction will be achieved in part by strengthening the partnerships and investing in the following key initiatives:

#### **Work-Integrated learning (Post-Secondary Accessibility)**

Post-Secondary Accessibility Services will expand work-integrated opportunities for students with disabilities at Nova Scotian universities and the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) by introducing programming to support summer employment, co-ops, internships, work terms and part-time employment. Outcomes will include the creation of:

- Disability-confident employers in the community who understand the ease of accommodation and business benefits of hiring persons with disabilities; and
- Students with disabilities graduating from post-secondary studies with relevant work experience and labour market contacts.

#### **Nova Scotia Loan Forgiveness program (Student Assistance)**

LAE is making additional investments to enhance the Student Assistance Loan Forgiveness Program by expanding loan forgiveness eligibility to students in certificate and diploma programs at Nova Scotia universities and the NSCC. These changes will support more youth in Nova Scotia, especially those in low-income categories, to pursue their post-secondary education here, and then stay here once they graduate.

#### **MyPath Portal (Student Assistance)**

Enhancements to the MyPath Portal are a priority for the Student Assistance Office in 2020-21. Students use the portal to monitor assistance status, communicate with the Student Assistance Office and securely upload documents that expedite the processing of applications. A third-party

review is being carried out that will identify opportunities for enhanced service, at least one of which will be the addition of loan forgiveness eligibility and amount information. A leader in student assistance programs and student interfaces when it was introduced in 2014, this work will keep MyPath at the forefront of this technology in Canada.

### **Medical school seats expansion**

Provincial funding has been approved to support Dalhousie University School of Medicine adding 16 new seats, four in the 2019-20 school year and the remaining in 2020-21, to help address the family physician shortage in Nova Scotia with a particular focus on rural areas and underrepresented groups, including Mi'kmaq/other Indigenous and African Nova Scotians. LAE will work in collaboration with the School of Medicine to develop admission criteria related to these additional seats.

### **Nursing school seats expansion**

In collaboration with the Department of Health and Wellness, investments are being made to increase the number of registered nurse (RN) education seats in the province. A total of 70 new first year seats are being added to undergraduate nursing programs at Cape Breton University (62 seats) and Dalhousie University (8 seats for the program in Yarmouth). Enhanced supports will be provided to improve the recruitment and retention of Mi'kmaq and Indigenous students and African Nova Scotian students.

### **Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning (NSSAL) review**

The NSSAL review is in its final phase of work. In the upcoming year, work will focus on improving system delivery processes to provide better service and clearer pathways to adult learners across the province. To ensure service providers can meet the new service standard, an updated funding model will be introduced. There will also be important work focused on strengthening NSSAL programming and learner outcomes. This includes changing learner eligibility and developing culturally responsive resources to meet the changing needs and demographic of adult learners.

### **Harmonized trades training**

The NSAA will work nationally and across the Atlantic Region with its interprovincial colleagues to carry on harmonizing trades training, improving relevant processes and building a shared apprenticeship management system.

### **Apprenticeship innovation and promotion**

The NSAA will support their new five-year Strategic Plan and enable flexible, innovative approaches to apprenticeship training. NSAA will also be investing in a 3-year marketing campaign to further promote the apprenticeship system.

### **Apprenticeship experiential learning opportunities**

As part of the government's Building Vibrant Communities Initiative and other partnerships, the NSAA will introduce youth to careers in the skilled trades by working with industry and community organizations to provide experiential learning opportunities.

### ***Enable safe, fair, diverse and productive workplaces***

LAE will establish healthy and safe environments in Nova Scotia workplaces, campuses and public spaces by developing the conditions to foster a culture of safety and fairness that reflects the changing nature of these places. LAE will also identify opportunities for partnership, training and investment with business and industry to build inclusive, adaptable, efficient, and effective workplaces and learning cultures that meet current workforce needs and the anticipated demands of the future. LAE will advance this strategic direction through the work of the following key initiatives:

### **E-Mental health supports for PSE students**

LAE will maintain its support to Healthy Minds Nova Scotia – a suite of e-mental health products, launched in October 2018 to benefit post-secondary education students at Nova Scotia's ten universities and the NSCC. The primary goal of implementing e-mental health products is to increase service capacity and access to mental health supports through technology. The Healthy Minds Nova Scotia Committee provides direction and support to ensure effective planning, implementation, monitoring and refinement of offerings of the e-mental health products and services. The membership of this committee includes representatives from all universities and the NSCC, the Association of Atlantic Universities, student groups, as well as staff from the departments of Labour and Advanced Education and Health and Wellness, and the Nova Scotia Health Authority. The Healthy Minds Nova Scotia website launched in January 2020.

### **Sexual violence prevention on post-secondary campuses**

The Sexual Violence Prevention Committee's (SVPC's) report (2017), *Changing the culture of acceptance: Recommendations to address sexual violence on university campuses*, outlines 10 comprehensive and strategic recommendations meant to reflect primary prevention initiatives, reduce victim blaming and change the culture in which sexual violence exists to prevent its occurrence on university and college campuses.

In 2020-21, LAE will maintain its support to sexual violence prevention on campuses by providing funding towards initiatives that endorse and advance the recommendations outlined in the SVPC's report. This work complements other provincial efforts to move toward a shared vision of a Nova Scotia free from sexual violence.

The Provincial Sexual Violence Committee will continue to collaborate and strengthen the stand-alone sexual violence prevention policies of Nova Scotia universities and the NSCC.

### **Fair Registration Practices Act (FRPA) review**

The legislative review of the FRPA and evaluation of the policies, processes and programs that support its implementation wrapped up at the end of 2019. The feedback from stakeholders will be evaluated and the recommendations assessed to determine next steps. Clarifying the Act's requirements and streamlining processes to support its implementation will be the focus.

### **Welcoming and inclusive workplaces**

LAE is investing in the revamping of the current Welcoming Workplaces Employer Toolkit in 2020. The toolkit is a resource to assist employers and industry to create more inclusive workplaces for Nova Scotians. This revamping of the toolkit is focused on providing practical supports for employers and stories of employer champions.

### **Safety outcomes**

LAE will maintain its approach emphasizing its collaborative work with stakeholders in a variety of ways to ensure compliance with safety requirements. LAE works through four basic "pathways to compliance" to positively influence safety outcomes:

- Setting requirements through an approach that considers stakeholder impacts, effectiveness and efficiency;
- Promoting compliance through outreach work aimed at ensuring stakeholder understanding of requirements and benefits of legislation, codes and standards;
- Verifying compliance through monitoring and inspections; and
- Enforcing compliance where necessary.

### **Occupational Health and Safety Advisory Council (OHSAC/Council)**

The OHSAC is appointed under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* to provide advice and recommendations to the Minister. In 2020-21, key areas of focus for the Council will include workplace mental health, occupational exposures, and safety training. Other key partnerships will include the re-launching of the Technical Safety Advisory Board in 2020 and continuing collaborative efforts and initiatives with the Workers' Compensation Board.

### **Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) consultations**

There are approximately 50,000 workers in the province who do not have access to workplace injury insurance – some of whom are the least able to afford an injury. Together, LAE and the WCB have initiated conversations with stakeholders regarding the workers' compensation system and what government should do, if anything, around expanding coverage. Stakeholders from a broad range of industry sectors are being engaged to discuss the appropriate scope of workforce and industry coverage, and the availability of protections for more vulnerable workers. LAE in collaboration with the WCB will report back “what was heard” in these initial conversations and depending on what was heard, will explore options for strengthening workers compensation for Nova Scotians.

### **Workers' Advisers Program (WAP)**

The WAP provides free legal assistance, advice, and representation to injured workers and their families claiming workers' compensation benefits and who meet the Program's eligibility criteria. The WAP will work to improve service delivery and support to injured workers and their families through improved program processes and structural changes to streamline intake and inquiries and reduce wait times for service. In addition, LAE will work on a plan to replace the current WAP database with a case management system that is more robust and suits the changing needs and reporting requirements of the program.

### **Temporary Foreign Worker provisions and process review**

LAE will be reviewing the Labour Standards processes relating to temporary foreign workers from a lean and continuous improvement perspective, identifying areas of concern and opportunities for process improvements and clarity.

### **Women in Trades**

NSAA will encourage the attraction and successful completion of women in trades through provision of supports and engagement of workplace partners in developing respectful workplaces. This includes connecting women to workplaces in the skilled trades and connecting employers to resources needed to create affirming learning environments in the workplace.

### **Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Act (ATQA)**

The NSAA will roll out a suite of enforcement tools, including Administrative Penalties, as approved through recent amendments to the ATQA and General Regulations. These amendments will ensure a level playing field for those companies who are compliant, that work is being performed safely and that consumers can trust that individuals working in the compulsory trades are trained and certified.

### *Create opportunities for growth*

To achieve inclusive economic growth for Nova Scotia, LAE will continue to work in partnerships with industry leaders, educators, and the private sector to create more opportunities to support and foster ideas, products, and job growth in the province. This strategic direction will be advanced through the delivery of the following key initiatives:

#### **NSCC Marconi Campus Relocation**

The NSCC Marconi Campus is being relocated to the waterfront site in downtown Sydney with construction expected to start in the spring of 2020, and the aim to have the campus open by September 2024. The relocation will help revitalize the downtown while creating a more community-accessible space. The new downtown campus will provide NSCC the opportunity to enhance the learning environment for students and attract students from across the Province to Cape Breton's busiest centre.

#### **Post-Secondary Education Sandboxes**

The Post-Secondary Education Sandbox Program hosted by Nova Scotian universities and the NSCC brings together students, mentors and advisers to develop an entrepreneurial mindset that graduates can bring into any work environment. The focus of Nova Scotia's Sandboxes is to foster enthusiasm and build capacity for innovation and entrepreneurship amongst Nova Scotia post-secondary education students. There are ten Sandboxes that receive funding to support activities and programming. LAE will continue to maintain and strengthen early stage innovation through Nova Scotia's Sandboxes.

#### **Science and Industry Pathway**

The government has funding for a Science and Industry Pathway initiative, which supports the delivery of Mitacs programs. Mitacs is one of Canada's leading organizations linking business and academia through unique research and training programs. Working with 60 universities, thousands of companies, and both federal and provincial governments, Mitacs has built partnerships that support industrial and social innovation in Canada. The focus is on attracting and retaining skilled talent to support the growth of the knowledge-based economy across the country. LAE will continue to work with Mitacs to identify placements for post-secondary students to gain valuable experiential learning opportunities, working with private sector organizations right here in Nova Scotia.

#### **Research Nova Scotia (RNS)**

RNS will help Nova Scotia attract, retain and attach highly educated and skilled people to research activity in the province, which aligns with government's inclusive economic growth priority. RNS

will advance the development of the province's first research strategy which will address ways to increase research capacity in Nova Scotia and develop a strategic approach to support the Nova Scotia research community and align funded research activity with Provincial priorities. LAE will maintain its support of the activities of RNS through participation on the Board.

### **Innovation Team / Working Groups**

The Innovation Team consists of the 10 university presidents and the NSCC president, Deputy Ministers (LAE, Executive Council, Finance and Treasury Board, Health and Wellness, Business and Education and Early Childhood Development), and the Vice-President of Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) Nova Scotia. The mandate of the Innovation Team is to identify ways post-secondary institutions can support and advance provincial innovation priorities. Working groups were formed in five key areas which the team identified as areas in which they could collaborate to support the Province's innovation agenda. The following are the working groups:

- Student Recruitment and Retention
- Entrepreneurship and Experiential Learning
- Social Equity
- Cultural Innovation
- Health Innovation

### **Graduate to Opportunity program**

LAE will support continuous growth in the number of recent university and college graduates hired for permanent, full-time jobs in their chosen careers through the Graduate to Opportunity (GTO) program. The number of positions created under GTO has increased every year since its inception in 2015. LAE will vigorously promote the program to eligible employers, employer organizations and post-secondary students and grads around the province.

### **Innovate to Opportunity program**

Nova Scotia's innovation and youth-retention agendas will continue to benefit from the jobs supported through the Innovate to Opportunity (ITO) program. ITO provides wage subsidies over three years to small- and medium-sized businesses that hire masters or PhD graduates for jobs that are focused on innovation. LAE will work with Nova Scotia Business Inc. (NSBI) and Innovacorp to promote the program throughout Nova Scotia's innovation economy.

### **Human resource capacity for employers and industry**

The department will continue to enhance employer and industry supports by leveraging partnerships and, engaging directly with employers to effectively meet their human resource and strategic planning needs. This investment in direct employer and industry supports, is realized

through ongoing work with industry sector councils, Canada Job Bank, Business Workforce Consultants, and NS Works Employment Engagement Specialists.

### **Employment research and innovation**

LAE will foster the development of innovative approaches to employment support programs and service delivery systems in the province through continuous investment in the department's Centre for Employment Innovation (CEI), led by St Francis Xavier University.

### **Minimize regulatory barriers**

LAE will work regionally and nationally to minimize regulatory barriers that impede competitiveness, productivity, labour mobility and interprovincial trade for businesses and individuals that perform work related to occupational health and safety, elevators and lifts, boilers and pressure vessels, electrical installations, fuels, cranes and amusement devices. The four Atlantic provinces have agreed to work toward providing more efficient and cost-effective services, reduce duplication of licensing requirements and qualifications, enhance mobility and strengthen safety.

## DEPARTMENTAL EXPENSES SUMMARY

(\$ thousands)

	2019-2020	2019-2020	2020-2021
<u>Programs and Services</u>	Estimate (\$000's)	Forecast (\$000's)	Estimate (\$000's)
Administration	734	747	820
Corporate Policy and Services	3,914	4,106	4,184
Safety	15,661	15,230	16,288
Labour Services	8,118	7,480	7,891
Skills and Learning	143,105	142,940	142,740
NS Apprenticeship Agency	18,389	18,908	17,083
Higher Education	55,332	61,726	58,681
School Cap Amortization	5,280	5,280	5,013
Community College Grants	145,676	145,676	147,931
<b>Total – Departmental Expenses</b>	<b>396,209</b>	<b>402,093</b>	<b>400,631</b>
<b>Assistance to Universities</b>	<b>427,782</b>	<b>448,072</b>	<b>433,420</b>
<b>Total LAE and Assistance to Universities</b>	<b>823,991</b>	<b>850,165</b>	<b>834,051</b>
<b>Ordinary Recoveries</b>	<b>-142,863</b>	<b>-143,499</b>	<b>-142,125</b>
<b>Ordinary Recoveries – ATU</b>	<b>-9,508</b>	<b>-9,508</b>	<b>-9,839</b>
<b><u>Funded Staff (# of FTEs)</u></b>			
<b>Department Funded Staff</b>	<b>266.2</b>	<b>242.2</b>	<b>266.2</b>

**Note:**

For Ordinary Revenues, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 2

For TCA Purchase Requirements, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 1