



# Business Plan

2021–22

*Labour and Advanced Education*



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## MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

We are pleased to present the 2021-22 Business Plan for the Department of Labour and Advanced Education (LAE).

LAE has remained dedicated to making sure all Nova Scotians can thrive. This past year introduced many new challenges, but that did not impact the department's focus and commitment to our top priorities; post-secondary education, skills and training, workplace health and safety, and labour services.

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have been felt by every sector throughout the province. While we are seeing employment levels recover, some jobs have been permanently changed, and many people remain displaced within the workforce. This has amplified the importance of LAE's role in creating and supporting a diverse and innovative workforce, while ensuring safe and fair workplaces, and equal opportunities are available for all Nova Scotians.

To increase opportunities and aid in our province's growth, the Department continues to advocate for lifelong learning and career advancement for Nova Scotians. LAE, along with post-secondary institutions and industry partners, is working to co-create a Nova Scotia Micro-credentials Framework to create the conditions that will ensure micro-credential providers can be innovative, agile, responsive and quick to market and allow learners to upskill or reskill without taking a traditional length program. The flexibility of this certification process will allow youth and adults to expand their skills, while keeping up with fast-paced changes in the workplace.

Our province has faced many changes over the past year, but despite the uncertainty, we are pleased with the many successes LAE has achieved. A great example is the record number of university and NSCC co-op students who were able to secure work placements through Nova Scotia's Co-operative Education Incentive program in 2020. With a collaborative effort across government, community partners and stakeholders, we will continue to build on our growth and success.

Over the next year, we will focus on our mandate to provide a fair, equitable, safe, productive, and inclusive environment in which to live, learn and work. This will be done in line with our strategic direction and government's key priorities by:

- Continuing to develop and invest in programs that help retain youth and those from underrepresented communities and help them attach to the workforce where they can build meaningful careers in Nova Scotia.
- Promoting inclusive economic growth by ensuring skills development and lifelong learning initiatives are supported and by helping Nova Scotians prepare, train, and connect to a productive workforce.

- Investing in low carbon and climate sector initiatives that maximize our efforts against climate change, such as the Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive that has supported six clean technology companies since January 2020.
- NSAA being represented on the Nova Scotia 2030 Net Zero Energy Ready Building Code Workforce Coalition Advisory Group, which will provide first-hand knowledge of the required changes in trades training needed to meet these goals.
- Maintaining our commitment to ensuring all Nova Scotians have access to fair, safe, and healthy workplaces. This includes continued work on labour standards, labour relations, worker's compensation, occupational health and safety, and technical safety.
- Continuing important conversations with all post-secondary institutions and student leaders to ensure the institutions are equipped to continue navigating through the pandemic, provide a high-quality education and maximize opportunities for growth in the Province.

Everyone is encouraged to take the time to review our business plan and learn more about our department and the important work we do by visiting [novascotia.ca/lae](https://novascotia.ca/lae).

## DEPARTMENT MANDATE

The Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education (LAE / department) 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 skills development, labour market attachment, and growth.
- Strategic action to align the skills of individuals with those needed by 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.
- Working collaboratively with the post secondary sector to support the cultural, social, and economic growth of the province.

## 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 2021-22. 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 2021-22

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 2021-22, 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 and remove barriers to participation in the workforce. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on Nova Scotia's labour market, sending unemployment from its lowest levels in decades to historical highs in just two months. In addition to providing responsive legislative and regulatory frameworks, the department will continue to pivot and enhance their suite of employment and education training programs and services to further help thousands of recently unemployed Nova Scotians. We will continue to help Nova Scotians prepare for, (re)enter and succeed at work in a rapidly changing labour market, with a focus on developing essential skills, such as digital skills and access to technology while supporting inclusive economic growth.

### **Apprenticeship START Program expansion**

The objective of the Apprenticeship START program is to encourage employers to register, retain and support their apprentices to completion during their apprenticeship journey. The program has a focus of small to medium-sized businesses and organizations. Due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, many apprentices were laid off and employers are hiring fewer new apprentices. To further support an apprentice's progression and completion and the hiring of apprentices, NSAA has expanded the Apprenticeship START program by temporarily allowing employers outside of rural areas to hire an apprentice and allowing employers to hire an existing apprentice who is not currently employed.

### **Building local labour market responses**

In the fall of 2020, recognizing the importance of community engagement and leadership in the design and delivery of labour market programs that could help vulnerable people prepare for, secure, and maintain employment, the department launched a call for concepts from communities. These concepts would identify and support local partnerships in delivering community-based learning, employment solutions and inform ongoing policy and program adaptations, and result in skills development and employment attachments. In 2021-22, the department will continue to work with selected local partners and will provide direct funding to their initiatives and on-going project support throughout their development and implementation.

### **Workforce program awareness raising campaigns**

As part of the department's economic recovery response to the pandemic, one of the most significant challenges many unemployed Nova Scotians are facing is first knowing where to go for help and navigating what Provincial supports may be available to them. In response to this, the department will launch an awareness raising campaign to promote LAE workforce programs and the Nova Scotia Works system of career and training supports available at 53 locations throughout the province that connect job-seekers and employers with resources. As well, NSAA will launch an awareness raising campaign to promote apprenticeship as a career path, encourage employers to hire new apprentices and re-hire apprentices laid off due to COVID-19 and build awareness of the supports available to both apprentices and employers.

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

LAE will continue to invest in the development and operation of the NS Works employment services system, available to all Nova Scotians, to ensure client-focused

service delivery, service excellence, and maximum reach and access. Service delivery outcomes for community-based employment services includes:

- Improved labour market opportunities and outcomes for all Nova Scotians including those underrepresented in Nova Scotia's labour market.
- Nova Scotia job seekers are prepared for and achieve their career and occupational goals including finding and keeping meaningful and long-term employment.
- Community organizations are empowered to play a role in building well-balanced local labour markets.
- Nova Scotians have equitable access to inclusive employment assistance services that are tailored to their unique and diverse needs.
- Nova Scotia businesses and employers find, hire, manage, develop, and retain the talent they need to be more productive in a global economy.

The NS Works Digital Service Delivery Channel (NS Works Online) will contribute to maximizing the accessibility of employment and career planning services. Digitally offered services began in 2020-21 and will continue to be developed in 2021-22. These services are vital to reaching all Nova Scotians with specific emphasis on employers, youth, and parents, as well as job seekers for whom transportation to in-person service is a barrier. This platform will help students plan for their careers, employers connect with job seekers, and job seekers connect with services that will help them find employment.

### **Digital literacy through Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning (NSSAL)**

NSSAL is adapting programming to ensure adult learners in Nova Scotia have the digital skills needed in today's economy. This project uses a multi-pronged approach to equip adult Nova Scotians with digital and other essential skills. This project provides a safe "sandbox" environment where NSSAL service delivery partners can offer flexible, just in time, digital and essential skills training to displaced workers, and those seeking to re-enter the workforce, upgrade their digital literacy, and / or pursue further education. This project will provide wraparound funding for IT infrastructure, curriculum development, program delivery, and learning platforms, as well as continuous professional development for e-learning in the adult education system.

### **Skills Development Program expansion**

The Skills Development Program supports over 1,500 unemployed individuals each year to attend occupational training to gain marketable skills that can improve employment prospects. The program has been temporarily enhanced to support a redistribution of labour in the province within sectors that are experiencing transition due to COVID-19 – manufacturing, wholesale trade, retail trade and accommodations and food services. The core Skills Development Program will continue to be a foundational program that will

move labour market development shifts while this rapid-response enhancement occurs, providing a robust approach to investment in unemployed Nova Scotians' skills and credentials.

### **Creating Opportunities Developing Everyone (CODE)**

The African Nova Scotian (ANS) Youth Employment Lab outlined a criminal record check as one of the highest barriers to employment for ANS youth. CODE was developed through collaboration across government departments and community organizations (North End YMCA/NS Works and ONE (One North End)) focused on removing employment barriers for youth. The program targets ANS youth with a criminal record and supports them to develop IT and employability skills and complete a paid internship with a Nova Scotia tech business with the goal of attaching to the workforce or higher education. The integrated support program includes trusted mentorship from an ANS with lived experience who has transitioned to a meaningful career and healthy lifestyle with a strong commitment to helping others do the same.

### **NPower Canada**

Professional, Scientific and Technical Services has been one of the few industries to experience employment growth during the pandemic. LAE will continue to partner with NPower Canada to offer a program that provides pathways for low-income, diverse youth to careers in IT through free, industry-specific training and wrap-around supports. The digital skills program was launched in fall 2020 and training began in January 2021 with the first cohort. The program will run for three years and will support over 350 youth who are facing barriers to employment. The 15-week program includes training, mentoring and wrap around supports and connects students with jobs upon completion. NPower Canada is also being supported by a horizontal collaboration of government departments focused on youth.

### **Unama'ki Pathways in Technology Early College High School (PTECH)**

The Unama'ki PTECH program is a pilot program developed by the Mi'kmaq community in Cape Breton Island, in partnership with IBM, Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey, Mi'kmaq Economic Benefits Office, and the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC). This program is providing Mi'kmaq and Indigenous students with the opportunity to earn a high school diploma and a NSCC diploma, at no cost to the student, in an information technology (IT) program area, while simultaneously gaining valuable industry experience. Students will graduate with the skills and knowledge necessary to continue their studies or to step seamlessly into competitive jobs in the IT field. LAE is providing funding to the NSCC to cover the post-secondary costs associated with the Unama'ki PTECH pilot

program. This program works towards increasing the diversity in our workplaces and removing barriers to employment faced by under-represented groups, and helps more Nova Scotians get the education, experience, mentoring, training, and skills they need to succeed.

### **MyPATH Portal (Student Assistance)**

The Nova Scotia Student Assistance (NSSA) program's, MyPATH portal is designed to facilitate and streamline the student borrower's experience with government. The portal allows students to securely access information regarding their loans and grants as well as to communicate with NSSA program staff and securely upload required documentation. A modern service option in normal circumstances, MyPATH is an invaluable tool during a pandemic when face-to-face interactions are not always possible.

The portal is still at the leading edge compared to similar platforms deployed by other jurisdictions across Canada, but it has been several years since it was launched, and some modernization is needed to ensure it continues to meet the high standards users have come to expect. In 2021-22, MyPATH will be enhanced to include features relative to the Loan Forgiveness Program and loan repayment. The technology will be mobile friendly and accessible for various types of technology, including those used by students with disabilities. The enhancements will also ensure that data and dashboards displayed on the platform are meaningful to all users and provide student borrowers with an easier process for submitting the necessary information / documentation needed when applying for student assistance support.

### **Accessibility and Electronic Service Enhancement Design**

Multiple applications for Nova Scotia Student Assistance (NSSA) and Post-Secondary Accessibility Services (PSAS) programs are available online. To keep pace with evolving technology, these applications require either a refresh or a rebuild. This project will ensure all NSSA and PSAS online applications offer maximum accessibility for all students. All of the applications will be updated to ensure a consistent look and they will be optimized for multiple platforms including better functionality on mobile devices and compatibility with modern assistive technology software and hardware used by students with disabilities.

### **Post-Secondary Accessibility Services Grants**

LAE will be providing a one-time COVID-19 Accessibility Grant for Students with Permanent Disabilities currently receiving assistance from Post-Secondary Accessibility Services and introducing the University Inclusive Education Tuition Grant to assist students with permanent disabilities attending inclusive post-secondary education

programs offered at several universities in the province. While COVID-19 has been challenging in many ways for post-secondary students, students with permanent disabilities face unique challenges transitioning to online learning platforms and require individualized supports. This funding will provide extra support for students with disabilities to help them address new barriers arising from remote-learning and other learning environment changes, and provide more equitable access to inclusive education programming.

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

Through the NSAA Diversity and Inclusion Framework, *Building Equitable Pathways*, NSAA is working to improve diversity and inclusion in the apprenticeship system by raising awareness of apprenticeship opportunities for participants from diverse communities, reducing barriers to apprenticeship and trade certification, enhancing employer and individual supports, creating partnerships for diversity and inclusion, and encouraging apprenticeship employers to hire individuals from diverse groups. In 2021-22, through consultation with our equity partners, the NSAA will renew its Diversity and Inclusion Framework with a focus on the development of a strategy for the ANS community. The Agency employs a Youth Outreach Coordinator to develop strategic partnerships regarding youth engagement in the skilled trades and support youth initiatives, as well as a Manager of Youth and Equity programs who also serves as the Agency's Chief Diversity Officer.

### **NS Works Diversity and Inclusion initiative**

Access to quality employment services can be a barrier for underrepresented persons in Nova Scotia's labour market. In recognition of these challenges, the department has partnered with the Centre for Employment and Innovation at St. Francis Xavier University to launch a Diversity and Inclusion Program for NS Works. This launch is focused on improving service to ANS and Persons of African Descent and has been guided by Black leaders within the NS Works employment services system. The objective of the program is to support service providers to hire 15 ANS and persons of African descent in NS Works centres across the province to increase representation, improve outreach and service delivery to ANS and persons of African descent, and accomplish the goal of NS Works to be equitable, inclusive and responsive to the diversity of communities served.

### **Student and Graduate Employment Program Diversity Bonus**

LAE will continue to provide a diversity bonus option to its two student employment programs: 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 ANS, racially visible, Mi'kmaq or Indigenous, as a person with a disability, a woman in an underrepresented occupation or an international student. Since the onset of the pandemic, several policy changes and coordination with other funding partners has maintained hiring rates of students overall and significantly increased the hiring of diverse and international students.

### **Forestry workforce initiatives**

LAE has been providing strategic support to the Forestry Sector and to regional partners impacted by the January 2020 closure of Northern Pulp, including support to the Forest HR Sector Council, to build capacity and create and implement a new strategic plan to address short-term and long-term workforce challenges and opportunities. NSAA, in partnership with the NSCC, established a 3-year customized initiative – providing intake, assessment, and learning supports – to support interested forestry sector employees to pursue apprenticeship in a skilled trade and achieve trade certification.

### *Foster responsive and sustainable learning systems*

LAE will support and foster learning systems that are aligned with Nova Scotia's labour market needs. Working in partnership with stakeholders, LAE will support the design and delivery of a lifelong learning strategy and programs that directly address the education and training needs and economic realities of communities across Nova Scotia. A key priority area for LAE is working with Nova Scotia Universities, the NSCC, and NSAA as economic supports and drivers of the economy. This strategic direction will be achieved in part by strengthening the partnerships and investing in the following key initiatives:

### **Nursing School Seat Expansion**

In collaboration with the Department of Health and Wellness (DHW), investments were made in 2020-21 to increase the number of registered nurse education seats in the province. A total of 70 new first year seats were added to the undergraduate nursing programs at Cape Breton University (CBU) (62 seats) and Dalhousie University (8 seats for the program in Yarmouth). In 2021-22, the department will continue to provide enhanced supports to improve the recruitment and retention of Mi'kmaq and Indigenous students and ANS students at CBU. In addition, an in-community nursing cohort is scheduled for Eskasoni First Nation in collaboration with CBU.

### **Medical School Seat Expansion**

Provincial funding was approved to support the Dalhousie School of Medicine, adding 16 new seats with a particular focus on rural areas and underrepresented groups, including Mi'kmaq / other Indigenous and ANS, four in the 2019-20 academic year and the remaining in 2020-21. Coupled with a dedicated effort from Dalhousie University to promote family medicine these seats will help address the family physician shortage in Nova Scotia. In 2021-22, LAE will continue to work with DHW and the Dalhousie School of Medicine to monitor the progress on efforts to increase participation by rural Nova Scotians, Mi'kmaq / other Indigenous and ANS.

### **Computer Science Program enhancement**

LAE is funding an enhancement to the computer science (CS) programming at a number of Nova Scotia's universities. There is significant growth in the digital economy in Nova Scotia resulting in a high demand for skilled computer science graduates. The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a rapid acceleration in many areas including digitalization of work. Nova Scotia is well positioned to capitalize on the opportunity to grow the digital economy given the strength of the post-secondary education sector in the province. This funding will support initiatives to increase the enrolment of women, African Canadian, and Mi'kmaq and Indigenous students in CS. This enhancement will support youth retention and contribute to population growth as a high percentage of CS graduates find jobs in the province immediately after graduation.

### **Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) Marconi Campus relocation**

The NSCC Marconi Campus is being relocated to the waterfront site in downtown Sydney. Construction started in the spring of 2020 and the campus is scheduled to be 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. In 2021-22, LAE will continue to chair the steering committee responsible for overseeing the project to ensure the project remains on schedule and within budget.

### **Cape Breton infrastructure initiative**

NSAA is supporting provincial investments in infrastructure for Cape Breton by maximizing employment opportunities for residents; focusing on underrepresented groups and providing training, apprenticeship opportunities, and jobs; leveraging procurement policy to build a stronger province; and investigating all opportunities to create local, social and economic impact. This investment provides an opportunity for

government to advance its priorities for inclusive economic growth as these infrastructure projects will create jobs, support workforce training and business development, and strengthen Cape Breton's infrastructure and economic prospects.

LAE's Skills and Learning Branch and NSAA will continue to partner with Industry and communities representing underrepresented groups in Cape Breton to maximize local benefit from increased employment, small business opportunities through the local supply chain and increased economic activity. This work will also ensure that government is actively responding to the training needs to facilitate skills development to enhance employment opportunities in these communities. An agreement is in place with the Cape Breton Partnership to support the work in the local community and a partnership with Menelik Hall to ensure the ANS community in Cape Breton is connected to opportunities related to these projects.

### **Apprenticeship Management System (AMS)**

AMS will replace the Apprenticeship and Certification Information System (ACIS) system now used by NSAA, enabling a self-serve function for employers, journeypersons, and apprentices to use the system to establish, maintain and verify the status of an apprenticeship and to make updates to information. The Project Initiation and Core Development phases of AMS are complete and implementation of the system is underway.

### **Supporting apprentice success – support strategy**

NSAA is developing a comprehensive support strategy for apprentices with diverse educational backgrounds and experiences, who identify as members of diverse communities, and / or who have identified and unidentified learning challenges, including the creation of a mentoring program. While quality technical training ensures success for many learners, there remains a percentage of apprentices who require appropriate learning supports and / or customized interventions and accommodations. This comprehensive strategy aims to ensure equitable application and access for all apprentices when learning in the workplace and participating in technical training in fulfillment of their apprenticeship requirements.

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

LAE initiated a multi-phased review of the NSSAL system to better understand the challenges and opportunities for adult learners; to identify gaps in the current system; and to develop and implement a strategic plan to address existing gaps that will be sustained through a cycle of continuous improvement. Over the next year, LAE will continue to evolve the NSSAL program model by defining the programming categories, finalizing

service provider common processes, evolving digital and essential skill programming, developing a funding model to better support programming, and creating a system of performance management and evaluation which assures quality and a cycle of continuous system improvement.

### **Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive (WIPSI)**

WIPSI supports employers to invest in employee skills, improve productivity, introduce new technology and processes, and enhance international competitiveness. In order to respond to businesses who have been negatively impacted by COVID-19, in fiscal year 2021-22, eligibility will continue to be expanded to include: (1) training that would allow individuals to learn new skills due to company downsizing and desire to retain current workforce and (2) technology to help individuals learn while on the job.

### **Nova Scotia Micro-credentials Framework**

The department will continue to work with post-secondary educational institutions and industry partners to co-create a Nova Scotia Micro-credentials Framework that will support lifelong learning and career advancement allowing youth and adults to continually learn new skills. Micro-credentials provide learners an opportunity to upskill or reskill without taking a traditional length program and certify an individual's achievements in specific skills either acquired through education or work experience. Micro-credentials differ from traditional education credentials, such as degrees and diplomas, as they are shorter and often stackable. Micro-credentials provide a clear way for learners to confidently showcase their skills to employers and provide distinctive value and relevance in the changing labour market.

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

LAE will continue to support 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, outreach 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. A key priority area for LAE is the application of occupational health and safety best practices to support our stakeholders in their recovery from COVID-19. LAE will advance this strategic direction through the collective work of the following key initiatives:

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

LAE will continue supporting HealthyMindsNS – a suite of e-mental health resources launched in October 2018 for post-secondary students at Nova Scotia universities and the NSCC. The suite was also extended to apprentices in September 2020. Government is committed to strengthening mental health supports for post-secondary students and ensuring they have 24/7 access to mental health services and resources.

The HealthyMindsNS 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 LAE and DHW. In 2021-22, the committee will be focused on improving student awareness of the e-mental health tools and evaluating the tools to ensure they are meeting the intended outcomes.

### **Sexual Violence Prevention on Post-secondary Campuses**

In 2021-22, LAE will continue its support to sexual violence prevention on university and NSCC campuses by providing funding through the Sexual Violence Prevention Grant to support initiatives that endorse and advance the 10 recommendations outlined in the *Changing the Culture of Acceptance (2017)* report. These recommendations reflect primary prevention initiatives, reducing victim blaming and changing the culture in which sexual violence exists to prevent its occurrence on university and community college campuses. 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 policies of Nova Scotia universities and the NSCC.

### **Improving business supports for emerging occupational health hazards**

Since Nova Scotia first declared a state of emergency on March 22, 2020, LAE has continued to serve the public, and has supported Nova Scotians in new ways. The safety of workplaces, facilities, and regulated devices in the province remains a priority. In collaboration with the CMOH, the department will work with employers, workplaces and device owners in the province to support them in mitigating emerging and existing health hazards and will focus on implementing directed support for the Health Care sector.

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

The WAP provides free legal assistance, advice, and representation to injured workers and their families claiming workers' compensation benefits. In 2021-22, the WAP will

continue to advance two initiatives – a WAP Operations Review and work with Digital Nova Scotia to implement a new WAP IT case management system. Each of these initiatives will enhance WAP's ability to provide excellent client service to injured workers and their families, by creating more effective and efficient systems and processes.

### **Appointment of an Arbitration Advisory Committee (AAC)**

The AAC provides the Minister of LAE with recommendations on arbitrators to be appointed to the Minister's List and an approach for building the capacity of new arbitrators in Nova Scotia, including initiatives to increase the number of arbitrators from diverse and underrepresented groups. Since 2015, the committee has been inactive. LAE has developed a Diversity and Inclusion Recruitment Strategy and is in the process of recruiting a new committee to be appointed in 2021-22.

### **Enhancing stakeholder services while decreasing regulatory burden and barriers**

LAE is increasing capacity to work with businesses to support them in identifying and addressing health and safety issues related to their people, equipment, and workplaces. This includes the creation of, and access to, plain language guides, website updates and more timely stakeholder safety notifications to address emerging safety issues that are important to Nova Scotians. In 2021-22, LAE will be modernizing first aid requirements to improve clarity and reduce regulatory burden for businesses. The department continues to explore other areas to decrease regulatory and administrative burden such as harmonizing requirements across Canada and mutual recognition initiatives.

### **Welcoming and inclusive workplaces**

LAE is investing in the revamping of the current Welcoming Workplaces Employer Toolkit in 2021-22. 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.

### ***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. In 2021-22, LAE will focus efforts to support the innovation ecosystem and initiatives to develop long term plans and policy recommendations that address the changing nature

of work. This strategic direction will be advanced through the delivery of the following key initiatives:

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

RNS was created by provincial legislation in 2018, with a mandate to align research support with provincial priority areas and coordinate research that will benefit Nova Scotians. RNS activities align with government's inclusive economic growth priority by creating jobs for highly qualified people and increasing local research capacity. In 2020-21, RNS developed a mission-oriented research strategy which lays out RNS's approach to supporting, coordinating, and organizing research with four key areas of focus:

- sustainable bioeconomy;
- climate change adaptation and resilience;
- healthy people and health care systems; and
- improved quality of life for Nova Scotians.

These key areas, and the missions identified to achieve each, lay out tangible challenges that will help align the research community's expertise with the priorities of the province. In 2021-22, LAE will continue to support RNS through participation on the Board of Directors, as well as coordinating provincial funding provided to RNS to support the Research Opportunities Fund as well as the operations of RNS.

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

Launched in 2014-15, the Nova Scotia Sandbox Program is hosted by Nova Scotia universities and the NSCC. Sandboxes bring together students with mentors and advisers to develop an entrepreneurial mindset that can be used in any work environment. Students participate in programs and events that focus on fostering an enthusiasm and capacity for innovation and entrepreneurship. There are 10 sandboxes which involve all universities and, directly or indirectly, all NSCC campuses.

In 2021-22, sandboxes will continue advancing projects that were funded under the Post-Secondary Sandbox Funding Grant. In addition, planning will commence for the May 2022 Creativity and Innovation Bootcamp which is a seven-day immersive experience that introduces students to a suite of approaches that uncovers their creative potential and capacity for innovative problem solving.

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

The Innovation Team consists of the 10 university presidents and the NSCC president, department Deputy Ministers, 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 exist 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

In 2021-22, the Innovation Team working groups will continue to advance work that supports provincial innovation priorities.

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

In 2021-22, LAE will continue to support internship placements for post-secondary students to gain valuable experiential learning opportunities through working with the private sector. LAE will provide \$1 million to support 250 internships in partnership with Mitacs, one of Canada's leading organizations linking business and academia through unique research and training programs. The focus is on attracting and retaining skilled talent to support the growth of the knowledge-based economy across the country.

### **Nova Scotia Graduate Scholarship Program**

The Graduate Scholarship Program supports graduate level scholarships for research and innovation, ranging in value from \$10,000 to \$15,000. Through these scholarships, Nova Scotia benefits from academic and business research and development activities that align with provincial priority areas of research such as: ocean science and technology; information and communications technology; clean technology; life sciences; health and wellness; resource sectors; or social innovation. In 2021-22, LAE will continue to support the Graduate Scholarship Program by providing a total of \$3.7 million to participating universities.

### **Hairstylist Apprenticeship Pilot**

NSAA is working in partnership with the Cosmetology Association of Nova Scotia (CANS) to implement a second province-wide cohort of the Hairstylist Apprenticeship Pilot to further test industry acceptance of the apprenticeship training model for this trade. An apprenticeship training pathway supports industry's request for more practical training, enables availability of training in remote areas and supports an affordable option for

individuals and those from diverse communities not currently represented in the trade to become Hairstylists.

### **Safety Outcomes**

LAE will maintain its collaborative approach to working with stakeholders to ensure compliance with safety requirements. The department will continue to seek out opportunities that collectively benefit and positively influence safety outcomes including:

- setting requirements that consider stakeholder impacts, effectiveness, and efficiency;
- promoting compliance through ensuring stakeholder understanding of requirements and benefits of legislation, codes and standards;
- verifying compliance to help identify opportunities for improvement and validate success; and
- enforcing compliance where more strict change is needed.

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

In response to the recommendations of the FRPA legislative review that was completed in 2019, LAE has implemented the following changes:

- new processes to ensure fair registration practices by Regulatory Bodies (RBs);
- updated surveys and templates; and
- mandatory requirements for RBs to demonstrate compliance if deemed to be non-compliant.

In 2021-22, the department will monitor and evaluate the impacts of the changes to determine if further changes are required. In addition, the department will propose amendments to the Act to reduce the frequency by which RBs are required to submit reports on registration practices.

### **Nova Scotia Sector Councils**

The Sector Council Program supports an industry-led approach to human resource development, tailored to meet the labour market needs of industry. The program also ensures that small and medium sized businesses in Nova Scotia have increased access to expertise, resources, and support in the areas of Human Resource planning, attraction and retention and training.

In 2021-22, LAE will continue to strategically advise and invest in the Association of Sector Councils (AISC) to develop collaborative approaches to common workforce

challenges and opportunities on behalf of its 14 industry association members. This focus for 2021-22 will build upon the important work completed in 2020-21 – specifically, the development of a collaborative strategic plan that identifies cross-cutting workforce priorities supported with investment, a governance structure and action plan. Work in 2021-22 will focus on:

- gathering and analyzing labour market information
- increasing diversity and inclusion across the Nova Scotia workforce
- providing opportunities for relevant skills and leadership training
- succession planning
- promoting better health and family supports
- career promotions

The Sector Council Program will continue to explore opportunities to establish partnerships with additional sector councils, representing key components of the Nova Scotia economy, to build on and enhance the overall approach to provincial workforce planning and development.

<b>DEPARTMENTAL EXPENSES SUMMARY</b>					
<b>(\$ thousands)</b>					
		<b>2020-2021</b>	<b>2020-2021</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>	
<b><u>Programs and Services</u></b>		<b>Estimate (\$000's)</b>	<b>Forecast (\$000's)</b>	<b>Estimate (\$000's)</b>	
Administration		820	823	926	
Corporate Policy and Services		4,184	5,006	4,608	
Safety		16,288	14,428	17,085	
Labour Services		7,891	7,400	8,150	
Skills and Learning		142,740	170,145	145,686	
NS Apprenticeship Agency		17,083	20,632	17,621	
Higher Education		58,681	62,630	59,145	
School Cap Amortization		5,013	5,013	5,790	
Community College Grants		147,931	147,931	148,439	
<b>Total – Departmental Expenses</b>		<b>400,631</b>	<b>434,008</b>	<b>407,450</b>	
<b>Assistance to Universities</b>		<b>433,420</b>	<b>475,260</b>	<b>443,590</b>	
<b>Total LAE and Assistance to Universities</b>		<b>834,051</b>	<b>909,268</b>	<b>851,040</b>	
<b>Ordinary Recoveries</b>		<b>-142,125</b>	<b>-172,467</b>	<b>-145,171</b>	
<b>Ordinary Recoveries – ATU</b>		<b>-9,839</b>	<b>-4,440</b>	<b>-4,369</b>	
<b><u>Funded Staff (# of FTEs)</u></b>					
<b>Department Funded Staff</b>		<b>266.2</b>	<b>241.5</b>	<b>265.6</b>	
<b>Note:</b>					
For Ordinary Revenues, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 2					
For TCA Purchase Requirements, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 1					