



Accountability Report 2020–21

Labour and Advanced Education

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Accountability Report 2020–2021

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1. Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Department of Labour and Advanced Education for the year ended March 31, 2021 is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the Department of Labour and Advanced Education Business Plan for the fiscal year just ended. The reporting of the Department of Labour and Advanced Education outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments, and opinions by Department of Labour and Advanced Education management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of Department of Labour and Advanced Education management. The report is, to the extent possible, a complete and accurate representation of outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in the Department of Labour and Advanced Education 2020-2021 Business Plan.

Original signed by:

Hon. Jill S. Balsler
Minister

Original signed by:

Ava Czapalay
Deputy Minister

2. Message from Minister and Deputy Minister

It is with pleasure that we share with Nova Scotians the 2020-21 Accountability Report for the Department of Labour and Advanced Education (LAE). This will be the final report for LAE, which is now the Department of Labour, Skills, and Immigration (LSI).

Over the past year, LAE has played an important role in supporting post-secondary education, training and skills development, workplace health and safety, and labour issues. Looking forward, LSI will remain focused on building solutions for Nova Scotians, including more and better paying jobs, enhanced learning opportunities in the skilled trades, improved workforce planning for health professions, and long-term population growth.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on the province this past year. The department carefully and quickly pivoted and enhanced its suite of programs and services to support Nova Scotians during this challenging time, while building a strong foundation for recovery. This included: creating the Worker Emergency Bridge Fund; expediting access to Skills Development for those in the hardest-hit sectors; expanding digital literacy programs through the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning and various online training programs through Skills Online Nova Scotia; enhancing the Nova Scotia Student Assistance Loan Forgiveness Program; introducing virtual technical training for apprentices; and fielding countless inquires on employment rights and safe working conditions.

Safety remains a top priority throughout the pandemic. Department officials also worked closely with other departments and post-secondary institutions to support the work of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and engaged with clients and stakeholders to support the development of over 40 business sector re-opening guidance documents.

We would like to take the opportunity to thank our community partners across the province, and the commitment of management and staff in helping all Nova Scotians live, learn and work to their highest potential.

Original signed by:

Hon. Jill S. Balsler
Minister

Original signed by:

Ava Czapalay
Deputy Minister

3. Financial Results

Labour & Advanced Education	2020-2021 Estimate	2020-2021 Actual	2020-2021 Variance
Program & Service Area	(\$thousands)		
Department Expenses:			
Administration	820	803	(17)
Corporate Policy and Services	4,184	4,216	32
Safety	16,288	14,800	(1,488)
Labour Services	7,891	6,617	(1,274)
Skills and Learning	142,740	162,943	20,203
Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency	17,083	19,387	2,304
Higher Education	58,681	58,605	(76)
School Cap Amortization	5,013	5,050	37
Community College Grants	147,931	147,931	0
Total Departmental Expenses Labour & Advanced Education (Note 1)	\$400,631	\$420,352	\$19,721
Total Departmental Expenses Assistance to Universities (Note 2)	\$433,420	\$475,631	\$42,211
Total: Departmental Expenses	\$834,051	\$895,983	\$61,932
Additional Information:			
Ordinary Revenues (Note 3)	(10,604)	(7,490)	3,114
Fees and Other Charges	(878)	(858)	20
Ordinary Recoveries (Note 4)	(142,125)	(164,106)	(21,981)
Total: Revenue, Fees and Recoveries Labour & Advanced Education	(\$153,607)	(\$172,454)	(\$18,847)
Ordinary Recoveries (Note 5)	(9,839)	(4,444)	5,395
Total: Revenue, Fees and Recoveries Assistance to Universities	(\$9,839)	(\$4,444)	\$5,395
Total: Revenue, Fees and Recoveries	(\$163,446)	(\$176,898)	(\$13,452)
TCA Purchase Requirements (Note 6)	\$33,832	\$34,795	\$963
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) (Note 7)	266.2	241.5	(24.7)

Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:

Note 1: Department of Labour and Advanced Education expenses were \$19.7 million, or 4.9%, higher than estimate primarily due to \$20 million in additional federal funding under the Workforce Development Agreement to support recovery efforts in response to COVID-19.

Note 2: Assistance to Universities expenses were \$42.2M, or 9.7%, higher than estimate primarily due to \$25 million in additional funding to help universities impacted by COVID-19 as well as \$16.8 million to four Nova Scotia universities (Dalhousie, Acadia, Saint Mary's and St. Francis Xavier) to expand and enhance their Computer Science programs.

Revenue, Fees and Recoveries Variance Explanation:

Note 3: Department of Labour and Advanced Education ordinary revenues were \$3.1 million or 29.4% lower than estimate primarily due to \$2.8 million reduction in direct loan interest revenues including reductions due to interest and payment freezes issued in response to COVID-19.

Note 4: Department of Labour and Advanced Education recoveries were \$22.0 million or 15.5% higher than estimate primarily due to \$20 million in additional federal funding under the Workforce Development Agreement to support recovery efforts in response to COVID-19 and \$3 million in incremental federal funding under the Labour Market Development Agreement.

Note 5: Assistance to Universities recoveries were \$5.4 million or 54.8% lower than estimate primarily due to \$5.4 million in lower than anticipated MPHEC recoveries under the Regional Transfer Agreement.

TCA Purchase Requirement Variance Explanation:

Note 6: Immaterial, no explanation required.

Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:

Note 7: Funded staff were 24.7 lower than budget due to temporary staff vacancies.

4. Measuring Our Performance

LAE Vision: *Every Nova Scotian has an opportunity to thrive.*

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

- This incorporates a strong focus on advancing inclusion and employability for all, fostering responsive and sustainable learning systems, enabling safe, fair, diverse, and productive workplaces, and creating opportunities for growth.

LAE Mandate: *To provide a fair, equitable, safe, protective, and inclusive environment in which to learn, work, and live*

- 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 services and learning programs that support their labour market attachment and growth. Strategic action is taken to align the needs of employees with those of employers to help all Nova Scotians prepare for, find, and keep employment.
- Providing opportunities for individuals to advance at home, in the community, or in the workplace through adult learning, literacy and essential skills, and skills development programs.
- Providing funding, services, and support to post-secondary institutions and post-secondary students to ensure high-quality post-secondary education and training remains relevant, accessible, and affordable.

The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency

The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency (NSAA), 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 2020-2021. The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency publishes an Annual Report that reports on its commitments and it is available at www.nsapprenticeship.ca.

LAE's Strategic Actions:

Work on improving workplace health and public safety, while reducing unnecessary regulatory burden

- A new occupational health and safety national reconciliation agreement was developed in 2020-2021, with a focus on common fall protection equipment standards. The agreement has been designed to provide flexibility for Labour and Advanced Education (and its counterparts in other jurisdictions) to add further common standards for occupational health and safety under Ministerial authority. Jurisdictional signatures are expected in 2021-2022.

Strengthen the collaborative partnership with the Workers' Compensation Board

- Labour and Advanced Education and the Workers' Compensation realigned their social marketing campaign to focus on COVID-19. Engagement sessions regarding vulnerable workers remain on indefinite hold because of the COVID-19 impacts.

Focus attention on start-up supports, such as the Nova Scotia Sandboxes, to spur economic growth and create jobs for young Nova Scotians

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, sandboxes quickly transitioned to online delivery, reaching out to students to promote online sandbox events. From May 1 to December 31, 2020, over 5,520 individuals / students were introduced to the sandboxes. Despite some programming being postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and changes to program delivery methods, sandboxes hosted more events in 2020 than in any previous year.

Collaborate with employers and industry sectors to improve the workforce and workplace

- The Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive (WIPSI) supported several special project training applications to help SMEs navigate business crisis management. In addition, WIPSI worked with the Workplace Education Initiative to align programs to policy objectives and support the training of as many Nova Scotia businesses as possible.
- Despite the challenges presented by the pandemic, the NSAA hosted 172 meetings with industry on topics ranging from trade updates, program development, and program review. These meetings included 628 individuals from industry (employers and employees) and 22 Trade Advisory Committees and Atlantic Trade Advisory Committees, with 134 industry representatives. A review of 13 pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs was also conducted.
- New apprenticeship pathways are under development for Farm Technician, Elevating Device Mechanic, and Transport Trailer Technician, Communications Technician, Crane Operator, Institutional Cook, and Glazier.

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

- The department created a new local labour market response program, "Back to Work", to support community-based initiatives that connect vulnerable job seekers to employment opportunities. This program acknowledges the importance of first voice and real community engagement in the design and delivery of labour market programs that help vulnerable people prepare for, secure, and maintain employment. The call identified and supported local partnerships that deliver community-based learning and employment solutions and informed ongoing policy and program adaptations. This effort reflects lessons learned from recent successful best practice labour market development initiatives that have supported low-income and underrepresented persons secure sustainable employment.

Through the Back to Work program, the department received 83 responses to the initial call for concepts, of which, 28 proceeded to a full proposal stage. Agreements and most projects were in place prior to the end of March 2021. The projects deliver community-based skills development and facilitate employment attachment and/or employee retention.

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)

- The Memorandum of Understanding (2019-24) between the Province and the universities provides a policy framework which outlines how government and universities will continue to work collaboratively and strategically to support Nova Scotia's university sector and its contribution to inclusive economic growth.

Throughout 2020-2021, collaboration continued through meetings of the Partnership Committee which focused on: the impacts of COVID-19 on the university sector and its students; collaborative project priorities; alignment of university outcomes with OneNS goals; plans to advance the mutual priority for equal opportunity; and reducing the education gap among underrepresented communities. In this instance underrepresented communities include: Indigenous students; African Nova Scotians and other students of African descent; students with disabilities; rural students; and economically disadvantaged students.

Take the lead on coordinating youth programming and supports that connect more young people, especially those from underrepresented groups, with jobs

- Labour and Advanced Education extended a diversity bonus option to the Co-operative Education Incentive and the Student Summer Skills Incentive (SKILL). The diversity bonus was implemented for positions beginning in Spring 2020 and was promoted to program applicants during the application period starting in December 2019. The programs allowed employers to have additional flexibility in funding to help youth disproportionately impacted during the pandemic.
- Final summer numbers indicate that 40% or 177 of Co-op students self-identified as a member of a designated diversity group. In fall, the percent was 35% or 84 students.
- The final tally for SKILL was 140 students or 18%.

Work collaboratively with the Minister on Youth to ensure a horizontal government approach

- The horizontal youth table has been focused on removing employment barriers for youth and is involved in a number of initiatives including the African Nova Scotian Youth Employment Social Innovation Lab (ANS Lab) and supporting pathways for underserved youth to careers in the IT sector. The ANS Lab identified criminal record checks as one of the major barriers to employment for African Nova Scotian youth which led to the codesign and development of the Matrix CODE (Creating Opportunities Developing Everyone), which targets African Nova Scotian Youth with experience in the criminal justice system, and provides free training in CODE, along with wrap around supports which include: employability skills training provided by Nova Scotia Works; mental health and fitness; sharing circles; and a 3-month paid internship. The goal of the program is to attach participants to the workforce in IT or to start their own business.

The Matrix CODE launched in October 2020. A video has been developed by community, with support from government (LAE and Communities, Culture and Heritage). The video highlights participants' experiences with the program and several of the youth involved said that the

program will change their life. Due to COVID-19, the Department and community partners are waiting until graduation in the fall to share the video.

Supporting Measures: LAE Mandate

MEASURE	BASE YEAR DATA (2016-17) Unless otherwise indicated	2020-21 YEAR DATA		
		2020-21 Target	Status Update	2021-22 Target
# of clients receiving employment services, education and training supports	13,924	14,400	12,783	13,000
# of post-secondary students participating in co-op work placements through the Co-op Education Incentive program	560 (2015-16)	700	861	775
# of Nova Scotia employers participating in co-op work placements through the Co-op Education Incentive program	360 (2015-16)	375	310	375
# of post-secondary students participating in the SKILL program supports	712	800	792	800
# of Nova Scotia employers participating in the SKILL program supports	560	500	379	500
# of Private Career Colleges programs with experiential learning components	Approx. 90%	96%	97%	90% ¹
# of individuals / students introduced to the sandboxes	3,015	Increase	21,035 (2019-2020 academic year)	Increase
# of programming and training activities with sandboxes that foster an entrepreneurial mindset and job ready skills	289	Increase	443 (2019-2020 academic year)	Increase
Value of funds leveraged (federal and private) for research	N/A	Research NS to expand and increase	\$38.98 million leveraged (in cash and in kind) on \$16.32 million of provincial research funding	Research NS to expand and increase

¹ Increasing conversion of programs to online or distance delivery in the post-COVID-19 environment can be reasonably expected to reduce the number of programs which have experiential learning components.

Supporting Measures: Youth Mandate

MEASURE	BASE YEAR DATA (2016-17) Unless otherwise indicated	2020-21 YEAR DATA		
		2020-21 Target	Status Update	2021-22 Target
Unemployment rate among youth 15-34	10.8% (2016 NS Average) 9.3% (2016 National Average)	NS rate at or below national rate	13.5% (2020 NS Average) 13.6% (2020 National Average)	NS rate at or below national rate
Unemployment rate of youth ages 15-24	10.9% (2016 NS Average) 13.1% (2016 National Average)	NS rate at or below national rate	17.2% (2020 NS Average) 20.1% (2020 National Average)	NS rate at or below national rate
Employment rate of youth ages 15-34	66.3% (2016 NS Average) 68.6% (2016 National Average)	NS rate at or above national rate	65.0% (2020 NS Average) 64.4% (2020 National Average)	NS rate at or above national rate
Employment rate of First Nations youth ages 15-34	45.7% (First Nations in Nova Scotia) (2016) 62.7% (NS Average) (2016)	As good as provincial employment rate for youth ages 15-34	N/A ²	As good as provincial employment rate for youth ages 15-34
Employment rate of African Nova Scotian youth ages 15-34	53.4% (African Nova Scotian) (2016) 62.7% (NS Average) (2016)	As good as provincial employment rate for youth ages 15-34	N/A ³	As good as provincial employment rate for youth ages 15-34
Net gain of youth aged 15-34	68 (2016)	Continued gain	921 (2020)	Continued gain
% of international students who graduate from NS post-secondary institutions become permanent residents	5.8% (2016)	10% ⁴	7.1% ⁵	10%

² Employment rate of First Nations and African Nova Scotian youth ages 15-34 data reported by Statistics Canada every five years. Labour statistics from the 2021 Canadian Census are scheduled to be released November 30, 2022.

³ Ibid.

⁴ One Nova Scotia Commission 10-year target.

⁵ As per the ONENS dashboard: The gross number of international post-secondary students transitioning to permanent residency has been increasing since 2015 but fell significantly in 2020 due to the global pandemic. In 2019, 12.8% of foreign students chose to stay in Nova Scotia post-graduation, but by 2020 this share had fallen to 7.1%. Even with a rapid increase in the number of international students choosing to study in Nova Scotia, the overall retention rate has risen considerably in recent years. The retention rate increased from a low of 3.4% in 2015 to a high of 12.9% in 2018, reaching and exceeding the target set out in the OneNS Report. While these are impressive numbers historically, the sudden drop in 2020 is concerning. We will need to recover to the level of success we have seen in recent years if we are to achieve our target in 2024.

Advance inclusion and employability for all

Nova Scotia Works Employment Services

- 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 2020-2021 and will continue to be developed in 2021-2022. These services are vital to reaching all Nova Scotians; a particular emphasis is placed on employers, youth, parents, and job seekers for whom transportation to in-person service is a barrier. This platform will help students plan to join the labour market, employers connect with job seekers, and job seekers connect with services that will help them find employment.

Through the *Nova Scotia Works Diversity and Inclusion Initiative* 16 African Nova Scotian / Persons of African Descent have been hired to join over 40 existing Black Career Practitioners in Nova Scotia Works Centres across the province; together they will help individuals to develop plans for finding work and prosperous futures. Mentorships have been formed to support the new hires. \$2.5 million in funding from the Canada-Nova Scotia Labour Market Development Agreement enabled the permanent career practitioner positions to be created as an action to increasing the province's capacity to meet the employment needs of Black Nova Scotians.

- The *NS Works Summer Internship* was offered for the first time in 2020-2021 and plans are in place to support the initiative for a second year. Thirty-four interns were employed at NS Works/ Nova Scotia Career Development Association (NSCDA) / Centre for Employment Innovation (CEI) in the Summer of 2020 and 34 paid summer internships will be available across the Nova Scotia Works System and with Immigrant Settlement Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) and Phoenix Youth in 2021-2022 in support of youth service provision and development of the Career Practitioner profession.
- Through the *NS Works French Language Service - Expansion Initiative*, Employment Nova Scotia began the development of a program to support five additional positions in Nova Scotia Works centres across the province for French speaking career practitioners. Through this, they engaged Francophone career practitioners from within the system to create strategies to enhance French Language services for job seekers across the province.
- The *NS Works School Liaison Initiative*, in partnership with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, added four new liaisons (one in each region in the province) for a total of nine liaison across the province to support students leaving high school to explore the labour market in Nova Scotia and to support those individuals who will move directly into the workforce through job search support and labour market information.

Skills Online Nova Scotia Initiative

- With little in-person training available to help employers get training for their employees, LAE expanded free online training programs through the Skills Online Nova Scotia Initiative. Six hundred and nineteen new employers and 3,489 employees took advantage of the program in 2020-2021.

Training and Attachment Programs for Nova Scotians

- The department began the development of a marketing campaign for employment services (NS Works) and the suite of labour and employment programs to ensure Nova Scotians are fully aware of supports available. The campaign will leverage the NS Works' system of career and training supports for individuals and human resource supports for employers, with 53 locations across the province. Working closely with local employers and business partners, these service providers offer career counselling, job readiness and job search skills, short courses in essential skills, connections to local jobs, and access to other employment and training support programs. In addition, the Targeted Referral and Feedback system, which is an interchange of information between the federal government's EI claim system and LAE was also used to proactively reach out to new EI claimants to advise them about services and programs available to them at the time of their EI application.
- In early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on Nova Scotia's labour market, sending unemployment from its lowest levels in decades to historic highs. It laid bare significant socio-economic inequities and accelerated longer-term labour market shifts. In response to changes in the labour market, a new temporary stream was created under the Skills Development Program training benefit that expedited access to the program for those who had worked in the Accommodation and Food Services and Wholesale & Retail Trade sectors and needed retraining for new jobs. This rapid-response approach supported a dramatic labour market shift and helped redistribute labour in the province within sectors that are experiencing transitions.

Workplace-based Learning

- To meet the evolving needs of small and medium sized businesses in Nova Scotia the department quickly transitioned to online delivery of the Workplace Education Initiative program, ensuring continued delivery of essential skills programs to working Nova Scotians. There has been an upward trend in the demand for e-commerce skills and upskilling in a digital environment. New programs in the areas of e-commerce and financial management have been developed and were delivered in multiple regions across the province.

As the Workplace Education Initiative continued to evolve and grow in the online space, quality instruction was made a priority. By the end of March 2021, the department implemented a new compensation model that includes tiers to recognize more experienced instructors who have participated in mandatory professional development. Planning activity for 2021-2022 is underway to ensure that all Workplace Education Initiative instructors have access to professional development training. Additionally, a list of Workplace Education Initiative programs has been generated and planning for framework development in 2021-2022 is underway.

- The department supported work on the expansion and enhancement of the SkillsOnline NS platform to include sector-specific landing pages and custom content. Sector Councils were highly engaged in this work to ensure that the format and content reflects the immediate needs of the respective sectors. The first pilot Marketplace (Trucking Human Resources Sector

Council) began in early November. These changes supported employers during the pandemic when online training was the only option to upskill their workforce.

Employer Diversity Bonus

- The employer diversity bonus was implemented for positions beginning in the Spring 2020 and was promoted to program applicants during the application period, starting in December 2019. In summer 2020, approximately 40% of all co-op employees hired self-identified as a member of a designated diversity group, a total of 177. In the fall, the figure was 35%, or 84 students, compared to 20% and 35 students in the same semester in 2019. Additionally, over the 2020 summer and fall terms, the number of diverse and international students hired through the program has more than doubled, to 257 (compared to 103 in the same terms in 2019).

Youth Horizontal Collaboration

- A government-wide youth structure remains in place to support a coordinated, collaborative effort to support youth (18-34) employment. Senior Officials from across government are working collaboratively on removing employment barriers. Joint efforts and priority areas include: working with community to improve African Nova Scotian (ANS) youth employment; providing underserved youth with the skills, training and support to connect to careers in the IT sector; and pathways of newcomer youth and youth engagement.
- The Province has invested \$1.3 million over three years to support Nova Scotian youth who are currently underrepresented in the workforce. The funding provides free training and other assistance to prepare them for jobs in the information technology sector. Training will be delivered by NPower Canada, a registered charity with a mission to reduce poverty in Canada and a focus on launching underserved youth into IT careers. Supported by the horizontal youth table, NPower will help enroll 350 youth in their program over the next three years. Youth will participate in a free 15-week IT training program including access to wrap around supports, a social worker and life skills and upon completion, gain an entry-level position in the IT sector. Based on success in other Canadian jurisdictions, 280 youth will complete the program and 224 will attach to the workforce in IT or continue to further education. Recruitment of additional youth is underway and training of the first 50 youth cohort began in January 2021.

NPower Canada launched its first youth cohort in February 2021 with over half of the youth participants identifying as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color). NPower Canada has begun recruitment for its second cohort which began in May 2021. The LAE Youth Lead continues to facilitate many connections for NPower Canada, including from across government, within the Departments of Community Services (DCS) and Health and Wellness (DHW), as well as the Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA).

NPower hosted a resource fair which included presentations from Labour and Advanced Education, NS Works, DCS (Employment Support and Income Assistance) and NSHA (mental health). Over 50 youth attended, and engagement levels were high. Youth demonstrated a strong interest in pursuing the services available as well as directing their peers to potential opportunities (including NPower). LAE was also able to support African Nova Scotia youth to participate in a pre-trades and entrepreneurship program delivered by Common Good Solutions through Federal Youth Employment and Skills Strategy (YESS) funding.

Diverse and Inclusive Apprenticeship Initiatives

- Under the auspices of the Diversity and Inclusion Framework: *Building Equitable Pathways*, the NSAA continues to develop and support initiatives to increase participation of women, Indigenous Peoples, African-Nova Scotians, and other groups currently underrepresented in the apprenticeship system.
 - In 2020-2021, NSAA hired an independent consultant to begin work on the renewal of the Diversity and Inclusion Framework: *Building Equitable Pathways*. A representative advisory team was established, first voice focus groups with apprentices and employers were held and a survey was conducted to inform the Framework. The Framework will be completed in 2021-2022 and launched at the Agency's annual industry meeting. NSAA continued active collaborations with the Aboriginal Apprenticeship Advisory Committee and the Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs to support awareness and capacity building in those communities. Direct outreach was accomplished through the delivery of Apprenticeship 101, bridging programs and funded partnerships with Aboriginal Peoples Training & Employment Commission (APTEC), East Preston Empowerment Academy (EPEA), Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS), Mi'kmaw Economic Benefits Office (MEBO) and YWCA. NSAA continued to apply a social equity lens to its programs and established an equity service delivery committee to identify internal improvements. Additional initiatives are discussed in other sections of this report.
 - Twenty African Nova Scotia participants successfully completed the Pathways to Shipbuilding 2-year project initiative, 19 are now employed at Irving Shipbuilding Inc.
 - In support of greater economic inclusion in the skilled trades, procurement in the Cape Breton Infrastructure projects will target that 25% of all craft/trade hours are to be worked by apprentices of which 10% must be worked by apprentices from underrepresented groups. A monitoring and compliance framework has been developed in partnership with the construction sector. To date, the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency and the Skills and Learning Branch have invested over \$500,000 to support skills upgrading, certification preparation training, and programs for equity-seeking individuals to attach to the workforce.
 - A Trade Advisory Committee (TAC) was formed to further review the application to designate Black Beauty Culture Hair Innovator (BBCHI) as a trade and determine the scope of the proposed trade. The TAC is composed of representatives from the cosmetology industry, natural hair care service providers, and private career colleges who offer courses in Hairstyling.

Apprentice Award Trust

- There are numerous costs that pose significant barriers to commencement and completion of apprenticeship training programs. These vary anywhere from the financial costs of training (books, tools, etc.), to the transaction costs of traveling to and from the community college where the technical training takes place. Moreover, the opportunity cost of paid work foregone through in-school, technical training is another cost-related barrier. In 2020-2021, the Trustees amended the Trust to expand eligibility to all levels of non-Red Seal trades and, in response to financial barriers apprentices were experiencing during COVID-19, all awards are being disbursed monthly rather than twice per year.

Call for Concepts – Return to Work Community Partnerships

- The program invested \$10 million to support 25 communities through the Back to Work Community Partnership initiative so they can plan and deliver short-term programs aimed at helping people build skills and connect to the local workforce. The Back to Work Community Partnership focuses on helping employers hire skilled workers and supports people, especially those from underrepresented groups, to prepare, train, and connect to meaningful employment. The project received a maximum of \$500,000 and will last between 12 and 18 months. The programs will address specific community needs, such as literacy and essential skills training, work placements and specific on-the-job training, including some trades.

Worker’s Emergency Bridge Program

- The department supported the development and the administration of the appeal’s process for the Worker Emergency Bridge Fund. The program helped Nova Scotians who were self-employed or laid-off, who did not qualify for Employment Insurance, to receive a one-time payment of \$1,000.

Foster responsive and sustainable learning systems

Work-Integrated Learning (Post-Secondary Accessibility)

- The existing work-integrated learning programming at Saint Mary’s University (SMU), Cape Breton University (CBU) and the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) was expanded to be available year-round instead of the summer only. The program, which provides work -integrated learning opportunities for students with permanent disabilities, was also extended to Acadia and St. Francis Xavier Universities, where program coordinators and employer outreach staff were put in place to begin delivering work-integrated learning opportunities in 2020-2021.
- A Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) working group was established to assist with effectively delivering programming under pandemic conditions. Consisting of representatives from all institutions participating in the WIL program and facilitated by Post-Secondary Accessibility Services (PSAS), in 2020-2021 the group focused on reinforcing program advancements to date and planning for program delivery in the post-pandemic environment.

Nova Scotia Loan Forgiveness Program (Student Assistance)

- The Nova Scotia Student Assistance Loan Forgiveness Program was enhanced by expanding eligibility to students in certificate and diploma programs at Nova Scotia universities and the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC). Examples of programs newly eligible under Loan Forgiveness include: Medical Lab Technology, Practical Nursing, Welding, Human Resource Management, Continuing Care Assistants and many more. Nova Scotia continues to provide one of the best student assistance programs in the country. Provincial loans are interest-free and there are upfront grants, loan forgiveness and the Nova Scotia University Student Bursary. Combined, an eligible student can receive more than \$40,000 over the course of their studies they do not have to repay.
- The Nova Scotia Loan Forgiveness Program has helped many young people start their careers with less debt after graduation. Government has forgiven about \$8 million in Nova Scotia

student loans for more than 1,000 Nova Scotia students who graduated from Nova Scotia universities in 2020. Additionally, as of August 1, 2020, eligible borrowers who study at Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) or in university-based certificate and diploma programs can, like university undergraduates, also have their Nova Scotia student loan debt eliminated.

MyPath Portal (Student Assistance)

- The department moved forward with updating the MyPath Portal in 2020-2021. The portal is a primary interface for students to monitor the status of student assistance applications, receive estimates of any assistance for which they may be eligible, securely upload documentation, and communicate with the NS Student Assistance Office. Originally launched in 2014, the portal requires upgrading, particularly to enhance its compatibility with the assistive technologies used by permanently disabled students. Both a project manager and a technical consulting firm have been engaged to build the enhancements and the project was formally launched in November 2020. At year end, the discovery phase was completed, which included stakeholder consultations (internal and external), screen mock-ups and significant user testing. The project's beta phase is planned for 2021-2022.

Medical School Seats Expansion

- Provincial funding was approved in 2020-2021 to support the Dalhousie School of Medicine adding 12 new seats with a particular focus on rural areas and underrepresented groups, including Mi'kmaq / other Indigenous and African Nova Scotians. This is in addition to the four new seats that were added in 2019-2020, resulting in a total of 16 new first year seats at the medical school.
- Dalhousie School of Medicine has made improvements to attract more Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotians, including a change to admission requirements and creating a seat for a Mi'kmaq community leader on the selection committee. As well, Dalhousie plans to create stand-alone cohorts for Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian students in the Bachelor of Sciences (Medical Sciences) undergraduate program for 2021-2022.
- To attract more Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotians to the programs and to discuss the possibility of further enhancements to the admission criteria, LAE and DHW established a new working group on Medical Education. The working group will continue to work to improve the recruitment and retention of Mi'kmaq / other Indigenous and African Nova Scotian students in the program and identify other potential opportunities to support access for these communities to medical education programs.

Nursing School Seats Expansion

- Labour and Advanced Education, in collaboration with the Department of Health and Wellness, received funding to add 62 Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BScN) first year seats at Cape Breton University (CBU), which supports government investments in new and expanded health care facilities in Cape Breton. As well, eight seats were added at the Yarmouth campus of the Dalhousie University School of Nursing to respond to demand in the Southwest Nova Scotia region.

- The department established two working groups to guide the recruitment of African Nova Scotians and Mi'kmaq students. CBU has created a new position which is their first African Nova Scotian Campus Coordinator, and a committee was struck to work on increasing applications from African Nova Scotian communities. The Director of the CBU School of Nursing has also joined a national Indigenous advisory group.
- In consultation with Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey, CBU is working on initiatives for recruitment and retention of Mi'kmaq students. The Director of Mi'kmaw and Indigenous Post-Secondary Recruitment and Retention for Labour and Advanced Education will chair an advisory committee to help attract more Mi'kmaq students to the CBU program. The committee will include key Mi'kmaq representation in the areas of health and post-secondary education.

Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning (NSSAL) Review

- The department implemented an updated funding model, effective July 1, 2020 which resulted in new two-year agreements with service providers. As of September 1, 2020, learner eligibility was expanded for all non-credential programs. The department also developed and issued an Expression of Interest for the Digital Skills Sandbox Concept and selected 13 service providers to participate.

Harmonized Trades Training

- The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency (NSAA) continues to be an active participant in harmonization initiatives in the Atlantic region and at the national level with the aim of providing greater consistency in training and improving apprentice mobility nationally. New harmonized training programs, including development of curriculum and exams, were initiated in collaboration with employers, tradespersons, and instructors in the Atlantic region for the Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Mechanic, Auto Body and Collision Technician and Powerline Technician trades. Development work is ongoing in the Insulator (Heat & Frost) and Sheet Metal Worker trades. Level 1 of the new harmonized programs was implemented in the September 2020-2021 training year for the Boilermaker, Heavy Duty Equipment Technician, and Truck and Transport Mechanic trades.
- At the national level, Nova Scotia industry representatives and instructors participated in workshops to develop and validate occupational standards and examination banks for 15 Red Seal trades: Agricultural Equipment Technician; Bricklayer; Cabinetmaker; Carpenter; Construction Electrician; Glazier; Hairstylist; Industrial Electrician; Instrumentation and Control Technician; Mobile Crane Operator; Motorcycle Technician; Parts Technician; Recreation Vehicle Service Technician; Roofer; and Truck and Transport Mechanic.

Apprenticeship Innovation and Promotion

- The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency (NSAA) has launched a two-phase 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 promote the skilled trades as a quality post-secondary career option to youth, parents/guardians, and educators.
- Phase one of the marketing campaign consisted of a thirty-second radio spot and social media ads. These went to market February-March 2021. The concept for phase II, "How Futures are

Shaped” focuses on “heads in, hands on” messaging and will consist of a 30-second commercial, an audio ad, billboards, bus shelter and internal/external bus posters and banners, and advertising on social and digital media channels. Phase two is scheduled to be in market August/September 2021-2022 and run until March 31, 2022.

- Work continues with the Apprenticeship Management System (AMS), an online apprenticeship system aimed at improving access to information and efficiencies for apprentices, journeypersons, employers, training providers and government apprenticeship management staff. AMS is being developed by the provinces of Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Manitoba; it is part of a major initiative to maximize similarities among apprenticeship authorities and modernize apprenticeship management services. The system is currently undergoing testing and implementation is planned in 2021. Nova Scotia is currently working on the implementation phase of the project.

NSAA 2020-2025 Strategic Plan: *Building on Success*

- NSAA developed its second, five-year strategic plan (2020-2025) through extensive consultations of over 100 participants and 30 survey responses with our industry, equity-seeking, and training provider partners. The development of the plan fulfills a requirement of the Apprenticeship Board under NSAA’s Operating Charter. This new plan, entitled, *Building on Success*, expands on the success of the inaugural strategic plan. The plan can be found at: <https://www.nsapprenticeship.ca/sites/default/files/files/Strategic-Plan-2020-25.pdf>
- The new strategic plan positions the Agency to continue its role as the critical hub of trades programming in the province – building relationships with industry and equity partners, making information, learning supports and guidance easily accessible for all apprenticeship clients, and ensuring our legislative and policy framework is responsive to apprentice and employer needs. The Agency will continue work to improve the perception of apprenticeship as a viable post-secondary pathway and career of choice with Nova Scotia’s youth, parents/guardians, and educators.

Apprenticeship Experiential Learning Opportunities

- The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency Youth Outreach Coordinator delivered 11 virtual high school presentations to a total of 174 students in Options and Opportunities (O2), co-op or skilled trade courses. Additionally, 7 presentations were given to other organizations on youth programs with whom the Agency has funding agreements, with 112 participants attending.
- The Agency has continued to work with our youth program partners in the delivery of experiential opportunities and programs to high school youth in the skilled trades.
 - The Building Futures for Youth program with the Construction Association of Nova Scotia had 198 youth applicants, with 180 virtual interviews and accepted 88 students to the program.
 - The TestDrive program with the Automotive Sector Council reached 1,420 students (views) through videos, resulting in 51 applicants with 21 students accepted to the program.
 - The Serve It Up! Program with the Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia received 35 applicants in 7 Regional Centres for Education (RCE) of which 17 students were accepted in 5 RCEs. As a result of the difficulties in the restaurant industry due to the pandemic, the placements may not be offered in summer 2021.

- Techploration engaged 1,202 youth participants using virtual learning platforms through the Alumnae Conference, Online Mentorship, and Techploration Goes to School events.
- Skills Canada-Nova Scotia engaged over 6,360 youth through its virtual Essential Skills Challenges, Skills 101 virtual series and two Skilled Futures in Technology videos.
- The Nova Scotia Construction Sector Council (CSC) hosted seven tours of the Trades Exhibition Hall, engaging 41 participants (40 were female). In addition, the CSC provided construction kits with instruction videos to schools and youth program partners. The Mobile Construction Experience was deployed for the Mainland Building Trades job fair and the Digby High School trades conference for African Nova Scotian students. This activity provided exposure to 110 individuals regarding the construction trades.

Enable safe, fair, diverse, and productive workplaces

E-Mental Health Supports for PSE Students

- Labour and Advanced Education continues to support HealthyMindsNS, a suite of e-mental health resources for post-secondary students at Nova Scotia universities and the NSCC. With support from the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency, access to the suite of resources was extended to apprentices in September 2020. The importance of the e-mental health supports has been heightened given the exceptional challenges students are facing in these unprecedented times.
- Government promoted World Mental Health Day (October 10th) through social media and these posts were widely shared by institutions, student groups, and other organizations. In March 2021, Labour and Advanced Education undertook a six-week organic social media campaign to raise awareness of the individual resources available through HealthyMindsNS. The campaign, supported by student groups and organizations, had an extensive reach. The HealthyMindsNS Committee has now turned its attention to planning shared marketing and communications activities for the September 2021 orientation to address the ongoing need to raise student awareness of resources available through HealthyMindsNS.
- The HealthyMindsNS Committee is currently considering some changes to the resources provided through HealthyMindsNS for the upcoming academic year. This follows a 15-month review of the supports and services that considered vendor metrics, and student and institutional feedback. License agreements between current vendors and the Province are in place until August 31, 2021 and include the option of a one-year renewal.
- The Department of Health and Wellness has established a Governance Group that includes representatives from Labour and Advanced Education to guide the implementation of an action plan that identifies areas and ways in which it may be beneficial to coordinate and collaborate on e-mental health and addictions services across organizations, recognizing that there are already several initiatives underway to enhance access to mental health and addiction supports through technology, including HealthyMindsNS.

Sexual Violence Prevention on Post-secondary Campuses

- LAE continues to support the universities and the NSCC as they implement the recommendations in the *Changing the Culture of Acceptance* (2017) report, through the provision of funding for the Sexual Violence Prevention Grant. This grant supports primary prevention efforts that build capacity at our post-secondary institutions for the prevention of sexual violence on campuses. The Provincial Sexual Violence Prevention Committee continues to meet to collaborate and share best practices on sexual violence prevention initiatives. The committee reviews and provides feedback on any proposals for grant funding submitted to LAE. In 2020-2021, LAE approved 11 proposals that support primary prevention of sexual violence on campuses. Budgeted funding of \$470,000 for sexual violence prevention was allocated in full. Some of the approved work includes:
 - support for a provincial Post-Secondary Sexual Violence Prevention Coordinator position, which is focused on collaborating with key partners to implement the *Changing the Culture of Acceptance* (2017) report recommendations;
 - support for peer-based Student Liaison positions at each university and a satellite position at NSCC;
 - support for the third phase of the Culture and Perspectives on Sexual Assault Policy research program to help campuses become survivor-centric, prioritizing the rights, needs and wishes of the survivor;
 - engage male-identifying students in ending sexualized violence on Nova Scotia campuses using the Man-Made program as a primary prevention tool;
 - support the evaluation of culture change related to sexual violence on Nova Scotia campuses and help guide decision making with respect to sexual violence prevention initiatives through a SenseMaker questionnaire and SenseMaking workshops;
 - support for the second phase of Open Resource, a platform for institutions and community partners to design and deliver sexual violence education and prevention materials that are evidence-based, targeted and proactive to ensure students receive information they need to engage in a positive and safe way;
 - support to the Nova Scotia Bystander Intervention Education (Waves of Change) program, with modules that include preventative education of sexual violence such as: consent; responding to a disclosure; alcohol and drug harm reduction; and anti-oppression training for students; and
 - support for facilitator training for Flip the Script, an established prevention program that provides training and tools for those at risk of sexual violence.

Fair Registration Practices Act (FRPA) Review

- In response to the recommendations of the *Fair Registration Practices Act* legislative review that was completed in 2019, Labour and Advanced Education implemented the following changes:
 - new processes were created to streamline and make clear the review process linked with fair registration practices for Regulatory Bodies;
 - a new annual survey and review template was created;
 - the introduction of mandatory requirements for regulatory bodies to demonstrate compliance if deemed to be non-compliant; and
 - a third-party website was decommissioned and the LAE website was updated with new tools and resources for Regulating bodies to assist with meeting obligations outlined within the Act.

Welcoming and Inclusive Workplaces

- Employer engagement sessions occurred throughout the province in 2020-2021. Employers were asked about how diversity and inclusion had been considered in their human resources and leadership practices and what they do to cultivate a sense of belonging and connection in their workplaces. A 'What We Heard' report will be produced in 2021 to provide a summary of findings and recommendations to inform the revision of the department's *Welcoming Workplaces Toolkit*. The department continues to work with the Nova Scotia Association of Community Business Development Corporations (NSACBDC) to explore opportunities to add more inclusive content to NS SkillsOnline.
- NS Works Employment Services Centres' Employer Engagement Specialists, who offer recruitment and retention support to employers across the province, helped employers advance their diversity hiring recruitment tools and practices and assisted employers in finding diverse candidates in communities across the province.

Safety Outcomes

- COVID-19 resulted in a substantial shift in compliance inspection activity. Workplace inspection activities approximately doubled since the beginning of Nova Scotia's COVID-19 outbreak in mid-March 2020. Subject to prior risk assessment, on-site inspections were conducted based on priority public needs and response to the most serious safety issues, with a particular focus on measures related to COVID-19 risks. The department also worked with industry groups and the Department of Health and Wellness to support the development of industry-specific workplace safety response plans for addressing COVID-19 risks.
- The department launched the 1-800-9LABOUR Awareness campaign aimed at informing Nova Scotians if they have questions or concerns about workplace or public safety issues. The campaign included print and digital display advertising as well as social media components.
- The department worked closely with other government departments to support the work of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and engaged with clients and stakeholders to support the development of over 40 business sector re-opening guidance documents. LAE continues to support the development of responsive industry-specific COVID-19 safety plans, protocols, guidelines, and support measures across a broad range of private and public sector workplaces. The department has developed a new COVID-19 workplace guideline to better support business on reducing the spread of the virus. This information will be shared with stakeholders and be made available online.
- Support for COVID-19 response remained the priority focus. The department continued to support development of industry-specific COVID-19 safety plans, protocols, and guidelines.
- The department continued to engage with high-risk sectors on their own industry specific occupational health and safety initiatives, including the construction, fishing, farming, and health care sector.

- 2020-2021 was a busy year on the enforcement side. Investigations in workplace safety incidents were ongoing with 12 long form charges laid and 5 convictions under the Nova Scotia *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.
- In collaboration with the Department of Justice, work neared completion on a program to provide Support for Victims and Victims Families to support those impacted by workplace safety incidents.
- Opportunities for digital governance and regulatory compliance such as: remote compliance verification; digital stakeholder engagement; and e-commerce continued to be identified and implemented as part of efforts to modernize engagement and verification processes.
- Engagement continued with industry sectors to address long term safety opportunities in their respective industries regarding new technology or traditional equipment.

Occupational Health and Safety Advisory Council (OHSAC/Council)

- The Council has continued to meet virtually and reviewed the insights gathered from training providers and participants related to Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) training; they are currently drafting a final report. The Council also started reviewing policy priorities in other jurisdictions to inform work on new priorities for the next three years.

Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) Consultations

- Consultations with firefighters regarding cancer presumption continued on a remote/virtual basis. The second round of consultation occurred in July 2020. Feedback from the consultations supported more promotional work with firefighters around reducing exposures. Amendments to the *Workers' Compensation Act* extending coverage to all volunteer firefighters came into force October 30, 2020.
- The WCB and LAE continue to work together to explore options and costing implications for expanding the list of cancer types included in the firefighters' presumption.
- The WCB and LAE continue to meet and discuss how to engage stakeholders to enhance WCB's offering to Nova Scotians.

Workers' Advisers Program (WAP)

- The department is assessing a new option for a case management service for the Workers' Advisers Program. The case management project commenced in November with the alpha stage, which identified both the specific business/system needs of the Workers' Advisers Program and how the Province's recently built case management service can be customized to accommodate these needs. The alpha stage of the case management project was completed in early 2021.

Temporary Foreign Worker Provisions and Process Review

- The department has improved the efficiency and effectiveness of the Temporary Foreign Worker process by making continuous improvement changes over the 2020-2021 year, as well as creating a foreign worker program process map and using the LEAN Six Sigma methodology to

identify and facilitate further review, analysis, and continuous improvement. Work on temporary foreign worker provisions and processes will continue into 2021-2022.

Women in Trades

- The NSAA is committed to support and partner with organizations such as Women Unlimited and the Office to Advance Women Apprentices (OAWA) to ensure trades pathways that work for women are built collaboratively, barriers are identified and addressed, and more opportunities for women to complete apprenticeship exist across the province.
- NSAA established a Women in Trade Office in 2019. The main objective of the office is to recruit, retain and advance women in the skilled trades where they are underrepresented, and to provide women with a more successful apprenticeship pathway. The NSAA, in collaboration with New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador, established the Women in Construction (WIC): Advancing Women in Apprenticeship Pilot. The Women in Construction Pilot funding agreement was extended with Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) until March 31, 2022. The 20 spots allocated to Nova Scotia have been filled and employers have started diversity and inclusion awareness training as part of the pilot.
- The Agency has also developed and implemented the Women in Skilled Trades (WIST) initiative, which focused on supporting successful apprenticeship pathways for women in the Industrial/Manufacturing, Motive Power, and Service Sectors. The WIST pilot ended on March 31, 2021; however, throughout the pilot, 20 employers participated, providing employment opportunities in the skilled trades to 22 women; all of whom were registered as new apprentices in the apprenticeship system. Over the course of the pilot, female apprentices accumulated hours, skills, and hands-on work experience that helped them progress in their apprenticeship program. Employers participated in Respectful Workplace Training. Existing female apprentices were also supported throughout this initiative and 14 successfully completed their apprenticeship programs while another 29 progressed in hours and training.
- The Women in Trades Office hosted a successful virtual celebration event: *An Evening of Recognition in Celebration of You*, to celebrate the achievements of women working in the skilled trades and to thank them for their contributions in building a skilled trades workforce in Nova Scotia. The event theme coincided with the International Women's Day theme, "Choose to Challenge."

Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Act (ATQA)

- In 2018, the *Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Act* was amended to improve and enhance the suite of enforcement tools available to the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency as the regulatory body responsible for regulated trades occupations. Administrative penalties may be issued to an employer and/or employee who contravenes the Act, General Regulations or Trade Regulations by failing to comply with a compliance order that has been issued. These penalties allow for progressive fines of up to \$5,000.00. The Agency has developed a policy and procedure to assist the compliance and enforcement officers in determining if an administrative penalty is the most appropriate tool in the case of non-compliance. To date, no administrative penalties have been issued; however, in 2020-2021 there were 432 site visits, 28 stop-work orders were issued, and three summary offence tickets were issued.

- As part of the amendments in 2018, the Agency has the regulatory authority to register students in pre-apprenticeship programs. In 2020, nearly 1,500 trades students at the NSCC were registered with the Agency, which provided automatic work permits for the students' work terms and provided the Agency with the information to support those students as they transition to apprenticeship. Work is ongoing to register students in private career colleges.

Create opportunities for growth

NSCC Marconi Campus Relocation

- The NSCC Marconi Campus is being relocated to the waterfront site in downtown Sydney. The relocation will help revitalize the downtown while creating a more community-accessible space. The department received approval in June 2020 to proceed with the construction phase of the new campus; construction started in July 2020. The department continues to chair the steering committee that oversees the project, which includes representatives from other provincial departments and the NSCC. The project is on schedule with the new campus expected to be open for September 2024.

Post-Secondary Education Sandboxes

- The Post-Secondary Sandbox Grant Program was introduced by LAE in 2019-2020 to enhance supports for students participating in the sandboxes. \$300,000 in funding for the grant was provided for each of the last two years - \$150,000 from LAE through Post-Secondary Innovation Team funding and \$150,000 from the Department of Inclusive Economic Growth. A total of eight projects were funded in 2020-2021.

Science and Industry Pathway

- The Science and Industry Pathway initiative, which supports the delivery of Mitacs programs, identifies placements for post-secondary students to gain valuable experiential learning opportunities with private sector organizations in Nova Scotia. In 2020-2021 the federal government provided additional investments across the country in the Mitacs program, which supported a further 210 internship placements in Nova Scotia. LAE provides annual funding of \$1 million to the program which supports 250 internships, with an additional 35 funded in 2020-2021. The program also received additional funding in 2020-2021 from Nova Scotia Business Inc (NSBI) and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) to support 81 additional internships.

Research Nova Scotia (Research NS)

- Labour and Advanced Education continues to support Research NS through the provision of annual funding and participation on the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors adopted a mission-oriented strategy to fulfill RNS's mandate, selecting four mission areas that serve provincial priorities:
 1. A sustainable bio-economy;
 2. Climate change resilience and adaptation;
 3. The changing nature of work; and
 4. Healthy people and communities.

- The selection of a mission-oriented strategy and mission areas created a framework through which RNS can coalesce partners, programs, and resources, and is a significant step in support of the research ecosystem. As the strategy moves through its transition phase into full implementation, Research Nova Scotia’s impact will be measured through progress toward specific, targeted missions and research questions within these mission areas. A full evaluation framework will form part of the mission-oriented approach. While developing its long-term strategic approach, Research Nova Scotia continued to support and fund research that would advance knowledge, build capacity, inform decision-making, and improve the health, prosperity, and environment in Nova Scotia.
- Research NS developed a comprehensive performance management framework. The framework will include quantitative and qualitative indicators that will be used starting in fiscal 2021-2022. As the framework takes shape, it will include three central components:
 - Evaluation of the impact of Research NS, and the projects and programs that it supports;
 - Evaluation of corporate performance, including monitoring of key financial and administrative performance metrics; and
 - Evaluation of strategy implementation, including progress towards the contribution research is making to achieving the outcomes identified in the mission-oriented framework.
- In 2020-2021, through provincial funding support and Board leadership from LAE, the Department of Health and Wellness, and the Department of Inclusive Economic Growth (formerly Business), Research Nova Scotia contributed to important COVID-19 research conducted at our post-secondary institutions.

Innovation Team / Working Groups

- In 2020-2021, the Innovation Team and its working groups, government, post-secondary institutions, and EduNova advanced provincial innovation priorities, despite the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic. This work included the themes of cultural innovation, social equity, and international student recruitment and retention. For example:
 - The Social Equity working group advanced the development of open access, online training, and resources modules to support education equity using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Culturally Responsive Pedagogies (CRP) at post-secondary institutions.
 - The Student Recruitment and Retention working group continued to support and monitor funded projects led by EduNova, including: Study and Stay; Nova Scotia International Student Program Ambassador Awards; and Graduate Retention Research.
 - The Cultural Innovation working group advanced a pilot project, titled *Creative Campuses*, which highlighted and profiled the arts and culture events happening on post-secondary campuses across the province. The working group also supported a collaborative three-day virtual event that brought together students, community organizations, and other partners to work in teams and come up with ideas to address how international students can be better welcomed by and engaged with Nova Scotians and their communities.

Graduate to Opportunity (GTO) Program

- The Graduate to Opportunity (GTO) program helped recent graduates connect with jobs in Nova Scotia. In 2020, 322 graduates were supported by GTO. Applications to the Graduate to Opportunity program were approximately 1/3 higher between January - March 2021, compared to the same period in 2020. Despite the impact of the pandemic on youth employment, GTO had more applications by the end of the 2021 fiscal year than ever before and hired almost as many graduates as the previous, record-setting year.
- The START Program saw increased youth participation with 38% youth in 2018-2019 increasing to 43% in 2020-2021, in part due to the disproportionate unemployment youth felt during the pandemic.

Innovate to Opportunity (ITO) Program

- The Innovate to Opportunity program is a relatively newer program, and prior to COVID-19 was experiencing significant year over year growth. This growth has continued during the pandemic. As of March 31, 2021, application to the program nearly doubled, with 10 applications arriving between January - March 2021. 26 graduates were hired in 2020-2021, compared to sixteen 16 in 2019-2020.

Human Resource Capacity for Employers and Industry

- Nova Scotia Works Employment Services Centres have 29 Employer Engagement Specialists (EES) across the province who actively engage with employers in their daily work to increase HR capacity with regional employers and ensure that they are directed to relevant government and community resources.
- The Association of Industry Sector Councils (AISC) has developed a strategic plan and has successfully recruited, and is currently onboarding, a new General Manager whose primary focus is implementation of the new strategic plan. This plan is focused on growing a diverse and competitive provincial workforce and was developed with input from 15 different industry sector councils and significant investment and planning support from LAE's Sector Initiatives team. The Sector Initiatives team also delivered additional funding to Sector Councils and AISC to support economic recovery by ensuring that these workforce and sector leaders have the capacity they need to address pandemic-related demands while also maintaining sufficient capacity to continue to deliver pre-pandemic goals and priorities. Sector Initiatives also established a formal partnership with the Aquaculture Association of Nova Scotia (AANS) and is in the process of working with the AISC to support their full participation as the 16th 'sector council member' of the AISC. This partnership will support AANS in leading and delivering solutions to key workforce challenges and opportunities present in this high-growth-potential sector of the provincial economy.
- The Workplace Initiatives team within the department partnered with the Nova Scotia Association of Community Business Development Corporations (NSACBDC) and the 15 different Sector Councils to develop and launch sector-specific learning marketplaces within SkillsOnline/SkillsPass to ensure that relevant and meaningful training options reflecting current industry needs are readily available and easily accessible (free, online and asynchronous) to employers, employees, job seekers and sectors.

- The department's One Journey Initiative (OJI) continues to provide existing partners the flexibility and support needed to minimize impact to planned programs during COVID. The program also works to establish new partnerships and programming with sectors whose workforce and employer needs and goals align with the program's mandate. For example, the Sector Initiatives team worked with employers from the manufacturing and boat building sectors to establish a new Advanced Composites program to create opportunities for workforce attachment and address the immediate labour needs of these important economic sectors.
- The department partnered with the Nova Scotia Construction Sector Council to establish an Industry-Community Engagement (ICE) Coordinator to connect and coordinate the industrial, commercial, or institutional (ICI) construction industry, (contractors, and unions) in Cape Breton with underrepresented communities (women, African Nova Scotians, Aboriginal Peoples, differently abled individuals, and newcomers). The aim is to increase diversity, build capacity in the skilled trades, and improve employment opportunities in the region.
- There was an increase in the number of job postings advertised through the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture and the Nova Scotia Fisheries Sector Council by implementing Job Bank feeds. For the Nova Scotia Fisheries Sector Council, this resulted in an incremental gain of 18 postings from 15 employers, representing 455 vacancies.

Employment Research and Innovation

- Labour and Advanced Education continues to partner with the Centre for Employment Innovation (CEI). Work included:
 - New Opportunities for Work (NOW) Program wrap-up and dissemination of learning for use by stakeholders in their work and programming - knowledge mobilization;
 - Collaborative Knowledge Mobilization (CKMb) framework for New Opportunities for Work (NOW) Program was developed and a series of short case studies is being developed specific to each NOW proponent's project(s);
 - An educational partnership with the Coady International Institute that saw new certificates in evaluation, research, and the future of work launched. More than 60 Nova Scotians participated in the inaugural opportunity while others engaged in asset-based community development and women's leadership in community development. The Future of Work and Workers webinar series was completed in partnership with the Coady International Institute, with participation from Nova Scotia Works and other employment services providers across Nova Scotia;
 - Final stage development of the Collective Impact for Inclusive Youth Employment Initiative (previously named Nova Scotia Young Leaders Initiative), including the development of a youth-centred advisory board. This includes the young leaders research project;
 - Engagement with Nova Scotia Works service providers through *Communities of Learning* and diversity webinars for the *Nova Scotia Works Diversity and Inclusion Program*;
 - Finalization of environmental scans with Nova Scotia Works service provider organizations to understand current practices, policies, and approaches for diversity and inclusion as well as career development for young people; and

- Support of NS Works-led innovation projects, through evaluation, facilitation, or community engagement for projects such as: *NS Works French Language Service - Expansion Initiative*; *NS Works Summer Internship Program*; *Career Practitioner Certification Project*; and *NS Works Diversity and Inclusion Program, Phase 1 Persons of African Descent and African Nova Scotians*.

Minimize Regulatory Barriers

- Nova Scotia continues to work with other provinces and territories to align jurisdictional regulatory requirements and facilitate labour mobility and inter-jurisdictional commerce, including mutual recognition of Canadian Registration Number designs for pressure equipment, labour mobility for gasfitters.
- In support of the Canadian Association of Administrators of Labour Legislation, Nova Scotia played a key role in the creation of the second phase of the Pan Canadian Occupational Health and Safety Reconciliation Agreement which will reduce barriers for inter jurisdictional workers in Canada. The proposed agreement is expected to come into effect in 2021-2022.
- Nova Scotia continues to engage on assessing and revising the regulatory requirements for First Aid Requirements to align with other jurisdictions in Canada.

Supporting Measures: LAE Mandate

MEASURE	BASE YEAR DATA (2016-17) Unless otherwise indicated	2020 -21 YEAR DATA		
		2020-21 Target	Status Update	2021-22 Target
# of youth & immigrant matches (connectees) with NS employers through the Connector program	323 (2014-15)	400	676	500
# of connectors engaged in the Connector program	109 (2014-15)	125	73	100
# of connections that lead to employment	151	150	172	150
# of recent post-secondary graduates placed in full-time roles with employers in NS through Graduate to Opportunity	120 (2015-16)	250	322	330
# of Graduate to Opportunity employers that hire members of diversity groups	14	90	109	125
# of post-secondary graduates placed in full-time roles with employers in NS through the Innovate to Opportunity program	N/A	15	26	30
# of participants in New Opportunities for Work program	110 (November 2017)	150	177	Program finished in 2020-2021 ⁶
# of employers who hired a job seeker through the START program	578	600	425	600
# of Nova Scotia employers participating in workforce development and training through the Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive and the Workplace Education Initiative	1700 (2014-15)	1700	2896 ⁷	1700
# of Nova Scotia employees participating in workforce development and training through the Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive and the Workplace Education Initiative	8000 (2014-15)	8000	5699	8000
# of internship placements in the Science and Industry Pathway (Mitacs) program	176 total (116+60 special placements)	250 placements ⁸	576 placements (through LAE, NBSI, ACOA, and other federal government funding)	250 placements
% of apprentices who represent diverse populations (not including women)	10.4%	15%	15.2%	17%
% of female apprentices	6%	8%	7.8%	9%
# of students using the Loan Forgiveness program	1,151 ⁹	Approximately 1,100 students are expected to be eligible annually	1,790 students were awarded loan forgiveness in fiscal 2020-2021 ¹⁰	~ 2,150 students awarded loan forgiveness in fiscal 2021-2022 ¹¹

Supporting Measures: LAE Mandate

⁶ Measure to be discontinued. Program finished in 2020-2021.

⁷ COVID dramatically reduced in person training provision.

⁸ Target based on annual LAE funding of \$1 million.

⁹ Note that Nova Scotia Student Assistance systems do not differentiate between the Loan Forgiveness and Debt Cap programs: some of these students are in receipt of Debt Cap support.

¹⁰ The increase from the target is due to the elimination of the minimum debt threshold of \$28,560 for students who graduated on or after August 1, 2019.

¹¹ This increased target takes into account estimated number of graduates from diploma and certificate programs which can newly qualify for the program –i.e., NSCC programs.

MEASURE	BASE YEAR DATA (2016-17) Unless otherwise indicated	2020-21 YEAR DATA		
		2020-21 Target	Status Update	2021-22 Target
\$ allocated to increasing weekly Student Assistance amounts ¹²	Weekly amount from 2013-14 to 2016-17 was \$180 max. Increased to \$200/week in 2017-18	Given the permanent nature of the increased weekly allowance the ongoing cost will be approximately \$2.2M	N/A	N/A
# of organizations/employers participating in the Job Creation Partnership program	70	50	75	50
# of Skills Development Program participants who complete a training program	1,077	900	882 COVID-19 reduced training participation	900
% of Skills Development Program participants reached for follow-up employed 24-weeks (6months) after completing the program	88%	88%	80%	88%
Pass rate for GED	78% (2016 NS Average) 74.1% (2016 National Average)	Meet or exceed national average	69% (2020) National Average 69%	Meet or exceed national average
# of learners that achieved their high school diploma through the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning	541 (2014-15)	450	304 COVID-19 reduced participation	450
# of apprentices ¹³	6167	7000	7048	7200
# of new apprentices	1416	1500	973	1200
# of employers who have hired an apprentice	2131	2500	2145	2400
# of new employers in the apprenticeship system	260	220	160	200
# of apprentices that attend technical training	2169	2600	2262	2500

¹² Measure to be discontinued as this was a one-time increase in 2017-18 and does not accurately measure the annual, year over year, activities of their programs.

¹³ All data for the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency (NSAA) are preliminary. Final numbers will be available with the annual report.

5. Supplemental Information and Appendices

Key/interesting facts about LAE

- A one-time \$750 COVID-19 response grant was provided to post-secondary students with high financial need who received Nova Scotia Student Assistance for the 2020-2021 academic year. The grant provided non-repayable support to 7,900 university, community college, and private career college students to help them manage the financial impacts of COVID-19.
- An additional one-time \$800 COVID-19 access grant was provided to permanently disabled post-secondary students for the 2020-2021 academic year. The grant provided non-repayable support to 3,500 university, community college, and private career college students to help them manage the financial impacts of COVID-19, especially those related to educational equipment and connectivity.
- Regulatory accommodations were made for the delivery of training programs at private career colleges to allow for options which were flexible and responsive to the COVID-19 public health requirements. These have been amended to allow colleges a responsive way to maintain the integrity of student programs.
- In 2020-2021 the Province invested \$25 million to help Nova Scotia universities with the unexpected financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This included information technology, curriculum development, and additional supports for faculty, as well as increased cleaning, and other costs associated with public health directives.
- Since March 2020, Nova Scotia's universities and colleges have been working closely with the Province to ensure all necessary public health protocols are in place, allowing students to continue receiving quality education in ways that keeps both students and communities safe.
- Amendments to the Trade Union Procedure Regulations were made to enable the Labour Board to continue to operate effectively and efficiently during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. The amendments assisted with modernizing and improving the effectiveness of the Board's processes and procedures as well as reducing the administrative burden for businesses. Documents can now be served by e-mail, other electronic means, and by facsimile transmission, rather than exclusively in-person or by registered mail. In addition, notices or documents can now be posted in a workplace other than as a physical copy.
- The department introduced Technology Measures in employment funding programs, including the Skills Development Program, Self-Employment Program, and Apprenticeship Program Technology. The measures provided financial assistance to

individuals for the purchase of a computer, headsets/headphones, required computer software, and internet connection to participate in virtual learning environments.

- The Apprenticeship START program was temporarily expanded to employers outside of rural areas (Sydney, Truro, and Halifax) and now enables apprentices who were laid off to transfer to another employer and continue to receive START funding. It is anticipated that up to 400 new apprentices and 200 laid off apprentices could be hired through the expanded Apprenticeship START program. As of March 2021, employers of 84 apprentices benefited from the expansion.
- Through collaboration with the Cosmetology Association of Nova Scotia, a Hairstylist Trade Apprenticeship Pathway pilot launched its second pilot this winter with a goal of determining the viability of a permanent apprenticeship pathway for the hairstylist trade in Nova Scotia.
- To ease business burdens, the department provided a temporary deferral period for payment of technical safety fees.
- The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency and its clients were significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic; examinations were cancelled throughout the year. Apprentices could not attend technical training on-site, were impacted by job loss or underemployment, and many field operations were stalled. In response, our training providers quickly pivoted our technical training to be delivered virtually and clients were provided funding for technology supports. Clients were also exempted from level exams to enable their progression and many certification examinations were rescheduled with smaller groups. Field teams continued to interact with clients through various virtual tools. Whenever possible, virtual options were used to keep the agency connected with industry partners and stakeholders.

6. Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act

The *Public Interest of Wrongdoing Act* was proclaimed into law on December 20, 2011. The Act provides for government employees to be able to come forward if they reasonably believe that a wrongdoing has been committed or is about to be committed and they are acting in good faith. Section 18 of the Act states:

Each deputy head shall prepare an annual report of disclosures, including any findings of wrongdoing, recommendations and actions taken and shall make this report available to the public.

The following table is a summary of disclosures received by the Department of Labour and Advanced Education:

Information Required under Section 18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2020-2021
The number of disclosures received	0
The number of findings of wrongdoing	0
Details of each wrongdoing (insert separate row for each wrongdoing)	N/A
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing (insert separate row for each wrongdoing)	N/A