



Initiatives 2019



Centre for
Employment
Innovation
ext. St. Francis Xavier University
Extension Department

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome to the Centre for Employment Innovation	03
New Opportunities for Work Program	04
Applied Research	07
Evaluation	08
Communities of Learning	10
Case Study Analysis	11
Case Study Example	11
Social Innovation Lab	14
Youth Initiatives	16
Innovation Series	18
Our Team	19
Connect with Us	20

>Welcome to the Centre for Employment Innovation

The Centre for Employment Innovation (CEI) at St. Francis Xavier (StFX) University provides leadership, conducts research, fosters exemplary practices, and encourages collaboration in the development and delivery of employment services across Nova Scotia.

Through engagement and participatory research activities with its partners, the CEI works to build capacity, strengthen governance, enhance diversity and inclusion in the workplace, and increase the quality and effectiveness of employment services across the province, in order to foster a more skilled, resilient and productive workforce.

The CEI is an important component of the career development and employment services ecosystem in Nova Scotia. As part of a systems-focused approach to service excellence, the CEI conducts its activities in collaboration with the eighteen community-based Nova Scotia Works employment services providers, the Nova Scotia Career Development Association (NSCDA), and the Government of Nova Scotia's Department of Labour and Advanced Education.

The CEI and its system partners value the importance of employers to the employment ecosystem, working with them to determine their needs and strengths, while also providing the supports required to create safe, welcoming and inclusive workplaces. Emphasizing equity, transparency, and accountability in all of its innovative partnerships and diverse advisory board, its pilot and demonstration projects, and its rapidly growing applied research agenda, the CEI works to ensure that all Nova Scotians have access to high quality, evidence-based, and people-centered employment services and supports.

The CEI works to shift the socio-economic development narrative in communities, from a focus on weaknesses and deficits, to an emphasis on strengths, opportunities and assets. Further, the CEI complements the existing efforts to encourage social innovation, entrepreneurship, and enterprise activities across Nova Scotia, that are currently underway at StFX University's Innovation and Enterprise Centre (IEC).

In an effort to facilitate positive change within Nova Scotia, the CEI also connects with leading organizations who offer exemplary practices in career development, community development, and social and economic innovation – these organizations include but are not limited to provincial workforce innovation centres across Canada and StFX University's Coady International Institute.

Emerging from the Government of Nova Scotia's ongoing employment services transformation process, the CEI was awarded to StFX University in June 2016. From September 2016 to March 2017, the StFX Extension Department staff and government officials, engaged with workforce innovation centres across Canada and Nova Scotia based employment services partners, to guide the initial development and organizational structure of the CEI. A full complement of CEI staff was hired between April and July of 2017. This document outlines the key activities and priorities for the CEI since its official opening less than two years ago.

➤ New Opportunities for Work Program



In June 2017, the Centre for Employment Innovation (CEI) launched the New Opportunities for Work (NOW) Program, a large-scale demonstration pilot aimed at fostering innovations across the employment services system in Nova Scotia. The purpose of the NOW Program is to increase the labour force participation, attachment, and integration of historically under-represented groups through the development and delivery of a labour attachment program. Identified groups at the focus of this pilot include First Nations, African Nova Scotians, racially visible persons, Nova Scotians on Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA), persons with a disability, and older workers (over 55 years of age).

The NOW Program incorporates emerging and exemplary practices in long-term labour force attachment that enable jobseekers from identified groups to access training, education and support. It also enables employers to access wage incentives (pay at least \$15/hour with the potential to obtain a maximum subsidy of \$10.50/hour per participant over a two-year period) and supports workplace diversity training to assist in creating a more meaningful employment relationship.

The NOW program is delivered through partnerships with eleven community-based and employment service organizations (NOW proponent organizations):



Initial goals of the NOW program include:

SHORT-TERM:

At least 150 individuals from under-represented groups will be attached to full-time, sustainable, meaningful employment.

Participating employers recognize and value a diverse workforce.

LONG-TERM:

Results of the program inform the policy and program design of other existing and future labour market programs, thus impacting the participation rates of under-represented groups into the future.

Labour market attachment, in industries which have identified a need and have a labour shortage, will be increased.

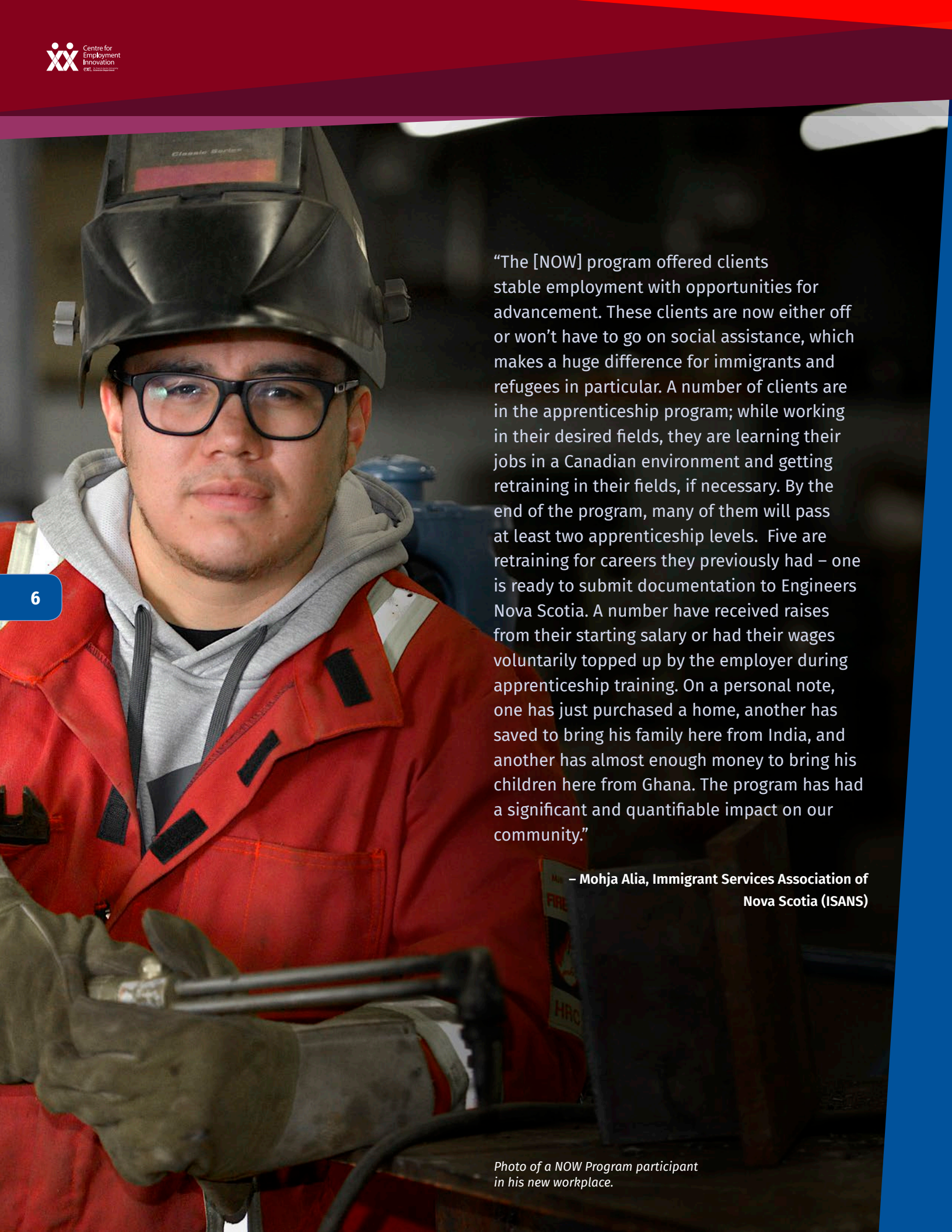
At the end of year one of the NOW Program, through partnerships across the province, 180 Nova Scotians are engaged in full-time employment, and over 100 employers have received or are receiving ongoing diversity and inclusion training at their workplaces.

Through its applied research agenda (see page 7), the developmental evaluation (see page 8) and the community of learning (see page 10) for NOW, the CEI and its NOW partners (including NOW proponent organizations and the Government of Nova Scotia's Department of Labour and Advanced Education), are working together to identify and mobilize the emergent and exemplary practices from the NOW Program. As learnings emerge from the NOW Program, the province's career development and employment services ecosystem will work collaboratively to contribute to theory building, policy, program and practice development to foster more skilled, resilient and inclusive workforce in Nova Scotia.

The localized and distributed leadership of the NOW Program is an important component of its success to date. The NOW proponent organizations continue to work with diligence and compassion to create opportunities for jobseekers and employers, while openly sharing their expertise and learnings. Their insights and knowledge are helping to build a future that works for all Nova Scotians.

“The NOW Program is having a broad-based impact in the 16 communities where we have engaged job seekers and employers. The broad appeal for the program continues to be its accessibility to small and medium-sized enterprises, who in this program, have been given the same status as a large business. The varying degree of skills that have been matched to this point, has highlighted the number of persons that are running into barriers too numerous or embedded to overcome. The NOW program and its flexibility may prove to be the cornerstone of real employment engagement for a dedicated number of community persons and their families.”

– Robert Ffrench, Valley African Nova Scotian
Development Association (VANSDA),
Nova Scotia Works



“The [NOW] program offered clients stable employment with opportunities for advancement. These clients are now either off or won’t have to go on social assistance, which makes a huge difference for immigrants and refugees in particular. A number of clients are in the apprenticeship program; while working in their desired fields, they are learning their jobs in a Canadian environment and getting retraining in their fields, if necessary. By the end of the program, many of them will pass at least two apprenticeship levels. Five are retraining for careers they previously had – one is ready to submit documentation to Engineers Nova Scotia. A number have received raises from their starting salary or had their wages voluntarily topped up by the employer during apprenticeship training. On a personal note, one has just purchased a home, another has saved to bring his family here from India, and another has almost enough money to bring his children here from Ghana. The program has had a significant and quantifiable impact on our community.”

– Mohja Alia, Immigrant Services Association of
Nova Scotia (ISANS)

*Photo of a NOW Program participant
in his new workplace.*

Applied Research

Research and innovation drive the activities of the Center for Employment Innovation (CEI). The strategy of “listening, learning, discussing, and acting” frames CEI’s work in community, and underpins its strong belief in community-based and practitioner-led research. The CEI believes that the people at the front lines of the work and in the community are the subject matter experts; it is vital that those voices are heard throughout the research process, beginning with the topics and areas explored.

There are many areas of research that can be explored within the province’s career development ecosystem and through other academic partnerships. The CEI seeks to address some of this abundance by building research capacity in partner organizations through such means as a “What is Research?” webinar series, presented in partnership with the Nova Scotia Career Development Association (NSCDA). The CEI’s goal is to both conduct and support research that will inform evidence-based practice, especially around exemplary and emerging practices for career development practitioners.

Situated within St. Francis Xavier (StFX) University, the CEI also approaches research through an academic lens. The CEI believes that through research rooted in practice, theoretical underpinnings will begin to emerge into a coherent body of theory. This is why CEI’s research falls into two streams:

- 1) Existing practice – which focuses on adding to a toolbox for career development professionals (*the “hows”*).
- 2) Theory building – which helps to create academic labour literature around the underpinnings of career development practice (*the “whys”*).

While the CEI research program continues to evolve - to date, the CEI has completed or is in the process of developing:

Literature Database: A database of literature on exemplary and emerging career development practices in a variety of areas. To access, please visit: stfxemploymentinnovation.ca/literature-database

Environmental Scan: An environmental scan of innovative programs and policies within the Nova Scotia Works system. This work has led to the development of case studies (see page 11) and informs other projects including the video innovation series (see page 18).

Ethics Review Proposals: Ethics Review Proposals on the NOW program for StFX University and Mi’kmaw Ethics Watch at Cape Breton University.

Impact of Certification to Career Development: A proposal for a pan-provincial project, in partnership with the NSCDA and Canadian Council on Career Development (CCCD), to explore the impact of certification to career development.

Webinar Series: “What is Research?” is a four-part webinar series, presented in partnership with the NSCDA, exploring the basics of how to conduct community-based research.

Research Agendas: Research agendas have been created for each of the NOW proponent organizations, resulting in 36 separate research proposals.

Employer Modelling in the Indigenous African Nova Scotian Community: This research project, in partnership with the Valley African Nova Scotian Development Association (VANSDA) and other community-based partners, is exploring the origins and impacts of employer modelling in the indigenous African Nova Scotian community. The research aims to understand historic limiters to success, and through the creation of an exemplary practices model, help contribute to increasing the African Nova Scotian presence in the province’s labour market.

Student Preparation for Life after Graduation – A research initiative delving into how university students are preparing for future careers or further education after graduation, in an effort to better understand how universities and communities can further prepare university students for an ever-changing world of work.

Youth Mentorship – This project explores youth mentorship in relation to work, seeking to understand how mentorship presents across sectors and examining potential barriers associated with mentorship opportunities.

The Centre for Employment Innovation welcomes the opportunity to discuss and potentially support research ideas relating to career development and employment services innovation. To connect with the CEI on a potential research initiative, please email: cei@stfx.ca

Evaluation

Evaluation is an important component of the programs and research projects facilitated by the Centre for Employment Innovation (CEI). With the goal of evidence-based practice, that evidence is ultimately determined through the evaluation.

There are essentially three types of evaluation:

Formative: *Completed in the ramp up stage to a project (e.g. a needs assessment),*

Summative: *Completed at the end of a project, measuring it against the original stated outcomes,*

Developmental: *Starts at the beginning of a project and is carried out through its duration.*

8

While the CEI does conduct some summative evaluation within each program and project, its primary focus is on conducting an on-going developmental evaluation.

A developmental evaluation framework is not so much an evaluation in itself, but rather an organizing system for data analysis being done in an emergent, iterative fashion. Such things as “course corrections” in process emerge, but so do more theoretical questions. For instance, gaps in the literature can be identified, and “roads not taken” can uncover unexpected questions and directions.

In the search for emerging and exemplary practices, it is equally important to explore why something didn’t work, as why it did. The underpinning of a developmental evaluation in all CEI activities provides added depth to our organization’s research activities.

The Developmental Evaluation Process

We start by asking a question: “What are we ultimately trying to do?” In the case of the CEI, the answer might be “improve or change the systems that help Nova Scotians find meaningful work.”

Once we have established the basic question, we continue to ask more questions, then analyze the answers. These questions may vary depending on the context but generally fall into the following categories:

“ In the search for emerging and exemplary practices, it is equally important to explore why something didn’t work ”

What?

What do we see? What does the data tell us? What are the indicators of change or stability? What cues can we capture to see changing patterns as they emerge?

So What?

So, what sense can we make of emerging data? What does it mean to us in this moment, and in the future? What effect are current changes likely to have on us, our clients, our extended network and our field of inquiry and action?

Now What?

Now What? What are our options? What are our resources? When and how can we act – individually or collectively – to optimize opportunities in this moment and the next?

The developmental evaluation never completely finishes until a project concludes. However, by breaking a project into smaller pieces, and doing developmental evaluation for each piece, decision points are identified, beneficial and non-beneficial decisions are clarified, and revisions are made accordingly. It provides a road map of the process, which can help to create the best possible project or program.

To date, the CEI has been involved in the evaluation of the following:

Career Development (Student Focused) in Schools Pilot -

Government of Nova Scotia's Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, and Department of Labour and Advanced Education

New Opportunities for Work (NOW) Program Demonstration

Pilot – Government of Nova Scotia's Department of Labour and Advanced Education, and ten community-based partner organizations

New Opportunities for Work (NOW) Program (Youth Focused)

Demonstration Pilot – Government of Nova Scotia's Department of Labour and Advanced Education, and Phoenix Youth

Youth Employability Skills Training Pilot -

Government of Nova Scotia's Department of Labour and Advanced Education, and Futureworx, a Nova Scotia Works employment services centre

The CEI welcomes the opportunity to discuss and potentially support evaluation projects relating to career development and employment services. To connect with us on a potential evaluation initiative, please email: cei@stfx.ca

Communities of Learning

A recent initiative of the Center for Employment Innovation (CEI) is the establishment of tri-annual Communities of Learnings (CoLs) for the NOW Program. These events create a learning environment where representatives from proponent organizations come together to share experiences, provide insights and reflections on their experiences with program implementation and administration, and create relationships that foster future joint, shared, or co-operative initiatives. CoLs are also a key practice that inform the developmental evaluation of the overall NOW program.

An important feature of the CoL is intentional sharing of emerging and exemplary practices, project learnings and in some cases, resources. The CoL strives to foster an environment where organization leads and project coordinators support one another in the implementation of projects. This adult education space is carefully designed to ensure participants share what is working, and what is not working across projects, to explore the collective approach and impact of the program, and to build relationships and trust.

The CoLs takes place over the course of one to two full days and each is hosted in a different area of the province in order to improve accessibility for proponent groups. Proponent organizations are also encouraged to actively participate in the content development of the CoLs.

Content for the CoLs includes:

*An **agenda** that outlines the objectives and activities for the session.*

*Co-created **principles of participation** and a **participation framework** that aims to create a common understanding of boundaries of dialogue which foster safety and trust. Each participant is encouraged to share their thoughts, insights and critiques in a respectful and constructive manner that leads to generative dialogue.*

***Goals and intended achievements** assist the attendees in placing themselves in relation to the others in the group. It also fosters a sense of unity among those assembled and reinforces safe sharing. The overall goal is to create a lifelong, life-wide learning environment in which knowledge is shared between participants and is emergent through the process of collaborative dialogue.*

It is important to note that the **agenda, principles of participation, participation framework, goals and intended achievements** are not static. These items are constantly revised between CoLs based on feedback and input from participants.

Ultimately, the primary goal of the Communities of Learning is to allow proponents to share information with one another about each proponent's experiences within the program in question. An emphasis is placed on discussing the learning emerging from the activities and strengthening the relationships between members. The CoL process and approach aims to influence the creation of networks that **work collectively** in implementing change and innovation within the employment service ecosystem.

"I loved and thoroughly enjoyed being a part of the Community of Learning. I felt it was very interesting to see the innovation happening across the province with the NOW program. For our organization, we took home with us the stories of success and hope to continue on the path of success with our own participants."

– Kristin MacIntyre, Island Employment,
Nova Scotia Works Centre



Case Study Analysis

The Centre for Employment Innovation (CEI) collaborates with a number of organizations to research the various innovations and practices occurring within the employment services sector of Nova Scotia.

Through various interviews and data gathering, the CEI has begun compiling a diverse catalogue of case studies that will be built upon over time and through deepening learning partnerships.

Listed below are the CEI case studies completed or currently in-progress:

The Island Works Career Services Correctional Institutions Program (Island Employment, Nova Scotia Works)

Status: COMPLETE

Fostering Diversity and Embracing Inclusion in the Maritime Trucking Industry (Trucking Human Resource Sector Council Atlantic)

Status: COMPLETE

Connecting Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder to Meaningful Employment: A Partnership Approach (Autism Nova Scotia)

Status: IN-PROGRESS

Culturally Appropriate Apprenticeship Program (Mi'kmaw Economic Benefits Office)

Status: IN-PROGRESS

Portfolio Express (YMCA Employment Services Centre of Greater Halifax / Dartmouth, Nova Scotia Works)

Status: IN-PROGRESS

Preparing and Attaching Recent Immigrants to Meaningful and Sustainable Employment (Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia)

Status: IN-PROGRESS

Employer Needs Assessment Model (Employment Solutions Society, Nova Scotia Works)

Status: IN-PROGRESS

To access our case studies online, please visit: www.stfxemploymentinnovation.ca/resources/case-studies

CASE STUDY:

Fostering Diversity and Embracing Inclusion in the Maritime Trucking Industry

Trucking Human Resource Sector Council Atlantic

Context

The Trucking Human Resources Sector Council Atlantic (THRSC Atlantic), based in Truro, NS, works with the trucking industry in Atlantic Canada to address its human resource needs. There are approximately 1500 sector employers in Nova Scotia who represent roughly 20,000 employees (*approximately 4% of the provincial workforce, according to the Government of Nova Scotia*). For every professional truck driver there are at least six human resources individuals who form his or her support team; they can be found in administrative, IT services, social media advertising/marketing, mechanics, driver technician, and/or safety positions. Indeed, one of the characteristics of this sector is the creation of cross-sectoral employment opportunities. However, currently the industry is not only short on professional truck drivers, but also in support people.

THRSC Atlantic is one of the proponents of the two-year New Opportunities for Work (NOW) wage subsidy program. It targets populations who are historically underrepresented in the workforce (First Nations, African Nova Scotians, racially visible persons, Nova Scotians on Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA), persons with a disability, and older workers (i.e. those over 55 years of age), offering an innovative approach to addressing key labour market challenges, with both short and long-term impacts. It aims to help employers create more diversity in their organizations. Participants receive the training and ongoing supports necessary to flourish in their new work environments, with the hope that current NOW employers will retain the employee past the two years, appreciating the value and experience that the employee now brings. In addition, during the program the participants are acquiring valuable job experience and skills that not only apply to today's job market but will be transferable to other organizations.

CASE STUDY:

Fostering Diversity and Embracing Inclusion in the Maritime Trucking Industry Trucking Human Resource Sector Council Atlantic - *continued*

Intended Outcomes

This project will:

Create a diverse human resource team for the Atlantic trucking industry.

Provide underrepresented populations opportunities to work within the trucking sector.

Increase employer awareness of what it means to break down barriers to employment and to take the time to accommodate employee needs as much as possible.

Attempt to fill labour gaps within the trucking sector by hiring outside the traditional labour pool.

12

The Challenge

Traditionally the trucking sector has not been a particularly diverse industry, and as a result there may be challenges around the employer-employee connection. The goal of THRSC Atlantic is to think first of the candidate and then of the employer; it is just as important, if not more so, that the job applicant feels secure, confident, and supported. There are numerous variables to consider when forming employment connections between candidates and employers: sometimes the chemistry just isn't right, employers aren't always on-board with what is asked of them, and aren't always willing to make a commitment to the populations represented by the NOW program. Individuals like the participants in the NOW program often come to employment support offices because they feel like they don't have the same opportunities others have. They want to feel supported and feel like they are being paid attention to and not cast aside.

The Client

(Please note that this is a fictitious client who is representative of the individuals this program has been developed for)

The client was a 54 year old woman who had recently come to Canada under the Syrian refugee program. She had many years of administrative experience, and everyone who knew her considered her to be an organizational genius. She had excellent computer database skills, and was interested in working in a warehouse inventory control position.

While there were a number of available openings, she was having difficulty in securing a position because her English language skills were poor. This is a common barrier for non-English speaking immigrants; they have the technical knowledge, but are unable to communicate in the language of their new country. THRSC Atlantic brought her into their NOW project, and connected her with an employer who was interested in hiring her. However, after six weeks, he let her go, citing her lack of English and cultural differences in the work environment as the reason. To everyone's surprise, another employer who was participating in the project, upon hearing about the situation, stepped up and offered her a similar position with his company. He was willing to work with her on her language skills, including giving her flexible work hours so that she could attend ESL classes.

He also encouraged his other employees to help her out, and a couple of the women in the company stepped in to act as informal mentors, even including her and her family in social activities outside of work. THRSC Atlantic also connected the employer to ISANS, who was able to continue to support both the employer and employee through existing programming. The employer's rationale when asked, was that it was difficult to find people who already had the high level of required inventory control skills she held, so he was willing to invest time and money in her, knowing that such an investment would be repaid tenfold in loyalty and excellent work. In time, as her English improved, she moved into a managerial position.

Lessons Learned

On-the-job training - *The organization wanted to be sure that all resources were going to be used as effectively as possible; to ensure this happened, this program took a different approach to training. Instead of providing the training prior to beginning work, the training was provided on-the-job, with the employer around to see it unfold. The benefit of this is that the employer can see where the candidates excel and where they may benefit from extra training. Every professional truck driver has different needs, and if the training of the employee is done in tandem with input from the driver, the training can be tailored for best-fit with that employer. Even though this "on-the-job" training was not part of THRSC Atlantic's original plan for their NOW project, it turned out to be of mass benefit;*



employers took on part of the responsibility and training to ensure candidates had the absolute best education for their specific occupation. However, pre-employment training is definitely available and encouraged for those who need it or wish to have it. But those who are ready to transition to a more hands-on approach have the opportunity to do so.

Job development lens - It is important that a job development lens is used, which means, an employer is being found for a candidate and not the other way around. There must be a good fit and screening, otherwise it will not work.

Shifting employer opinions - Employers have to be patient and willing to commit to the candidates; this sometimes results in employers walking away or the organization saying 'maybe this employer isn't the best fit for this candidate.' THRSC Atlantic found that most employers liked this approach and even benefited from it.

Success begets success, and word of mouth still works - Trucking sector employers from all over Atlantic Canada have lined up to be part of the THRSC Atlantic's NOW program. Most importantly, employers who have been part of the program are telling their success stories about the benefits they've found by removing barriers for underrepresented individuals looking for work. This talk is spreading awareness all through the region in a way that may not have reached employers otherwise, or at least as quickly.

There is one company in particular that is now operating at 46% capacity in terms of their number of professional truck drivers; there are around 70-75 employees in total of which approximately half are immigrants. The diversity in that workforce is widespread, and the employer is proud to talk about it. In fact, it is so successful that many of the employer's older drivers, the demographic often most likely to challenge change, are embracing this opportunity with open arms; they're proud of what their employer stands for and are supporting it accordingly.

Importance of workplace culture - A workplace culture that is welcoming to diversity usually has to have buy-in from the top. The second employer played an active part in helping the client fit in, as did the other employees.

Collaborative partnerships between organizations - THRSC Atlantic is in the process of developing a diversity toolkit that employers in the sector will be able to use for their own diversity and inclusion training. In the meantime, partnering with other service organizations who can provide expertise in areas like working with immigrants, and diversity and inclusion training (in this case, ISANS) to fill in the gaps benefits both employees and employers and adds an additional level of support to ensure successful attachment.

Social Innovation Lab

The Centre for Employment Innovation (CEI) is committed to Dr. Rev. Moses Coady's vision of *"a full and abundant life, for all"*, and strongly believes that collaboration, collective action, and adult learning are necessary to create vibrant and resilient communities.

The world of work is changing, and it is as important as ever to understand how to prepare for, adapt to, and shape future possibilities. As communities, organizations, and individuals, people have the assets and strengths to collectively address economic, environmental, and social challenges and inspire meaningful change—to be able to shape a future that works for all.

So, what could a **future that works for all** truly look like? And how do we get there together?

These are the questions the CEI is exploring across Nova Scotia, together with its partners and communities, as it strives to understand at the local level how to best foster and prepare for a future of 'work' that works for everyone.

The CEI's approach, based on a blend of social innovation and collective action labs, is to create the 'container' for diverse stakeholders to come together to share knowledge, re-define complex challenges, identify opportunities and co-develop and test a range of creative solutions. These conversations are designed to be part of an ongoing process, focused on inspiring different ways of thinking about the world, and how we approach challenges and opportunities.

Through this process, organizations and individuals can develop and lead adaptive change strategies that can better prepare their communities to address future challenges and opportunities, while simultaneously deepening relationships and building capacity.

These conversations provide an opportunity for the CEI to work together with communities of people to address economic, environmental, and social change. Participants' unique experiences will collectively help to support Nova Scotians build a more resilient, effective and inclusive workforce.

Central to this exploration is the importance of relationships, collaboration, first-person perspective, and an openness to ideas and testing of multiple solutions. Conversations to date have focused on the importance of deep and genuine listening, exploring the various factors that influence one's ability to engage in work (i.e. *transportation, child care, educational supports, cultural awareness, human and technological supports, etc.*), and identifying opportunities for cross-sector collaboration.

These early conversations are also helping the CEI and its partners to understand common themes relating to the future of work, identify areas that should be further explored, and continue to explore how to best engage community members from across the province.



Graphic facilitation provided by BraveSpace.ca

Themes arising thus far:

Workplace Diversity

Balancing well-being and work-life

Understanding future labour market supply and demand

Responsible citizens

How do we best support our Older Workers?

Enhancing supports for employers

Community Engagement to support better futures for youth

Open-mindedness

Engaging employers to amplify employment opportunities for all populations

Discussing the “Future of Work” in universities and school curricula

Strengthening relationships to foster creativity and innovation to build capacity

Effective flexible labour opportunities

Better collaboration with community partners

Fostering agency in our communities

Strong economy

Life is ever-changing and understanding how to achieve a future of ‘work’ that works for all is complex. It requires ‘us’ to look at the whole picture, from different perspectives, as an interconnected system of beings. Over time, these conversations, and subsequent actions, will help to connect initiatives that are currently working towards similar goals, elevate the voice of community members, and create a space for people to discuss lived experiences, successes, and challenges.

“When we recognize the changes we’re experiencing, we can effectively learn from our collective wisdom, and then truly become drivers of system-change. Together, we can truly shape a future that works for all.”

— Jessica Popp, Coordinator of Stakeholder Engagement,
Centre for Employment Innovation



Youth Initiatives

Youth engagement and capacity building have been integral pieces of work for the Centre for Employment Innovation (CEI) since its establishment. Activities have ranged from supporting St. Francis Xavier (StFX) University student societies focused on career preparation, to co-developing and sponsoring youth networking events, to ensuring diverse and inclusive learning opportunities are available for youth from across the province.

One of the primary and ongoing examples of youth engagement is through CEI's student intern program. During our first 20 months, the CEI has hosted nine incredible StFX University students as interns—with positions ranging from two months to over one year, and with students who are engaged in various fields of study. The diversity of experience and perspectives has substantially made conversations, and thus work, more robust.

Collectively, CEI student interns have gained almost **3000 hours** of work experience with the centre. During this time, they've contributed to staff, departmental and external stakeholder meetings; supported staff research, communications, marketing, planning, and engagement efforts; and developed and facilitated (in consultation with their supervisor) projects that relate to their interests in the career and community development fields.

"I had the freedom to self-direct my project but, I also got the support I needed to really make it come to fruition. That was really cool...I learned a lot about writing professional papers, and writing research reports. That wasn't something I really got experience with [in my undergraduate program]. Research papers are definitely different and going through the process of research (ethics, knowing what questions to ask, how to articulate your key learnings, etc.)—that was very important and something a lot of people don't understand or realize. And not something you get exposure to until you're in your masters [degree] so I'm really lucky that in my undergrad. I got that experience."

Some of the work CEI student interns have led and/or supported include:

Compiling literature reviews and a database for emerging best practices in employment services.

Conducting interviews and developing case studies on innovative employment practices across Nova Scotia.

Exploring when and what type of resources and supports university students use to prepare for future education and/or work.

Completing environmental scans of employment and career development resources, approaches and practices at StFX and across Nova Scotia.

Participating in developmental evaluations for the New Opportunities for Work (NOW) Program.

Supporting and facilitating evaluations for youth career development and employment readiness program.

Exploring mentorship models, including barriers and benefits of mentorship practices for businesses, entrepreneurs, and communities.

The ability for students to support current work while learning new techniques and methodologies, paired with the opportunity to gain experience in designing and facilitating their own projects of interest, fosters a range of diverse experiences that will prove beneficial in any work they pursue.

"Working at the CEI has reminded me that all our work is intersectional. No one lives or works in a silo and so our work should not be siloed into working with only one group of people, in one geographic space, or in one line or field of work. I hope to take this along with me throughout the rest of my time in school and into the world of work. This is something that runs true beyond simply the world of employment, entrepreneurship, community development, or education."

The CEI recognizes the importance of experience and exploration in career development. Many of its students have had no formal experience in the fields of career, employment and/or community development; however, many have cited their work with the CEI as being truly 'eye-opening'. Some students describe how their experiences have encouraged them to look at their field through different lenses, while others have completely shifted the direction of their educational pursuits.

"Working here opened my eyes to what I want to do with my life and what direction I wanted to take...I am much more open to working with people, working with community development, and I'm going back to school to learn more and hopefully make more [of an] impact on different communities surrounding my home town."

— 2017-2018 CEI Student Intern

The CEI intern program places a high value on two-way learning. CEI staff recognize the employment opportunities for university students can be of great value—supporting capacity development, learning new skills, creating mentorship opportunities, and expanding horizons. For the CEI, insight and perspectives from the interns are of equally important value. Students support the Centre's desire to think differently about the situations it is exploring and conversations it is engaged in. Students challenge staff to explore alternative solutions, and they inspire staff to see what's top of mind for our next generation of workers and change makers.

As the CEI strives towards a future that works for all, youth have and will continue to play an instrumental role in facilitating meaningful, sustainable change, with the career development and employment services system, post-secondary institutions and beyond.



Innovation Series

In 2018, the Centre for Employment Innovation (CEI), in collaboration with a number of the Nova Scotia Works employment services providers, the Nova Scotia Career Development Association (NSCDA), the Government of Nova Scotia's Department of Labour and Advanced Education and Communications Nova Scotia embarked on a video project, titled **Innovation Series**, that documents innovations and unique employment narratives found within the employment services system of Nova Scotia.

The primary goal of this project is to create videos that serve as engaging research and knowledge-building tools for those working in the career development sector of Nova Scotia and beyond. However, the potential ways in which the videos can be used is quite broad and may differ between employment services organization.

18

“The primary goal of this project is to create videos that serve as engaging research and knowledge-building tools”

Listed below are the goals the CEI set out to accomplish with the Innovation Series:

To showcase the innovations happening within the employment services system of Nova Scotia.

To inspire and inform employment services organizations on the innovations taking place within their own network and province.

To highlight the themes emerging from these stories of innovation (e.g. the impact of helping one individual into employment can have a positive effect on the entire community, incorporating diversity and inclusion practices into an organization benefits our workforce and communities, etc).

To elevate the collective awareness surrounding the Nova Scotia Works Centres and the scope of their work.

To demonstrate the potential for success when clients and employers work with career development organizations.

To create resources for our province's career development system by way of a marketing and education tool.

To illustrate the diversity of clientele who can benefit from working with a career development organization.

The first videos from CEI's Innovation Series are set for release in February 2019. To stay informed on our latest releases: Sign up for the CEI Newsletter - stfemploymentinnovation.ca Follow us on social media (Facebook and Twitter) - @StFXExtension



Our Team



"Innovation through collaboration is the cornerstone of our engagement, learning and research agenda. At the CEI, we focus on bringing together the people, knowledge, and assets that strengthen the employment services ecosystem and build capacity for positive change."

Jaime Smith, Executive Lead



"We are working to broaden the narrative on employment in our province by connecting people with research and stories that resonate."

Katie Stewart Snyder, Marketing & Communications Officer



"We do research you can use. Our exploration of career development is practical, community-focused and above all, practitioner led."

Dr. Paula Romanow, Manager of Applied Research



"Supporting new employment initiatives, in collaboration with service providers, allows us to witness firsthand the breadth of innovation occurring within our province's employment services system."

Angela Bear, Navigator of New Initiatives



"The voice of the community is at the core of our work. We believe collaborative relationships are key to fostering a future that works for all."

Jessica Popp, Coordinator of Stakeholder Engagement



"Our community-based approach to research emphasizes first-voice and is underpinned by the strategy: Listen, Learn, Discuss, Act."

Catherina MacIntyre, Research Intern



Centre for
Employment
Innovation
ext. St. Francis Xavier University
Extension Department



Connect with us!

Website:
stfxemploymentinnovation.ca
*Be sure to sign up for our
newsletter when you visit!*

Email:
cei@stfx.ca

LinkedIn:
Centre for Employment Innovation

Facebook:
@StFXExtension

Twitter:
@StFXExtension

YouTube:
StFX Extension