



Initiatives 2020



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

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Welcome to the Centre for Employment Innovation

The **Centre for Employment Innovation** (CEI) at St. Francis Xavier (StFX) University is pleased to share its second Initiatives document which highlights the many activities, partnerships, and projects it is engaged with to strengthen the development and delivery of employment services in Nova Scotia. The CEI works diligently with its partners to provide distributed systems leadership; foster exemplary community, organizational, and career development practices; conduct applied and practitioner-based research; and encourage collaboration for a greater collective impact for all Nova Scotians.

Over the past two plus years, the employment services system has worked together to foster a more skilled, resilient, and productive workforce. The CEI and its partners aim to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion within workplaces, so that all Nova Scotians have opportunities to meaningfully engage in the workforce.

The CEI is an important component of the 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 network of community-based **Nova Scotia Works** employment services provider, the **Nova Scotia Career Development Association (NSCDA)**, and the Province of Nova Scotia's **Department of Labour and Advanced Education** (through **Employment Nova Scotia**). Through its diverse advisory board, its pilot and demonstration projects, and its rapidly growing applied research agenda, the CEI engages with many other employment-focused, career and community development organizations, and post-secondary institutions. Through these innovative partnerships that push the boundaries to be more equitable, transparent, and accountable, the system works collectively to ensure that all Nova Scotians have access to high quality, evidence-based, and people-centered employment services and supports. The CEI and its system partners also work to ensure that employers receive the services and supports they need to create safe, welcoming, and inclusive workplaces.

The work of the CEI aims 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 underway at the StFX Extension Department's Innovation and Enterprise Centre (IEC) that encourages social innovation, entrepreneurship, and enterprise activities across Nova Scotia. Through its relationships with a network of provincial workforce centres across Canada, and its growing partnership with StFX University's Coady Institute, the CEI connects with leading organizations and institutions who offer exemplary practices in career development, community development, and social and economic innovation, and brings those practices back home. In the fall of 2020, Coady Institute will offer an inaugural certificate focused on the Future of Work which builds on the growing CEI partnership and Coady's 60 years of partnership with leading community-based and non-governmental organizations globally.

In Community: 2019 Reflection

January 2019

The Centre for Employment Innovation (CEI), the Innovation and Enterprise Centre (IEC), and the EXT Student Society were proud to partner with Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS), the Northern Connector Program through Eastern Strait Regional Enterprise Network (ESREN), and St. Francis Xavier (StFX) University's Student Career Services and Co-operative Education Program to support the inaugural **Connect @ X**. This student-led initiative offered StFX students an exciting opportunity to network with local, provincial, and national employers. The StFX students come from various majors and fields of study, including students participating in the Co-operative Education Program. It included an equal number of employers and students who met over dinner, listened to an engaging keynote speaker, and further developed relationships during a networking period—all to help make meaningful and lasting connections.



June 2019

The **How We Thrive** gathering at Mount Saint Vincent University brought change-makers and leaders from across Nova Scotia together to connect and deepen relationship, share and learn together, and discuss ways to advance positive change in our communities. There were eight different learning streams available to choose from, with each taking a unique and innovative approach to exploring ideas around how people and communities can thrive. Along with Michael Flood, the Director of the Quality of Life Initiative at Engage Nova Scotia, the CEI team co-facilitated a learning stream called Unleashing Potential focused on youth development. This session was designed and facilitated by young change makers for young change makers and focused on accessing resources needed to drive change and realize our personal and collective potential.



June 2019

The CEI's student interns, supported by Jess Popp and Dr. Paula Romanow, gave a presentation on the CEI's youth initiatives to the **Nova Scotia Career Development Association's annual conference**. The students each presented on the projects they were working on:

Brenda Gatera outlined the Nova Scotia Works Diversity & Inclusion Program, Phase 1 African Nova Scotians and People of African Descent;

Jessie Doyle gave an overview of the Flexible Labour Innovations Pilot;

Catherine Kennedy explained the Recognition of Prior Learning in Adult Secondary Education National Jurisdictional Scan;

Aleesha Quinn described the Youth Employability Skills Pilot;

Alyssa Mansfield reported on the development of the NOW Program as a case study; and

Ben Herringer shared about his experience facilitating at the **How We Thrive** gathering and provided an update on the employment services ecosystem Innovations Video Series.

The session was standing room only and participants were extremely impressed with not only the work the students were doing, but with their polished and professional presentations.



August 2019

The CEI, the Spatializing Care: Intersectional Disability Studies Lab at StFX, and StFX Faculty Development Committee, with support from a Jules Leger Award, collaborated to facilitate **Disability, Access, Equity and Education: Creating Welcoming Communities**. More than 100 people from universities, community, government, and Nova Scotia Works centres gathered at StFX's Keating Centre for two-days to explore how we might create and sustain more equitable and accessible spaces across our communities. Participants learned about what is happening, and not happening, explored shared assets and resources, nourished a sense of curiosity, and collectively imagined the possibilities for collaboration across sectors within rural Atlantic Canada. A common thread throughout the conference was the importance of celebrating our diversity and recognizing that unique approaches to supporting individuals, whether it be in the classroom or in the workplace, is key to our collective success. This can be achieved through meaningful engagement, authentic relationships, and reciprocity.

September 2019

The CEI co-sponsored the **Ability Starts Here Conference on Diversity and Inclusion** led by the Collaborative Partnership Network of Nova Scotia and TEAM Work Cooperative Nova Scotia Works. This conference featured sessions on 'Leading Inclusion in Your Workplace', 'How to Move Beyond Implicit Bias and into Real Inclusion', 'Building Intercultural Competence awareness', and 'Maximizing Opportunities for Women Who Have a "Disability"'. The day concluded with participants being engaged to explore the shift to more inclusive and welcoming organizations and workplaces in small group conversation. Highlights involved the Diversity and Inclusion Award presented by the Lieutenant Governor to seven regional winners from which Eden's Decor Store, Yarmouth, was named the provincial winner.

Lieutenant Governor Award Winners

Provincial Winner:

Eden's Decor Store, Yarmouth

Regional Winners:

Cumberland County Red Cross, Amherst

Little Pumpkins Inc., Kentville

Manzer Construction Inc., Digby

Paul's Bistro and Café, Liverpool

Foodland, Sydney Mines

SimplyCast, Dartmouth



September 2019

The CEI's Jessica Popp and Jennifer DeCoste, founder of the Life.School.House Cooperative, traveled to Denmark to explore the link between Danish folk high schools, the People's Schools of the Antigonish Movement, and Life.School.House's contemporary folk schools that are active across Nova Scotia. Grundtvig Folk High School hosted the **International Folk High School Summit 2019** and welcomed 125 people from 28 different countries for the event. Attendees included school leaders, practitioners, researchers, and promoters of adult popular education as well as representatives of institutions and countries inspired by the Danish folk high school tradition. This inaugural international summit aimed at creating a space for attendees to learn about the initiatives that are taking place around the globe, while also focusing on establishing greater international cooperation. This trip provided an opportunity to understand some of the deeper roots of the Antigonish Movement and develop new global partnerships with organizations who are using popular, community-based education as a means for social change.

September 2019

CEI Executive Lead Jaime Smith and Coady Senior Program Staff Yogesh Ghore traveled to India for the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)'s **Future of Work forum** and book launch. They both participated in roundtable sessions on Climate Resilient Agriculture, Small Farmers and Future of Work and Technology, Skill Development, and Global Supply Chains. They joined individuals and organizations from around the world in discussing local and global solutions for food, income, and housing security through skills development. This human-centred approach to a future of work based on a foundation of social justice, being collective, and strengthening the assets of all workers will be further explored in **Future of Work**, a new Coady course in development in conjunction with the CEI.



October 2019

Members of the CEI team attended a **Graphic Recording Workshop** hosted by partners at BraveSpace. As many of us are visual learners, we process information, find patterns, and remember better when we have visual cues and references. During the two-day workshop, the CEI team enjoyed learning alongside other participants—building on their visual skills, sharing techniques and ideas, and strengthening their confidence in graphic recording. These skills can be applied in various aspects of our work, including helping our team organize more effectively, learning, teaching and facilitating, recording meeting notes, and visual storytelling.

October 2019

The CEI's Dr. Paula Romanow delivered a presentation on "Foregrounding First Voice Narrative in Diversity and Inclusion Education for Nova Scotian Employers" to the **Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education (CASAE) East annual conference** in Halifax. This paper highlighted the research being done with the proponents of the New Opportunities for Work project and their various diversity and inclusion initiatives with their employers. The emergent data is indicating that the use of a strong First Voice component within the various initiatives is more effective in shifting employer and staff attitudes towards diversity and inclusion than those that do not include these voices. It is also becoming evident that including First Voice individuals in designing the diversity and inclusion training appears to result in stronger impact for transformational learning.

October 2019

The Frank McKenna Centre for Leadership at StFX University hosted the first annual Strait area **Sister-2-Sister Conference**. The conference was hosted in response to the need for youth outreach in rural communities and was designed to create a space for young women in junior high school to post-secondary to participate in culturally relevant leadership and peer-to-peer mentorship. Sister-2-Sister aims to create a sisterhood for Indigenous and African Nova Scotian youth (sisters) by sharing experiences of living as an othered woman through poetry and breakout sessions focused on explored goal setting and healthy relationships. CEI's Brenda Gatera helped facilitate the breakout sessions. Rebecca Messay, former Student's Union president and the only black female Student Union president at StFX, was the keynote speaker for the event. The day concluded with youth sharing their experience from the day; keywords shared were: empowering, beautiful, connected, and fun.





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November 2019

The CEI co-sponsored the Valley African Nova Scotian Development Association's **Bridging the Gap – The Road to Employment Equity** Conference, which provided an opportunity for attendees to explore how we might work to build a healthy, diverse, and sustainable labour force, placing Nova Scotia's needs and opportunities at the forefront of labour force development. Marginalized communities continue to see higher levels of unemployed or underemployed in Nova Scotia. This event aimed to break down the siloes between employment services, employers, researchers, and job seekers to work towards more collaborative approaches to equitable and sustainable employment opportunities.

November 2019

In partnership with the Future Skills Centre–Centre des Compétences futures (FSC-CCF), Business Higher Education Roundtable, and The Conference Board of Canada, the CEI co-convened the **Nova Scotia Regional Sounding**, an event aimed at bringing together Nova Scotians who are engaged or interested in the province's skills, employment, and training community. With more than 200 registrants, event participants openly shared their thoughts and ideas about how the Future Skills Centre could best support the province today for workforce opportunities of the future. The CEI will follow up on this event and continue to strengthen opportunities for further partnership through in person meetings with the Future Skills Centre and other workforce innovation centres across Canada in January 2020, in addition to supporting current Nova Scotia funded research projects.



New Opportunities for Work Program

NOW New Opportunities
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The Centre for Employment Innovation (CEI) is proud to report that as the New Opportunities for Work (NOW) Program draws to a close in February 2020, 186 Nova Scotians have been and remain in full-time employment, and more than 100 employers have received or are receiving supports and ongoing diversity and inclusion training at their workplaces. A final evaluation of the NOW Program will be launched in 2020.

In July 2017, the CEI launched the 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—some of which are Nova Scotia Works Centres, while others are larger system partners):



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.

Through its applied research agenda (see page 10), the developmental evaluation (see page 14) and the community of learning (see page 16) 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 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 continue to work collaboratively to contribute to theory building, policy, program and practice development.

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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.

The CEI frames the idea of employment within a social determinants of health lens. This means that we recognize the importance of work in all its forms to the health of the individual, their community (whatever that community may be), nationally and globally. This approach allows us to explore through our research many topics arising from the province’s career development ecosystem and through other community-based, and academic partnerships. A significant part of our mandate is to build research capacity in our students as well as within our partner organizations through such means as the “What is Research?” webinar

series, presented in partnership with the Nova Scotia Career Development Association (NSCDA) and available on our website. Also, in partnership with Coady Institute, we will offer *Action Research for Citizen-led Change* a two-week certificate course where participants design their own action research initiative step-by-step, learning about the principles and methods appropriate for different action research purposes.

Situated as it is within St. Francis Xavier (StFX) University, as well as its community-led research program, 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”).**

The CEI research program continues to evolve to reflect the expansion of the CEI’s role and mandate, to date, the CEI has completed or is in the process of developing the following research projects:

Case Study Analysis: A collaboration with several organizations to research the various innovations and practice occurring within the employment services sector of Nova Scotia. Through various interviews and data gathering, the CEI is compiling a diverse catalogue of case studies that will be built upon over time and through deepening learning partnerships.

Diversity & Inclusion in the Workplace Environmental Scan: An environmental scan of diversity and inclusion in the workplace programs within Nova Scotia. Phase I of this project is to compile an inventory of existing programs in all sectors of the province’s workforce (government, academic, business, community-based organizations, etc.). Phase II will explore and catalogue exemplary practices that emerge from the scan.

Flexible Labour Innovations Pilot (FLIP) – Antigonish: This partnership arose during one of the CEI’s Social Innovation Labs, when it was shared that Antigonish employers were experiencing challenges in addressing severe labour shortages. Using the concept of flexible working arrangements, combined with the concept of pooling labourers, FLIP is exploring how to create a model to have workers available for employers based on their day to day needs, while ensuring that workers are employed in a way that best suits their needs and life circumstances. As an employer-driven initiative, the CEI’s role within this work is to help facilitate a process of discovering barriers to employment, benefits of and interest in a flexible labour pool, and potential models for implementation. This collaborative initiative is guided by a steering committee that consists of local employers, HR professionals, researcher, Nova Scotia Works staff, and community organizations.

Impact of Certification on the Career Development Profession: This project will explore the impact of certification on the career development profession, in partnership with the Nova Scotia Career Development Association (NSCDA) and Canadian Council on Career Development (3CD). The results will be used as evidence for the development of a national career development practitioner certification program.

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

New Opportunities for Work (NOW): As the NOW program comes to a conclusion, there is a large body of emerging research on topics such as intersectionality, the role of supports to continued employment for marginalized populations, to be deeply analyzed, and shared with our various partners, both inside and outside the project.

Pan-Canadian Jurisdictional Scan of Recognition of Prior Learning in Adult Secondary Education in Canada: This report contributes to the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning (NSSAL) review of the province’s adult education system and identifies exemplary practices, as well as challenges, found in each Canadian jurisdiction for the acquisition by adult learners of the adult high school diploma or its equivalent.

Research Agendas: The initial three-year research agenda for the CEI is complete and will be updated for 2020-2023 this calendar year.

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.

Youth Mentorship: This project explores mentorship for early career individuals (ages 18-34), seeking to understand how mentorship presents across sectors and examining potential barriers associated with mentorship opportunities. This research will conclude with a case for mentorship, to demonstrate to Nova Scotian employers the social and economic impact of workplace mentorship.

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



In keeping with its mandate to foster ties between St. Francis Xavier University and communities in the Antigonish area, in the spring of 2019, the CEI set up a fund to support Community / StFX Faculty Collaborative Employment Innovations Research Projects. In April, 2019, we issued a call inviting StFX faculty, in equal partnership with community-based organizations, to apply for funding for projects in the area of innovative employment initiatives within community.

Six projects were selected for funding, with a completion date of August 31, 2020:

- 1. Essential Skills for Atlantic Fisheries: Actioning Best Practices and Evaluating Outcomes.** Partners: Wendy Kraglund-Gauthier, Manager, Networks & Ongoing Learning, Coady Institute; and Jayne Hunter, Executive Director, Literacy Nova Scotia (see Figure 1).
- 2. Addressing Barriers to Employment for Nova Scotia's Post-secondary Students with Disabilities.** Partners: Jane MacDonald, Manager, StFX Student Career Services; Robena Stewart, Manager, NS Works – Career Connections Antigonish; Elizabeth Kell, Co-ordinator StFX Tramble Centre for Accessible Learning; and Wendy Kraglund-Gauthier, Manager, Networks & Ongoing Learning, Coady Institute.
- 3. Exploring the Impact of an Appreciative Inquiry Framework on Teacher Pedagogy Enhancing Understanding of Metacognition and Career Readiness in a Rural Nova Scotian High School.** Partners: Dr. Jennifer Mitton-Kukner, StFX Faculty of Education; and Anne Findlay, Principal, North Nova Education Centre.
- 4. Developing Youth's Food Knowledge and Skills through an Etuaptmumk / Two-Eyed Seeing (E/TES) Approach.** Partners: Dr. Ann Fox, StFX Department of Human Nutrition and Paqtneke Mi'kmaw Nation Band Council and Education Department.
- 5. Syrian Children and Youth Summer English as an Alternative Language (EAL) Learning Program.** Partners: Dr. Ingrid Robinson and Dr. Dan Robinson, StFX Faculty of Education, the Town of Antigonish, and Jack Beaton, Education Coordinator, Syrian-Antigonish Families Embrace.
- 6. Share the Earth.** Partners: Eric Smith, Coady Institute, and Gwendolyn Colman, Executive Director, Genuine Progress Index Atlantic Society.

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

Essential Skills for Atlantic Fisheries (ESAF) Actioning Best Practices and Evaluating Outcomes

Wendy Kraglund-Gauthier, PhD, with Brenda Lavandier, Research Assistant



Research Project Partner



Research Project Funder

Overview of the ESAF Project

The fisheries sector is the **largest private sector employer in Atlantic Canada**. The growth and sustainability of the fisheries sector here and in other parts of the country is currently affected by a range of workforce and labour market challenges including, but not limited to:

- inadequate literacy and essential skills,
- recruiting and retaining workers,
- aging population,
- decreasing rural population,
- limited transportation, and
- depressed rural economies



The current and future shortages of skilled and unskilled workers in the production and post-production processing side of operations is forcing industry to recruit personnel from around the globe.

Vision of the Essential Skills for Atlantic Fisheries Pilot Project:
To deliver an innovative Essential Skills program through customized training that supports employment success and retention for the fisheries sector.

Primary Purpose:

To develop and test an innovative literacy and essential skills training model in collaboration with the fisheries and aquaculture sector in Atlantic Canada that will help rural, low-income unemployed individuals to improve their literacy and essential skills so they can get and keep a job, meet the on-the-job demands of this industry, and adapt and succeed at work.

Aim:

To better understand the challenges encountered and key success factors currently in place in this industry to ensure the training model developed will be transferable to other jurisdictions in Canada.



Funding for the Essential Skills for Atlantic Fisheries (ESAF) project was provided by the Government of Canada's National Essential Skills Initiative.



ESAF Project Partners

The Literacy Coalition of New Brunswick's ESAF project is an example of interprovincial and multi-stakeholder program. Project partners include the PEI Literacy Alliance, Literacy Nova Scotia, and the Newfoundland and Labrador Laubach Literacy Council and funding is provided by federal and provincial departments.



CEI Innovation Research Project Activities

- Conduct an environmental scan of existing assessment tools and curriculum examples from similar programs in other Canadian regions
- Review the literature on LES training and its role in employment attachment
- Evaluate Cohort 1's curriculum outcomes from learner, employer, and facilitator perspectives on the current workplace LES programming
- Translate knowledge gained from proposed research activities into the broader project's curriculum revisions (Cohort 2) so content is responsive to stakeholder needs and rooted in best practices
- Mobilize knowledge throughout LES networks across the province

The Essential Skills

Essential Skills are skills that:

- Help people perform the tasks required by their occupations and other activities of daily life;
- Provide people with a foundation to learn other skills; and
- Enhance people's ability to adapt to workplace change

1. Numeracy
2. Oral Communications
3. Working With Others
4. Continuous Learning
5. Reading Text
6. Writing
7. Thinking Skills
8. Document Use
9. Digital Skills

Findings to Date

The scan identified 111 organizations that have been engaged in literacy and essential skills training and services or provide research and/or resources, either at provincial or territorial or national levels, alone or in partnership with other organizations.

Demographic Communities Served in Essential Skills Training

Aboriginal, Inuit	Adults with Low Literacy	African Nova Scotians	Career Services Personnel	Persons with Disabilities
Employment & Income Assistance Clients	Entrepreneurs	Francophones	Inmates	Newcomers to Canada
Older Workers	Rural Residents	Women	Youth	

82 mentions of specific career-related essential skills appeared across 22 general industries.

Target Industries Referenced by Organizations	
Agriculture (1)	Manufacturing (3)
Apprenticeship / Pre-Apprenticeship (12)	Mining (5)
Aquaculture / Fisheries (9)	Oil and Gas (3)
Automotive (1)	Outdoor/wilderness (1)
Construction (7)	Retail and Office Management (5)
Cultural Arts / Creative Arts & Fashion (3)	Small Engine Repair (2)
Engineering (1)	Tourism (5)
Food Services / Food Processing (4)	Train-the-Trainer/Mentorship (8)
Health and Related (3)	Transportation (2)
Heavy Equipment (2)	Utilities (1)
Information Technology (3)	Workplace Safety (1)

From our Conversations to Date

- Flexibility of curriculum design based on needs assessment of participants and industry
- Varied assessment strategies are needed
- Preference for face-to-face modalities, with some blended options
- Program content helps out on the job, but also in daily interactions
- Mix of formal /informal learning gives flexibility needed to engage its workforce in skills development.
- Challenging to schedule workshops (shift work, seasonal work)
- Technological innovation and creative partnerships has resulted in training via a variety of modalities and environments that enable just-in-time learning in real-life contexts.

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.

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:

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?

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.

The CEI is leading the following system-level evaluation projects:

Career Development Practitioners in Schools (Nova Scotia Works School Liaison) - Government of Nova Scotia’s Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

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

Nova Scotia Works Diversity and Inclusion Program (Phase 1 – People of African Descent and African Nova Scotians) - The African Nova Scotian and People of African Descent Community Advisory Panel; Valley African Nova Scotia Development Association, YMCA of Greater Halifax/Dartmouth, Career Connections, all Nova Scotia Works employment services centres; Government of Nova Scotia’s Department of Labour and Advanced Education; and the Nova Scotia Career Development Association

The CEI welcomes the opportunity to discuss and potentially support evaluation projects relating to career development and employment services. For those interested, CEI will also be offering a certificate course on Development Evaluation in partnership with Coady Institute in 2020. To connect with us on a potential evaluation initiative, please email: cei@stfx.ca

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

Communities of Learning

At the Centre for Employment Innovation (CEI), we recognize the importance of collaboration, across and within sectors, to foster more effective and sustainable impacts for positive change. One way we put this into practice is through the establishment of Communities of Learning (CoLs) within many of our initiatives. These tri-annual events create a learning environment where representatives from organizations involved in each initiative 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 many of our initiatives.

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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 organizational leaders and practitioners 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 are hosted in a different area of the province to improve accessibility for proponent groups. Proponent organizations are also encouraged to participate in the content development of the CoLs.

Content for the CoLs includes:

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

A **participation framework** and **principles of participation** co-created with proponents that aims to create a common understanding of boundaries of dialogue that fosters safety and trust. Participants are encouraged to share their own 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 participants share knowledge and learnings emergent through the process of collaborative dialogue.



Graphic facilitation provided by BraveSpace.ca



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It is important to note that the **agenda, principles of participation, participation framework, goals and intended achievements** are not static. Based on feedback and input from participants, team members and partners revise these tools between CoLs.

Ultimately, the goal of a CoL is to allow partners to share information with one another about experiences within the program in question, to learn from them together. 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

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, thriving, 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.

How do we grow on what is working well to ensure all Nova Scotians can participate in the workforce to their fullest potential?

By starting with an individual focus, and reflecting on our experiences in organizations and communities, we can learn about and facilitate action to create positive change, and to strengthen our culture of innovation together. After hearing various NOW program leads share their diverse experiences, the CEI helped participants unpack the NOW program and its activities through a lens of collective impact. This learning experience helped to shape conversations that allowed participants to begin exploring what their roles might be in building diversity, fostering equity, and embracing inclusion for a more resilient workforce in Nova Scotia.



In 2019, the CEI was proud to partner with Mo Drescher, co-founder of BraveSpace (bravespace.ca) to host social innovation labs at the annual Nova Scotia Career Development Conference and at the Disability, Access, Equity and Education Conference at St. Francis Xavier University.

Through CEI's partnership with Coady Insititute, we will explore how social enterprise can be a vehicle to create social change while addressing the age-old question of sustainability through a two-week certificate course, Social Enterprise for Inclusive Economies. Beginning with an assessment of the emergence and history of the social entrepreneurship movement, this course will cover topics such as the for-profit non-for-profit divide, the need for varied capital at different stages, and aspects of institutional and personal leadership.



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 Province of Nova Scotia's Department of Labour and Advanced Education and Communications Nova Scotia embarked on a video project. Titled **Innovation Series**, the project documents innovations and unique employment narratives found within the employment services system of Nova Scotia.

The primary goal 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.

“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 job seekers 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; and

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

To view Innovation Series videos or stay informed on our latest releases:

Sign up for the CEI Newsletter - stfxemploymentinnovation.ca

Follow us on social media (Facebook, YouTube and Twitter) - @StFXExtension



Post-Secondary Student Engagement

Student 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 student engagement is through CEI's student intern program. In 2019, the CEI has hosted ten incredible StFX students as interns—with positions ranging from three months to more than 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.

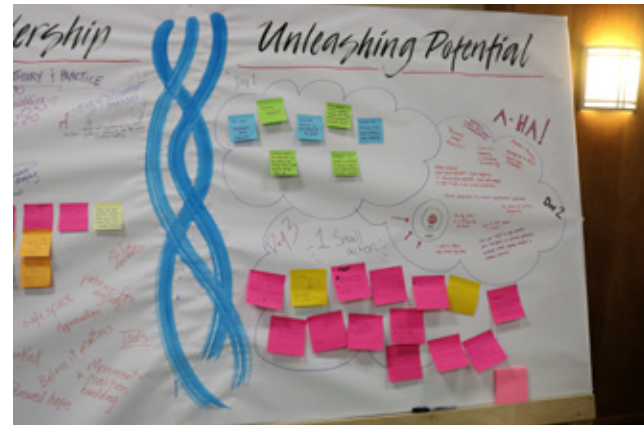
Collectively, CEI student interns have gained almost **5,000 hours of work experience** with the centre. During this time, they have contributed to staff, departmental, and external stakeholder meetings; supported staff research, communications, marketing, planning, and engagement efforts; and developed 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."

– 2017-2018 CEI Student Intern

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

Facilitating a three-day learning stream focused on 'unleashing youth potential' at the 2019 How We Thrive Gathering;



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;

Creating research guides and supports for other student researchers, including guides for preparing effective case studies and performing comprehensive literature reviews;

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; and,

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 with the CEI] has given me the opportunity to learn and work with historically underrepresented people and... [complete] research that helps to improve peoples' lives. My biggest learning was in having a better understanding of the challenges in the labour environment, in the community, and province of Nova Scotia. [I'm] learning to do applied research and witnessing how research translates into real life programs and projects to address people's needs. I gained valuable research skills that will be applied in studies in school. It has influenced my thinking on focusing studies from international or global perspectives to focus on development at the local community level. This was not the case before."

– 2019 CEI Student Intern

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, young people 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.

"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 [confined to] 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."

– 2018 CEI Student Intern



Our Team



"Together we will explore how we might create pathways for young people across our province to be community connectors. Our challenge is creating the infrastructure for youth to develop leadership skills within organizations, that are also collaborating across silos and contributing to the success of communities."

Alfred Burgesson, Engagement and Impact Coordinator



"The capacity to work with the people for the people on various levels has always been my passion. During our earth walk we are medicine to one another."

*Andrea Curley,
Research Coordinator*



"There are so many positive stories happening in our province and by sharing them we hope to continue to build upon that momentum."

*Brian Lazzuri, Manager of
Marketing and Communications*



"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 communities and organizations, and build capacity for positive social change."

*Jaime Smith, Director, Social Innovation,
Coady Institute and St. Francis Xavier University,
and Executive Lead, Centre for Employment Innovation*

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"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*



"Our biggest asset is the diversity of our communities. Our differences in perspectives, stories, knowledge and experiences are exactly where innovation emerges. Our work prioritizes inclusivity and collaboration in finding what is working and how these best practices can be shared, ensuring that those who are impacted by decisions have a voice throughout the process."

Brenda Gatera, Engagement and Research Assistant



"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*



"CEI provides Social Innovation Labs and Communities of Learning to foster collaboration; bringing community and system partners together to share, learn, and develop innovative initiatives that ultimately lead to meaningful employment for all."

*Jody Cook, Financial and
Administrative Coordinator*

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"Our community-based and action research approach enables us to gain and share valuable knowledge that can be translated to create better and sustained employment opportunities for people."

*Michael Adiyia,
Research Coordinator*



"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*



Centre for
Employment
Innovation
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Extension Department



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