

Call for Concepts *Back to Work: Community Partnerships*

Overview:

The Skills and Learning Branch at the Department of Labour and Advanced Education (LAE) is looking for innovative concepts to build local labour market programs that support vulnerable individuals to develop skills, and to prepare for, secure and maintain employment. This Call for Concepts will provide direct funding support to community-based projects that respond to immediate needs and opportunities in the community and demonstrate collaborative, strategic partnerships to address the identified need.

PROJECT NAME	Back to Work: Community Partnerships
DEPARTMENT	Labour and Advanced Education
CONTACT EMAIL	Joe Brown: be-unit@novascotia.ca

Objective:

This Call for Concepts will:

- identify and support local/regional partnerships for the planning, creation and delivery of short-term, labour market programs and projects that respond to an immediate community need;
- focus on supporting community-based learning and employment solutions;
- support the development of programs or initiatives intended to help vulnerable individuals in preparing for, securing, and maintaining employment; and
- support employers and sectors to find and/or develop skilled workers and to build more diverse and inclusive workplaces.

Program Description:

Through the Call for Concepts process, local and regional partnerships will develop and deliver programs or projects that may include:

- foundational adult learning (literacy, high school completion);
- essential skills training (on the job or in conjunction with other employment-focused programming);
- industry-specific skills training (on the job or in the classroom);
- work experience or permanent employment attachment opportunities such as employer-community partnerships to fill labour shortages;
- skill development of individuals with the intent to meet employer needs and sector demands; and
- wrap-around services to assist with long-term success of the programs.

Evidence of Success:

Evidence from previous projects, programs and initiatives, completed in partnership with LAE, has indicated the combination of occupation-based and/or formal education and training (e.g. upgrading, certification training) combined with essential and soft skills training (e.g. communication skills, work ethic, resume writing, interview skills, etc.) is most effective in preparing individuals for successful entry into the workplace.

Flexibility in tailoring employment training and wraparound supports for both individuals, particularly those facing barriers, and employers is also critical to success. Ongoing wraparound supports and guidance, both during the training period and on the job, provided participants with the required resources for success (e.g. childcare, eldercare, accessibility adaptations, troubleshooting, job development, employment maintenance, etc.). These supports also included access to job developers, employer engagement specialists, and other career development professionals.

Program Purpose and Outcomes:

The purpose of this Call for Concepts is to increase labour force participation and attachment, and to increase growth and productivity in the workplace. This will help achieve the following outcomes:

- businesses, industries and their employees will become more productive through skills training, strategic human resource services, and industry/sector partnerships;
- employers will embed new and improved human resource strategies and develop inclusive and welcoming workplaces;
- unemployed Nova Scotians will be better able secure long-term, stable employment;
- the earning potential for vulnerable individuals may improve;
- individuals will connect with opportunities for further education, training and advancement and may obtain credentials and/or certifications;
- community partnerships will take on and maintain ownership of projects for the long-term to ensure strategies and programs meets the local needs of employers and vulnerable persons in the labour market; and
- community networks, relationships, linkages, and collaboration among skills development and training institutions and organizations, labour market partners, and the private sector will emerge to leverage assets and resources for the benefit of all Nova Scotians.

Eligible Applicants:

The Call for Concepts is open to organizations that provide:

- employment services and supports;
- human resource support to sectors;
- services and support to underrepresented groups; and
- education and training programs.

Employer participation is encouraged.

Note: Partnerships are a mandatory requirement for this Call for Concepts. A lead organization must be identified.

The following organizations are not eligible to apply for this Call:

- municipal government departments;
- Provincial and territorial governments, institutions, agencies, or Crown Corporations; and
- applications from individuals.

Eligible Participants:

This Call for Concepts is intended to fund programs that provide direct assistance to unemployed persons, employed persons who are at risk of becoming unemployed, employed persons who need assistance to maintain their employment, individuals from underrepresented groups, those earning low wages, and those in precarious positions. This includes:

- precarious workers who need new skills to find employment, e.g. those in part-time/seasonal jobs, temporary employment, and self-employment;
- individuals with job instability and/or lack of working hours which keeps them struggling to make ends meet. Some may be eligible for income assistance and others may have little access to direct financial support or other supports;
- individuals who are underrepresented in Nova Scotia's labour market and those most impacted by COVID including Mi'kmaq and other indigenous peoples, African Nova Scotians, Persons of African Descent, racially visible individuals, persons with disabilities immigrants, and women;

- low skilled workers who lack essential skills, high school diploma or equivalency, employer recognized certifications and occupational skills;
- workers who have been displaced due to lack of work/industry changes and who require new skills to attach to the labour market;
- individuals who are working in sectors or regions that are undergoing shifts and changes that may result in eventual/anticipated unemployment/job loss, e.g. those in wholesale and retail trade, food and accommodations, and culture and recreation; and
- individuals who are in the labour market or want to enter the labour market and have low literacy.

Note: Individuals must be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident legally entitled to work in Canada and are a Nova Scotia resident.

In-eligible Participants:

The following individuals are ineligible to participate in the proposed programs:

- Temporary Foreign Workers
- Youth within the current school system (grades pre-primary to high school)

Essential Program Components and Concept Submission:

Initiatives, projects, and programs presented by applicants should consider the program and project outcomes in the development of the proposed Concept. The submission **MUST** include:

- A demonstrated labour market need(s) in the community as well as the potential of workforce attachment to occupations most in demand, e.g. projects that assist individuals who have been displaced from industries and sectors affected by economic downturns attaching to occupations that are in demand, such as healthcare;
- A clear description of how the proposed activities address the challenge(s) with the activities that could include, but are not limited to:
 - The development of essential or employability skills
 - Offering certifications that match employer needs, occupational skills training, or employer training
 - Participant case management, employer case management and wrap-around supports
- Collaborative partnerships with key and appropriate agencies, organizations, businesses, educators to develop and deliver the labour market development solution and the required wrap-around supports
- Leveraging of existing resources, services and offerings that demonstrates how existing resources can be brought together for innovative, responsive solutions that require minimum additional investments by way of the Call for Concept funds, e.g. leveraging of existing programming and services in new and innovative ways could result in significant in-kind contributions
- Identification of individuals qualified to deliver proposed activities
- Measurable outcomes that provide maximum benefit for participants
- The ability to ideate and execute quickly, test new approaches, evaluate during program delivery, and adapt as needed based on the results

The concept submission includes the following in a 2-page summary:

- Lead and partner organizations (mandatory)
- Project Title
- Project Summary / Overview – in 250 words or less, describe the key goals, activities, sectors to be engaged, skills to be acquired, targeted populations, and organizations, etc.
- Background and Rationale – in 250 words or less, describe the labour market need, knowledge of the community, how this project will fulfill the outlined needs, and how it will continue to meet the needs beyond the implementation of the project

- Outcomes – short, medium, and long term
- Target Population(s)
- Number of Potential Participants
- Proposed Start and End Dates
- Covid Contingency Plan – outline a plan that includes how the project will move forward in the current Covid climate and the contingency should a second wave result in reduced and/or no in-person delivery
- Proposed budget

Ineligible Concept Submissions:

- Research, studies, focus groups or public meetings.
- Expenses incurred prior to receipt of application and approval of full proposals are not eligible.
- Fundraising events or activities.
- Major building development or major equipment purchases.

Project Budget:

The maximum budget should not exceed \$500,000 per concept exclusive of taxes, and inclusive of travel expenses related to the delivery of the initiative. Administration fees, if applicable, are not to exceed 15 percent of the total. A detailed budget is not required for the Call for Concepts. If the Concept is invited to submit a full proposal, a detailed budget will be required in addition to the work effort and a breakdown of expected expenses. The Skills and Learning Branch team will provide a high degree of support to work through these details and commits to turnaround feedback and approvals quickly.

Proponents are encouraged to leverage existing government programs where applicable. (See Annex A.) Where applicable, it is also expected that in-kind contributions can be leveraged and this can be in the form of the use of existing resources, existing programs delivered in a new and innovative way, and/or through the partnerships created. Additional costs such as technology can be reviewed and may be considered, if required, for the program and if a direct benefit for the participants. This will be assessed on as required basis.

All project engagements resulting from the Call for Concepts/ and payments will be facilitated through the Labour Market Programs Support System (LaMPSS). Project start dates should be no later than March 1, 2021.

Project Timing:

The anticipated timing of this work includes:

TIMING AND DELIVERABLES	
ACTION	TIMEFRAME
Call for Concept launch	October 15, 2020
2-pg Concept Submissions Due**	November 27, 2020 / 4:30 pm
LAE Evaluation Process	November 30 to December 4, 2020
Notification to successful proponents to move to the next stage of proposal development	Will begin the week of November 30, 2020
Proponent Proposal Development with assistance, where required, from LAE	November 30 to February 19, 2021
Application approval	If approved, project activities must begin no later than March 1, 2021
Final Deliverables and Summary report	Will be negotiated during proposal development

** November 27, 2020 is the initial submission deadline. LAE will continue to accept Concepts until the funding is fully committed or January 15, 2021, whichever occurs first.

A final summary report and additional update reports will be required at the end and throughout the project to report on progress and results. These timeframes are estimates only and are based on obtaining required information in a timely manner. Actual timeframes will be discussed between the proponent and LAE.

Experience and Qualifications:

Partnerships are a mandatory requirement and it is expected that the “Lead” organization will partner with parties that, together, possess all the skills and knowledge required to execute and deliver the proposed concept as outlined.

LAE encourages innovation through arrangements such as partnerships and consortiums. As partnerships and consortiums are developed, the lead proponent is expected to oversee the provision of all necessary resources to complete the services proposed in response to this call. Any contractors hired by the chosen proponents will be linked to the proponent and the proponent will be responsible for all business and financial and human resource arrangements with the subcontractor.

Confidentiality Clause:

The final report, deliverables, and all associated project related work, which is accessible to the general public pursuant to and in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPOP Act), is to be prepared for LAE and distributed at the discretion of LAE and all associated project work and deliverables are subject to the FOIPOP Act and any other applicable law.

Concept Evaluation Criteria:

All proposals and payments will be facilitated through the LaMPSS, and all concepts are to be submitted no later than the date and time outlined in this call. Any concepts submitted after that time will not be considered.

LAE reserves the right to:

- A. Reject any or all submitted concepts
- B. Suspend or cancel the call at any time for any reason without penalty
- C. Not necessarily accept the lowest cost concept

All concepts will be evaluated using the same evaluation criteria. Shortlisting and evaluation will be conducted using a scoring matrix based on a predetermined set of criteria. Concepts will be evaluated using the following criteria:

CRITERION	WEIGHT
The Concept is in a region(s) with additional economic downturn.	10%
In-demand industry sector(s).	10%
Demonstrated experience and expertise of the “Lead” organization and partner organizations that, together, possess all the skills and knowledge required to execute and deliver the proposed concept, as outlined. Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational profile • Organization’s alignment with the expected results of the proposed concept • Experiencing in managing and delivering relevant labour attachment programs and government agreements • Roles, relationships, and responsibilities • Qualifications and expertise of lead staff and partners in demonstrating diversity and inclusion 	20%
Evidence of labour market need and an outline of how the project will address the needs, including those who may be in precarious employment.	20%

Evidence the project promotes and contributes to the needs of diverse communities and builds more inclusive workplaces for individuals from diverse and underrepresented groups.	20%
Demonstrates collaboration and partnerships with industry, organizations and/or government to bring value to the project (i.e., leverage resources and/or expertise, strengthen collaboration or partnerships, promote equity, diversity, and inclusion)	10%
Evidence the “Lead” organization and partner organizations have knowledge of the targeted community and associated local labour market.	10%
TOTAL:	100%

- All submissions received become the property of LAE and all submissions will be held in confidence unless otherwise required by law.
- LAE reserves the right to disqualify potential submissions if there is an existing or recent business or personal relationship which can be perceived as causing a conflict of interest.
- Potential proponents are responsible for complying with all instructions, terms, and specifications related to the call. Failure to comply may result in disqualification of the potential proponents at the discretion of LAE.
- All expenses incurred in the preparation of the response to the call is entirely the responsibility of the potential proponents.
- Concepts will only be evaluated if it meets the minimum eligibility requirements as outlined within this call.
- Only proponents that will be approved to the next stage of approval will be contacted about next steps.
 - If a proponent is moved to the next stage, the proponent will be required to work with LAE in the development of a detailed proposal (template to be provided).

Projects will be initiated and led by community partners who are closest to local job seekers and employers. The Skills and Learning Branch will provide a high degree of support by way of on-going involvement in the project throughout its development and implementation. Enquiries can be directed to Joe Brown at: be-unit@novascotia.ca.

Annex A: Labour and Advanced Education: Employer Programs, Services and Resources

The Skills and Learning Branch is dedicated to ensuring Nova Scotian businesses have the skilled workforce they need to compete in today's economy. The following is the suite of programs, services, and resources available to employers.

Training and Development:

Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive (WIPSI)

<http://novascotia.ca/programs/workplace-innovation-productivity-skills-incentive>

WIPSI funds employers and industry associations to provide workforce training that is new or incremental and related to innovation, expansion, quality management and/or inclusion, with the goal of increasing the out-of-province and international competitiveness of Nova Scotia businesses. For small to medium sized businesses, this incentive can fund up to 100% of training costs up to \$10,000. Individual businesses can receive a maximum of \$100,000 in training supports per fiscal year.

Workplace Education Initiative (WEI)

<http://novascotia.ca/lae/workplace-education>

WEI funds 40-hour programs of customized, essential skills training for working Nova Scotians (including entrepreneurs). The WEI model focuses on partnership, community economic development, and continuous improvement to support the needs of Nova Scotia businesses. Programs are delivered through individual businesses, business associations, sector councils and community organizations.

SkillsonlineNS

<https://www.coursepark.com/ns>

SkillsonlineNS offers hundreds of free online training courses to all Nova Scotians. Topics range from customer service, marketing to financial management and much more. Businesses can set up a free private learning network and use it to assign training to staff and monitor progress.

Hiring Incentives and Supports:

Nova Scotia Works – Employer Engagement Specialists

<https://novascotia.ca/works/>

Employer Engagement Specialists are based out of the Nova Scotia Works Centres across the province. They work with local employers to ensure that employers have the resources needed to build and train their workforce by providing Human Resource information and supports and by assisting employers to access and navigate available government and community programs and services.

Graduate to Opportunity (GTO)

<https://novascotia.ca/programs/graduate-to-opportunity>

GTO helps build stronger workforces and retain young people in Nova Scotia with a salary incentive to hire recent graduates. Employers receive 25% of the first year's salary, 35% if the new grad is a member of a designated diversity group and 12.5% of the second year's salary.

Innovate to Opportunity (ITO)

<https://novascotia.ca/programs/innovate-to-opportunity/>

ITO helps highly educated young people start their careers while helping businesses become more innovative. Funding is offered to eligible employers to hire recent Masters' and PhD graduates for jobs that are focused on research, innovation, and exports. Employers receive funding for a three-year period and can be eligible to receive funding of up to 50% of a new graduate's first year salary.

Co-op Education Incentive (CO-OP)

<https://novascotia.ca/programs/co-op-education-incentive>

CO-OP provides wage assistance to private sector, government-funded and non-profit organizations offering career-related work experiences to university and community college co-operative students. Employers pay students a minimum of \$15/hr plus 4% vacation pay, and CO-OP will reimburse \$7.50/hr to a maximum of 40 hours per week.

Student Summer Skills Incentive (SKILL)

<https://novascotia.ca/programs/student-summer-skills-incentive>

SKILL offers wage assistance to non-profit organizations that provide quality, career-related summer jobs to students going into university or community college in the fall. Applications are open once a year from mid-December to January.

START

<https://novascotia.ca/employmentnovascotia/programs/start.asp>

The START Program provides financial incentives to employers who are looking to hire and support ready-to-work Nova Scotians in their companies. Incentives vary depending on the type of employment offered and the skill level of the employee.

Resources to Strengthen Human Resource Practices:

NS HR Toolkit

<http://workplaceinitiatives.novascotia.ca/nshrtoolkit/>

This toolkit has tools and resources for employers to find, keep and develop their employees. Employers can quickly and easily find relevant information, resources, and downloadable templates to help strengthen Human Resource practices.

Welcoming Workplaces

<http://workplaceinitiatives.novascotia.ca/welcomingworkplaces/>

Welcoming Workplaces is an online source of information and resources to help Nova Scotian employers embrace diversity and build welcoming and inclusive workplaces. Areas of focus include senior management commitment, policy development, staff engagement and community partnerships.

Job Bank

<http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/>

This federal and provincial service matches employers with skilled job seekers. Employers can post their available jobs on the Job Bank and access other resources to assist them to successfully hire employees for their businesses. Nova Scotia employers who require assistance to use this service may call **902-722-1073 (Halifax)** or **1-866-562-0100**.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Funding Program

<https://novascotia.ca/lae/RplLabourMobility/rpl.asp>

The RPL Funding Program helps organizations, educational institutions, immigrant serving agencies and other stakeholders to develop tools, programs and services that facilitate the assessment and recognition of what learners/workers already know and can do, and to support entry and advancement in educational pursuits and/or the Nova Scotia labour force. Partnerships across government are encouraged to foster coordinated approaches and use of funding and other resources.

Labour Market Programs and Supports:

Sector Council Program

<http://novascotia.ca/lae/sector-council-program/>

The Sector Council Program supports industry-driven recruitment, retention, and training initiatives to address human resource challenges in Nova Scotia's industry sectors. The Association of Industry Sector Councils (AISC) represents the interests of thousands of small-and medium-sized businesses all over the province. Sectors represented in the AISC share ideas, success stories, resources, and expertise to create more jobs for Nova Scotians. <https://aisc.ca/>

One Journey Initiative

<http://novascotia.ca/lae/one-journey-work-and-learn/>

The One Journey Initiative responds to industry labour shortages. Employers provide paid work placements and commit to hire unemployed or underemployed Nova Scotians for hard-to-fill positions. One Journey participants receive occupational and employability skills training to ensure a successful transition to work.

Business Workforce Consultants

Business Workforce Consultants work directly with employers and industry across Nova Scotia to address strategic workforce planning issues. This could include succession planning, identifying employee and leadership training resources and building human resource capacity in industry, regions, and businesses.

The logo for Canada, featuring the word "Canada" in a serif font with a small Canadian flag to the right.

To learn more about these programs and resources call (902) 722-1073 (Halifax), 1-866-562-0100, or visit our sites as listed..

The logo for Nova Scotia, featuring a stylized blue and white flag with a red shield in the center, above the words "NOVA SCOTIA" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font.