

DEPARTMENT OF ADVANCED EDUCATION AND SKILLS

GROWTH THROUGH EMPLOYMENT, STRENGTH IN DIVERSITY, DIGNITY BY INCLUSION

STRATEGIC
PLAN **14|17**

Message from the Minister



In accordance with my responsibilities under the Transparency and Accountability Act, I present a strategic plan for the Department of Advanced Education and Skills covering the period April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2017.

The Department of Advanced Education and Skills is a category one public body and this strategic plan was prepared in accordance with the applicable guidelines. This new plan coincides with a significant, ongoing reorganization of the Department that will make it even more responsive to the changing demands of today's growing labour market. Together with our partners the Department will work to develop the workforce necessary to meet growing labour demands.

Today, more Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are working than ever before and fewer Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are on Income Support. Today, the percentage of the population receiving Income Support is at a historic low (approximately seven per cent), a trend that is expected to continue. The Department of Advanced Education and Skills is committed to supporting this trend by removing barriers to work and better matching labour

market demand with the people that can do the work. This plan was prepared under my direction and the Strategic Directions of the Provincial Government were carefully considered in its preparation.

I look forward to working with departmental employees along with other partners in the province, to implement this strategic plan. My signature below attests to my accountability for the preparation of this plan and the achievement of the specific goals and objectives identified.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin O'Brien". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Kevin O'Brien
MHA

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Introduction

In accordance with the *Transparency and Accountability Act*, the strategic plan for the Department of Advanced Education and Skills identifies three key priority areas, also described as strategic issues, which will be addressed over the next three years to help meet the social and economic needs of the province.

To address these strategic issues, three-year goals, along with corresponding objectives have been developed. These goals aim to improve:

- alignment of labour market supply and demand
- responsiveness of post-secondary education and training, and
- supports for individuals and families to participate in social and economic opportunities

Using specified measures and indicators, an Annual Report will be tabled in the House of Assembly each year. This performance report will provide a summary of the progress in achieving the goals and objectives set out in this plan, and will outline performance indicators for the years ahead.

Vision

Growth through employment, strength in diversity, dignity by inclusion

Mission

By March 31, 2017, the Department of Advanced Education and Skills will have improved the quality and the delivery of supports and services.

Goals

Goal 1

By March 31, 2017 the Department of Advanced Education and Skills will have improved its supports to promote the alignment of labour supply and demand

Goal 2

By March 31, 2017 the Department of Advanced Education and Skills will have enabled provincial post-secondary education and training to become more responsive to labour market demands

Goal 3

By March 31, 2017 the Department of Advanced Education and Skills will have improved supports for individuals and families to participate in social and economic opportunities

Overview of Department

The Department of Advanced Education and Skills helps people access post-secondary education, develop basic skills, plan their careers, find and keep jobs, obtain financial assistance, and immigrate to the province.

The Department undertakes strategic initiatives to align labour supply and demand, including working with our education and training partners to help prepare people for job opportunities in the province and ensure the responsiveness of our post-secondary training institutions.

The Department supports employers in accessing and keeping skilled workers, works with organizations to deliver employment and career supports, and assists people affected by wide-scale emergencies.

The Department also leads corporate-wide strategies and approaches to reduce poverty, enhance the inclusion of persons with disabilities, promote immigration and multiculturalism, develop the provincial workforce and support sustained population growth.

Structure

The Department of Advanced Education and Skills is composed of:

5 Branches:

- Community and Social Development
- Corporate Services
- Post-Secondary Education
- Regional Service Delivery
- Workforce Development and Immigration

Staff

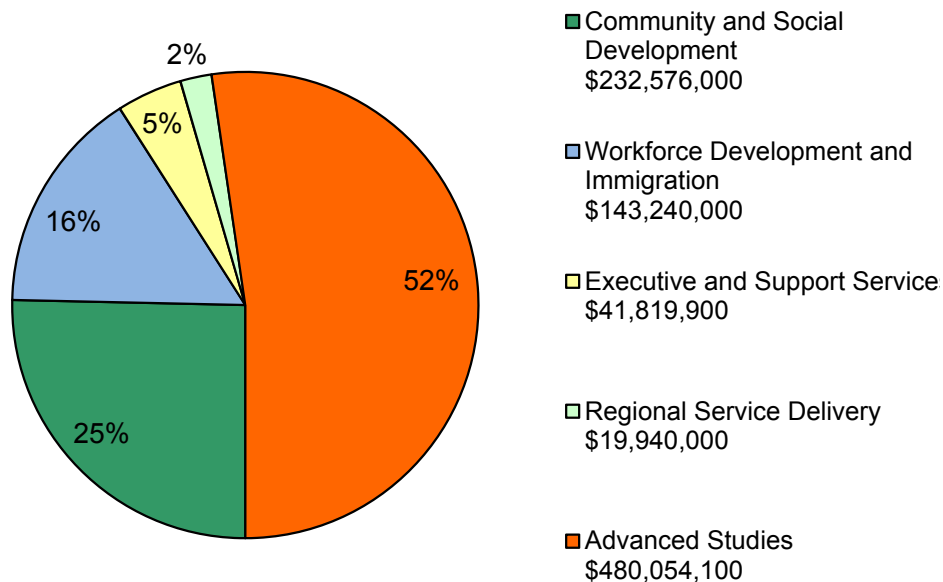
Staff	
Males	185 (26%)
Females	539 (74%)
Total	724 (100%)

Approximately 52% of employees are located in offices in the St. John's Census Metropolitan Area. The remaining 48% are located in offices throughout the province.

Budget

For 2014-15, the Department of Advanced Education and Skills has a budget of \$917.6 million. The greatest expenditure in the Department is in support of advanced studies at \$480.1 million followed by community and social development at \$232.6 million followed by community and social development at \$232.6 million and workforce development and immigration at \$143.2 million and workforce development and immigration at \$143.2 million and workforce development and immigration at \$143.2 million and immigration at \$143.2 million.

**Fiscal Year 2014-15
Predicted Gross Expenditures**



Legislative Authority

Legislative authority for the Department's programs and services is provided by the following 13 pieces of legislation:

- *Apprenticeship and Certification Act*
- *College Act, 1996*
- *Council on Higher Education Act*
- *Degree Granting Act*
- *Emergency Services Act, shared with the Department of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs*
- *Income and Employment Support Act*
- *Labour Mobility Implementation Act*
- *Memorial University Act*
- *Memorial University Pensions Act*
- *Private Training Institutions Act*
- *Student Financial Assistance Act*
- *Canada Student Loans Act*
- *Support Orders Enforcement Act, 2006, shared with the Department of Justice*

Mandate

The Department of Advanced Education and Skills helps citizens obtain the necessary educational, financial, and social supports to achieve the greatest benefit from the growing opportunities that exist in the province.

To ensure the province has skilled workers and highly educated graduates to support a fast-growing economy, the Department works with employers, supports and collaborates with Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic and oversees private post-secondary institutions.

Through the development and delivery of programs and supports, the Department works to meet labour demands and increase labour force participation in the province, including under-represented groups such as Aboriginal people, women, and persons with disabilities.

The Department also leads corporate-wide strategies to reduce poverty, enhance the inclusion of persons with disabilities, promote immigration and multiculturalism, develop the provincial workforce and support population growth.

Lines of Business

The Department provides a spectrum of programs and services, in 30 offices around the province, in the following five areas to support attachment to the labour force, to meet the province's labour market needs or to support individuals when they require assistance:

1. Employment supports and career services - (such as career counseling, wage subsidies, apprenticeship and trade certification supports, job searching, pre- employment readiness and training and 'up-skilling')
2. Income supports and basic benefits - (such as monthly benefits, earning supplements and one-time benefits)
3. Labour market development and immigration - (such as supporting employers with recruitment and retention, human resource planning, and providing individuals with labour market information and trend analysis on labour market opportunities)
4. Post-secondary education - (supports to individuals such as training, tuition supports, apprenticeship, trade certification, student financial assistance, student assessment, adult learning and literacy, and support to post-secondary institutions)
5. Policy and program development and leadership on cross-government initiatives - (through development and implementation of strategies and programs to support poverty reduction, inclusion of persons with disabilities, immigration and multiculturalism, literacy skills, workforce development and population growth)

Further details on current programs and services can be obtained from the Department's website at www.aes.gov.nl.ca

Employees within the Department of Advanced Education and Skills support the following values:

- 1. Diversity** – Appreciating the individuality of others by words and actions
- 2. Leadership** – Empowering staff to guide and inspire others
- 3. Service Excellence** – Providing timely access to responsive programs and services that are delivered by knowledgeable and friendly staff
- 4. Innovation** – Encouraging new and efficient ways of responding through programs and services
- 5. Respect and Dignity** – Showing acceptance and sincerity for the beliefs and behaviours of individuals
- 6. Teamwork and Partnership** – Working together with colleagues and partners to develop and deliver appropriate supports and services

Primary Clients

The Department has expanded its client base over recent years to provide people with a broad range of services – be it providing financial supports, career counseling, training allowances, wage subsidies or disaster relief. We support employers with attracting and retaining employees. We work with post-secondary institutions, community agencies and service providers to help people prepare for, obtain and keep employment. We also work together with other governments and their agencies to support our citizens to participate fully in the life of the province. Accordingly, the Department of Advanced Education and Skills currently serves nine broad groups:

- Apprentices and tradespersons
- Community organizations and service providers
- Employers and industry groups
- Governments and government agencies
- Immigrants
- Individuals and families
- Job-seekers
- Post-secondary students
- Post-secondary educational institutions

Vision

A vision is the outcome which would be achieved if the Department's mandate is completed. It is a short statement describing the ideal state an organization is striving to achieve in the long-term. Accordingly, the Department's vision is:

“Growth through employment, strength in diversity, dignity by inclusion.”

Mission

By March 31, 2017, the Department of Advanced Education and Skills will have improved the quality and the delivery of supports and services.

Measure

Improved the quality and the delivery of supports and services.

Mission Indicators

- Enhanced access to services
- Improved timeliness of services
- Streamlined the delivery of programs and service

The mission statement identifies the focus area for the Minister over the six-year period (2011/12 to 2016/17). It represents the key longer-term result that the Minister and the Department will be working towards as they move forward on government's strategic directions of Labour Market, Post-Secondary Education, and Community and Social Development. Refer to Appendix A for details on focus areas and outcomes.

The mission statement also identifies the measures and indicators that will assist both the Department and the public in monitoring and evaluating success.

Strategic Issues, Goals, Objectives, Measures and Indicators

Strategic issues represent the most significant internal or external changes that a department must realize to achieve its mandate, vision and mission. The goals identified for each issue, reflect the results expected in a three-year time frame (2014/15 to 2016/17). The objectives provide an annual focus.

Measures and performance indicators are provided for both the three-year goals and the first year's objectives (2014/15). All of these elements assist both the Department and the public in monitoring and evaluating progress.

After considering the strategic directions, along with the mandate and financial resources of the Department, the following issues have been identified as key priorities for the Department over the next three years:

- Alignment of labour market supply and demand
- Responsiveness of post-secondary education and training
- Removal of barriers to participation in social and economic opportunities

Strategic Issue 1 - Alignment of labour market supply and demand

The provincial economy has significantly expanded since 2003, primarily due to development in the natural resources sector. Between 2003 and 2013, real GDP expanded by 16.5 per cent. Newfoundland and Labrador's economy remained strong throughout the recent recession and growth is predicted to continue into 2015.

Major project investment and related employment have contributed to this growth. Strength in the labour market as a result of this growth is reflected in rising wages and participation rates.

The growing economy has contributed to a host of new opportunities for provincial residents. As a result of economic growth and strategic labour market actions, more Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are working and the province has its lowest unemployment and income support rates since 1976.

In some sectors of the economy, labour supply has not kept up with labour demand. Skill shortages have been cited as the major impediment to businesses in the province by some organizations. Employers and employer organizations are citing skill mismatches as key concerns and major impediments to their sustainability and growth. To help address these concerns, efforts need to continue to maximize labour force participation in the province.

The Department of Advanced Education and Skills plans to respond to these concerns by reshaping public policy and programming to the evolving needs of our labour market. This alignment of labour supply and demand is critical to ensure the Department can support maximized growth in sectors of opportunity, drive an innovative, productive and knowledge-based economy and ensure all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians can benefit from the province's economic growth.

Over the next three years, the Department will work with partners to enhance the alignment of labour supply with demand and in doing so foster and reinforce the growth and prosperity that the province has been experiencing. In this way the Department will address the strategic direction relating to labour market. The relevant component areas of this strategic direction include: labour market enablement; workforce supports for individuals and employers; and immigration – attraction, promotion, retention and integration.

Issue 1

“Alignment of labour market supply and demand”

Goal 1 (3-year)

By March 31, 2017 the Department of Advanced Education and Skills will have improved its supports to promote the alignment of labour supply and demand

Measure

Improved its supports to promote the alignment of labour supply and demand

3-Year Performance Indicators:

1. Improved the collection, dissemination and access to labour market information for planning purposes
2. Tailored employment and training programs to respond to labour market demands
3. Increased employer access to skilled immigrants
4. Incorporated regional and sector labour market opportunities into employment planning, skills development and training processes.

Objective 1 (2014-15)

By March 31, 2015 the Department will have commenced initiatives to improve its supports to promote the alignment of labour supply and demand

Objective 2 (2015-16)

By March 31, 2016 the Department will have continued initiatives to improve its supports to promote the alignment of labour supply and demand

Objective 3 (2016-17)

By March 31, 2017 the Department will have furthered initiatives to improve its supports to promote the alignment of labour supply and demand

Objective 1 (2014-15)

By March 31, 2015 the Department will have commenced initiatives to improve its supports to promote the alignment of labour supply and demand

Measure

Commenced initiatives to improve its supports to promote the alignment of labour supply and demand

Performance Indicators:

1. Released a revised labour market supply and demand forecast
2. Increased immigration efforts to recruit skilled workers to meet employer demands
3. Increased the promotion of employment opportunities in the province
4. Released the Workforce Development Strategy for Newfoundland and Labrador

Strategic Issue 2 - Responsiveness of post-secondary education and training

Demand for skilled workers continues to increase as the vast majority of job growth is in occupations that require a university degree or college diploma. Continued investment in programs, equipment and infrastructure at Newfoundland and Labrador's public post-secondary education institutions ensures that students have access to in-demand labour market relevant training in renovated and newly constructed state-of-the-art facilities. Our public post-secondary institutions have embarked on efficiency reviews to ensure that their programming and operations meet the needs of students and their future employers. Learning opportunities in this province have never been greater. Students have access to long-term and short-term program options that can lead to labour market attachment. Students in this province are also contributors and leaders in innovative research and technology projects. The success of our post-secondary education is measured by the thousands of graduates as well as our institutions' faculty and staff who through their research and teaching activities contribute to the social and economic development of this province.

The Department will continue to focus on, and make progress in, increasing the educational attainment of the people of this province while breaking down barriers to employment and education that are faced by certain groups of our society. To address the financial barrier, Newfoundland and Labrador continues to be a leader in the delivery of affordable and accessible post-secondary education and remains a model for the rest of Canada, thanks to low tuition rates at Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic dating back to 2000. Additionally, needs-based grants, interest-free student loans and debt-reduction initiatives ensure that students graduate with less debt than ever before.

Over the next three years, the Department will work with our partners to improve the responsiveness of our post-secondary education and training systems so that students, their families and their communities continue to benefit from an affordable and accessible education system and employers benefit from a ready supply of highly skilled workers. In this way the Department will address the strategic direction relating to post-secondary education. The component areas of this strategic direction include: post-secondary infrastructure; affordability and student access; programming; and apprenticeship policy and training.

Issue 2

“Responsiveness of post-secondary education and training”

Goal 2 (3-year)

By March 31, 2017 the Department of Advanced Education and Skills will have enabled provincial post-secondary education and training to become more responsive to labour market demands.

Measure

Enabled provincial post-secondary education and training to become more responsive to labour market demands

3-Year Performance Indicators:

1. Strengthened the effectiveness of apprenticeship operations in meeting labour market needs of the province
2. Strengthened the capacity of post-secondary education and training to be more innovative and responsive
3. Improved efficiency and accountability in the NL Student Financial Assistance Program

Objective 1 (2014-15)

By March 31, 2015 the Department will have commenced initiatives to enable provincial post-secondary education and training to become more responsive to labour market demands

Objective 2 (2015-16)

By March 31, 2016 the Department will have continued initiatives to enable provincial post-secondary education and training to become more responsive to labour market demands

Objective 1 (2014-15)

By March 31, 2015 the Department will have commenced initiatives to enable provincial post-secondary education and training to become more responsive to labour market demands

Measure

Commenced initiatives to enable provincial post-secondary to become more responsive to labour market demands

Performance Indicators:

1. Reviewed phased-in approaches from MUN and CNA to operationalize the efficiency review
2. Introduced and maintained financial solutions to remove barriers to participation in post-secondary education
3. Improved efficiency and responsiveness of provincial apprenticeship operations

Strategic Issue 3 - Removal of barriers to participation in social and economic opportunities

Employment and participation rates have improved significantly over the last decade. In order to have a strong province, we need a strong economy and a strong social safety net. A strong social safety net breaks the cycle of poverty by supporting people to develop to their full potential and participate in their communities. Ending poverty and social exclusion are essential elements to ensuring a prosperous province.

Through our poverty reduction strategy, inclusion strategy and general focus on removing barriers to participating in the social and economic life of our province, much progress has been made. In 2003, NL had one of the highest levels of poverty in the country. According to the most recently available data, Newfoundland and Labrador is tied with Saskatchewan as the province with the second lowest percentage of people living in low income. [Statistics Canada's 2011 Low Income Cut Offs (LICOs), After-Tax]. This reflects progress in supporting vulnerable individuals, including persons with disabilities, those in receipt of financial assistance, at-risk youth and others, to be able to take advantage of our strong economy.

Work remains to ensure that we continue to respond to current economic and social realities. To continue to make progress in reducing poverty and social exclusion, we must address and prevent barriers that limit participation so that all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians can take part in economic, cultural, social, recreational and civic life.

Poverty and social exclusion have significant costs for the province and hold people back from participating fully in society and contributing to the economy and communities. Reducing poverty and social exclusion restores the balance of opportunity in our society.

Over the next three years, the Department will undertake further initiatives to remove barriers facing individuals while continuing to lead cross-governmental strategies and action plans designed to reduce poverty, enhance inclusion, and promote multiculturalism.

In this way the Department will address the strategic direction relating to community and social development. The relevant component areas of this strategic direction include: social and financial supports; poverty reduction; and barrier removal and prevention.

Issue 3

“Removal of barriers to participation in social and economic opportunities”

Goal 3 (3-year)

By March 31, 2017 the Department of Advanced Education and Skills will have improved supports for individuals and families to participate in social and economic opportunities

Measure

Improved supports for individuals and families to participate in social and economic opportunities

3-Year Performance Indicators:

1. Improved living supports for individuals that are having difficulty finding and keeping employment
2. Implemented new phases of cross-government strategies that address the key issues of poverty reduction and inclusion.
3. Implemented program and service delivery improvements to increase access to opportunities in the province
4. Developed a horizontal approach to address population growth in the province

Objective 1 (2014-15)

By March 31, 2015 the Department will have initiated activities that improve supports for individuals and families to participate in social and economic opportunities

Objective 2 (2015-16)

By March 31, 2016 the Department will have continued initiatives that improve supports for individuals and families

Objective 3 (2016-17)

By March 31, 2017 the Department will have furthered initiatives that improve supports for individuals and families

Objective 1 (2014-15)

By March 31, 2015 the Department will have initiated activities to improve supports for individuals and families to participate in social and economic opportunities

Measure

Initiated activities to improve supports for individuals and families

Performance Indicators:

1. Commenced implementation of an incremental approach to establishing service standards
2. Launched the Inclusion Strategy's Action Plan which includes supportive programming
3. Reviewed the income support program to guide the development of solutions for individuals that are unable to attach to the work force
4. Led the development of the Poverty Reduction Strategy's second Action Plan
5. Released a population growth strategy for the province

Appendix A: Strategic Directions

Strategic directions identify desired physical, social or economic outcomes. They normally require action by more than one government entity. These directions are generally communicated by the Provincial Government through platform commitments, Throne and Budget Speeches, policy documents and other communication activities.





The *Transparency and Accountability Act* requires departments and public bodies to take into account these strategic directions in the preparation of their performance-based plans. This requirement assures the integration of planning practices across Government and ensures that all entities are moving forward on key commitments.

The directions related to the Department of Advanced Education and Skills and its public entities (for example: boards, corporations, Memorial University, and College of the North Atlantic) are provided in the following tables. Each strategic direction is comprised of a number of components, or focus areas. In reference to the Department, these component areas will be addressed through the various planning processes (strategic, operational or work planning). Only the highest order of planning is indicated in the strategic direction tables that follow.

In reference to other public bodies reporting to the Minister, each strategic direction table notes with a check mark, those component areas that are applicable to entities reporting to the Minister.





1. Title: Labour Market

Outcome: A skilled and employed work force better meeting the demands of a competitive economy.

Components of Strategic Direction	Applicable to Other Entities Reporting to the Minister	This Direction is addressed:		
		in the Department's strategic plan	in the Department's operational plan	in the branch/divisional work plans of the Department
1. Labour market enablement				
2. Workforce supports for individuals and employers				
3. Immigration – attraction, promotion, retention and integration				
4. Adult literacy				





2. Title: Post-secondary Education

Outcome: Enhanced post-secondary education system that contributes to the social, cultural and economic development of the province.

Components of Strategic Direction	Applicable to Other Entities Reporting to the Minister	This Direction is addressed:		
		in the Department's strategic plan	in the Department's operational plan	in the branch/divisional work plans of the Department
1. Post-secondary infrastructure				
2. Affordability and student access				
3. Programming				
4. Apprenticeship policy and training				

3. Title: Community and Social Development

Outcome: Strengthened community and social supports and the enhanced inclusion of persons with disabilities through equitable access to services and opportunities.

Components of Strategic Direction	Applicable to Other Entities Reporting to the Minister	This Direction is addressed:		
		in the Department's strategic plan	in the Department's operational plan	in the branch/divisional work plans of the Department
1. Social and financial supports				
2. Poverty reduction				
3. Barrier removal and prevention				
4. Multiculturalism promotion				

Appendix B: In-active Entity

Council on Higher Education

The Council on Higher Education is comprised of eight to eleven members including:

- Minister of Advanced Education and Skills
- Deputy Minister, Department of Advanced Education and Skills
- Chair of the Board of Regents, Memorial University
- Chair of the Board of Governors, College of the North Atlantic
- President, Memorial University
- President, College of the North Atlantic
- Two student representatives, one each from Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic
- Up to three additional representatives appointed by the Minister

Pursuant to Section 8(1) of the *Council on Higher Education Act*, the council shall make recommendations to the university, the college and the minister, as it considers appropriate, with respect to:

- a. the strategic directions that should be implemented for post-secondary education in the province;
- b. priorities for the provision of post-secondary education in the province to reduce unnecessary duplication of effort and expense;
- c. the sharing of library resources, information, career counselling, academic and pre-enrolment advice services, disability services, housing services, distance education delivery and other student support services;
- d. cost-effective provincial, national and international student recruitment policies and standards and student recruitment activities;
- e. student credit transfer arrangements among the university, the college and other accredited provincial, national and international post-secondary educational programs; and
- f. those other matters related to the university and the college that the council considers necessary.

The Council on Higher Education has not been active in recent years; however, there are plans to revive this entity as the Department moves forward. At that time, this entity will be subject to the planning and reporting requirements of the *Transparency and Accountability Act*.

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