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Self-Employment

If you are unemployed and want to create a job for yourself by starting your own business, the Self-Employment program can help. This program offers both financial help and entrepreneurial support to eligible individuals. Employment Nova Scotia also offers funding to organizations to help their unemployed clients start their own businesses. It does this by offering information sessions, entrepreneurial training and assessment, and help to develop and carry out business plans.

Eligibility Information

To be eligible, you must be unemployed and thinking about starting a new business to create a job for yourself. You must be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident legally entitled to work in Canada. As well, you must meet one of the following conditions:

- have a current Employment Insurance (EI) claim
- have had an EI claim that ended within the last three years
- have had an EI claim for maternity or parental benefits within the past five years, then remained out of the job market to care for a newborn or newly adopted child, and now want to re-enter the labour force

Applying for Self-Employment Program

Before you can apply for the Self-Employment program, you must first meet with an employment assistance service provider. They will assign a case manager to you. The case manager will then see if you qualify for additional support and tell you about the various employment services you can access.

These services may include

- job market information
- employment needs assessment
- career planning
- employment counselling
- diagnostic assessment
- job search skills
- job finding clubs
- job placement services
- help making a return-to-work action plan
- case management
- follow-up support

If you are interested in starting a business, you will meet with a self-employment coordinator to talk about your business idea. Together you will decide if your concept is viable and acceptable. You will also evaluate business plan priorities, whether the business is likely to survive in the marketplace, and what effect the business will have on current businesses. The self-employment coordinator may also refer you to other funding agencies with programs that could help you finance your new business.

Before you can apply for the Self-Employment program, you and the self-employment coordinator must agree that self-employment is a good option for you.

After reaching this agreement, you will be given a letter of support. The letter will state that you have drafted your business concept and have shown a need for help to further develop and/or carry out your plan. This document will be included in the employment assessment and your return-to-work action plan as part of your Self-Employment program application.

Employment Nova Scotia will review your application along with your case manager's assessment and recommendation, the self-employment coordinator's letter of support, and your return-to-work action plan. Your application will then be assessed by Employment Nova Scotia.

Please Note:

- The date your fully completed application is received by Employment Nova Scotia will be considered the date that you have asked for help. This date determines whether you qualify within the timeframes outlined in the Eligibility Information section above. If an application is returned to you to have information clarified or added, it will not be considered fully completed until all of the information needed is received.
- Your business, under the Self-Employment program, must be a new business or an existing business in which you had no prior ownership.
- The longest you can receive financial help in the form of grant payments is 40 weeks (or up to 78 weeks if you are a person with a disability that may affect your ability to carry out your plan).
- Financial help is intended to cover personal living expenses during the start-up stage of your business. It is not an investment in the business.
- You must devote at least 35 hours each week to develop and carry out your business plan. You must also show proof of personal financial investment in the business.

Self-Employment Information

For program-specific information, including a list of employment assistance service providers, visit www.gov.ns.ca/employmentnovascotia/programs/self-employment.asp or call toll-free at 1 (877) 223-0888.

About Employment Nova Scotia

Employment Nova Scotia manages employment-related programming funded by the Canada–Nova Scotia Labour Market Development Agreement, the Canada–Nova Scotia Labour Market Agreement, and the Targeted Initiative for Older Workers.

