



Labour and Advanced Education

Canada-Nova Scotia Labour Market Agreement

Annual Report 2010-2011

Summary

In the 2010-2011 fiscal years, the Province of Nova Scotia invested \$15.4 million in Labour Market Agreement (LMA) funds and \$7.4 in Strategic Training and Transition Fund (STTF) funding in labour market development programs.

Through the LMA, Nova Scotia was able to increase participation of under-represented groups and low-skilled Nova Scotians, thereby strengthening the labour market for the future.

The STTF funding supported individuals, employers and communities affected by the economic downturn. The 2010-2011 fiscal year marked the end of this two year funding agreement.

Together, the LMA and the STTF assisted over 3700 Nova Scotians gain better access and attachment to the labour market. The following report outlines the investments and activities undertaken through support of these two agreements.

The future health of the Nova Scotia labour market depends on many elements. The LMA and STTF funding have allowed Nova Scotia to support several key elements to help ensure a bright future for both individual Nova Scotians and the province as a whole.

"I never wanted to even try to learn before because I thought I couldn't do anything. Now I am wanting to explore interests but I am still afraid to try new things. This is a starting point for me as I have never had any work experience before and I have had a lot of personal struggles. The majority of staff are great. All staff are very informative about their teaching and it's a lot of fun."
- Program participant

LMA/STTF programming received a more than 90% overall satisfaction rating. Majority of participants would recommend their interventions to others. Some because:

"It can help you achieve your goals fast"

"I learned a lot from it and I believe it was very educational and inspiring"

"It has helped me very much with my English skills."

"Benefits of exposure to work experience..."

"I dealt with many different people here, and found all of them helpful."

"It was a timely intervention."

Background

The Canada-Nova Scotia Labour Market Agreement is a six-year bilateral agreement through which the federal government provides funds for Nova Scotia's labour market programs and services. This agreement was signed between Canada and Nova Scotia in June 2008.

Eligibility for LMA-funded programs and services is limited to:

- Unemployed Nova Scotians who are not eligible to receive Employment Insurance benefits; and
- Employed Nova Scotians who do not have a high school diploma or recognized certification or who have low levels of literacy and essential skills.

In addition, the LMA is designed to target specific groups of eligible Nova Scotians who are under-represented in the workforce. These groups include Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, immigrants, African Nova Scotians, Acadian and Francophone Nova Scotians, older workers, women and income assistance recipients.

The LMA is designed to compliment labour market programs and services available to those Nova Scotians who are eligible for Employment Insurance benefits through the Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA).

An Omnibus Amendment to the LMA was signed on May 1, 2009, providing an additional \$7.4M in 2010-11 through the Strategic Training and Transition Fund (STTF). A part of the Federal Economic Action Plan, the STTF aims to actively support individuals, employers and communities affected by the economic downturn through the implementation of workforce response, workforce stabilization, and workforce growth and development strategies and initiatives. Under the STTF, client eligibility can include both EI and non-EI eligible Nova Scotians.

This report provides a summary of the results of programs funded under the LMA during the 2010-2011 fiscal year, as outlined in Nova Scotia's 2010-2011 Annual Plan.

"I am very excited and proud to be a part of this program, to witness the participant's growth and watch them peel back the layers and blossom like flowers. With the extra support of a Job Coach this will make the transition a positive experience not only for the participant but also the employers and communities who will be involved in the program."
- Program facilitator

"Is there another word that's better than excellent?"
- Satisfaction rating comments by Program participant

Planning Context

In 2010-2011, priorities for the LMA were set by the Department of Labour and Advanced Education (LAE) in collaboration with:

- Department of Community Services,
- Department of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism (ERDT),
- Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women,
- Nova Scotia Business Inc. (NSBI), as well as
- Offices of Aboriginal Affairs, Acadian Affairs, African Nova Scotian Affairs and Immigration

Funds are allocated based on provincial priorities and strategies. Funds are used strategically to enhance existing provincial initiatives such as workplace education and adult learning, while other funding permits the creation of new employability programs. Programs and services are typically delivered by third party community organizations and educational institutions.

Activities funded by the LMA are currently delivered by three departments: Labour and Advanced Education, Office of Immigration and Community Services.

Similar to the LMA, an interdepartmental committee applied a collaborative approach to STTF investments. Committee members include representatives from the Departments of Labour and Workforce Development, Economic and Rural Development and Nova Scotia Business Inc.

Nova Scotia's Labour Market Context

Nova Scotia's economy retracted slightly in 2009, with real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) declining 0.1%, which hasn't occurred since 1991. A significant increase in investment from the government sector helped offset declining business sector investment, weak consumer spending, and falling exports. Private sector forecasters expect growth will be positive in Nova Scotia, with a consensus forecast for real GDP of 1.8% (2011) and 2.1% (2012).ⁱ

The recession led to reduced hiring and numerous closures and layoffs, which contributed to an approximate 20% increase in unemployment (affecting youth and prime-age adults, more so than older workers). Areas of manufacturing, retail trade and tourism-related industries were most affected by the downturn, both in Nova Scotia and across Canada.

Newly laid-off workers faced the reality of a change in the labour market. Skills enhancement was required for successful transition to new employment as job opportunities at lower skill levels were diminished. Funds were distributed to support employers and employees affected by economic downturn in efforts to develop Nova Scotia's workforce.

Current labour market conditions remain weak, although stable. The unemployment rate is still above its pre-recession level at 9.4% (2010), suggesting a large number of job seekers are still in transition.

ⁱ As of February, 2011

Fortunately, plant shutdowns and layoffs have moderated – initial E.I. claims fell by 8.9% in 2010ⁱⁱ. Regionally, employment in Halifax has continued to grow over the past two years, unlike all other economic provincial regions where employment is still below pre-recession levels and unemployment remains elevated.

Many industries and skill areas were, and continue to be, unaffected by the recession. Labour/skills shortages also remain an issue. For instance, occupations in health, engineering, IT, and certain skilled trades saw fewer layoffs and continue to have good employment prospects across the province.

LMA Highlights

In 2010-2011, the Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Workforce Development invested \$15.4M of LMA funds and \$7.4M of STTF funds in labour market programs for Nova Scotians for a total investment of \$23 M.

The LMA had over 2500 registered clients for 2010-2011. The STTF had over 1100 registered clients and an estimated 1400 additional clients who received transition and/or self-serve interventions. In total, it is projected that close to 5000 clients have benefited from these investments with activities ranging from short-term interventions and referrals to long-term, full-time programs.

Highlights of Program Investments include:

- Over \$2.27 million in funding to support newcomers and immigrants in increasing their employability through enhanced and occupation-specific language training, employment and business development supports, and bridging programs for internationally educated professionals.
- Over \$2 million in funding to help persons with disabilities improve their employment prospects through programs including job maintenance, job coaching, post-employment support as well as literacy and essential skills training programs.
- Over \$ 2.5 million in investments in adult learning programs where adults gain literacy and essential skills to help them transition to employment.
- Invested \$405,000 to support the Link Continuing Care Assistant Program, Nova Scotia School of Adult Learning. Over the last two years, there has been a 96% employment rate with over 100 CCAs certified and working.
- Invested \$1.5 million to fund a pilot program to provide supports to enable African Nova Scotians to participate in upgrading and skills training that will result in labour market attachment.
- Invested \$1,224,516 in labour market development programs and services for Aboriginal Nova Scotians.

Program participants' goals:

"I want to be a teacher someday"

"I would like to attend Compu College -Fitness, Health & Wellness"

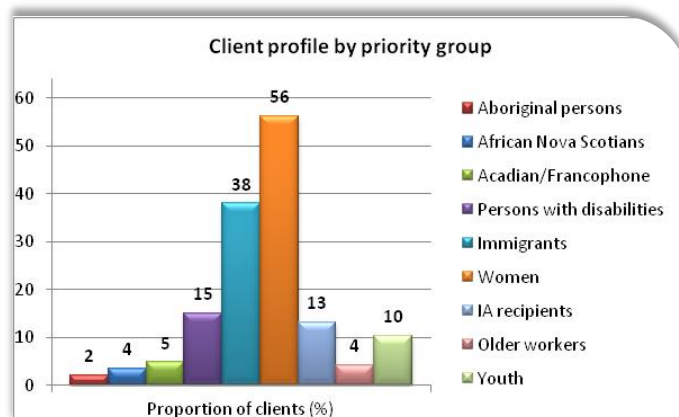
"This program was a huge part in helping me make the next steps of my life. It provided me with the skills to make educated decisions about going back to school and what programs would be best for me. I am enrolled in mechanical drafting Sept 2010"

"Being able to shadow an RT gives me a great opportunity to gain knowledge and the skills for the future. I am going to school in Sep/10"

ii That is, average monthly initial received employment insurance claims, comparing 2010 with 2009.

LMA Client Profile

Of the registered LMA and STTF clients who identified themselves with a priority client groupⁱⁱⁱ, 56% were women, 38% were immigrants, 15% were persons with a disability and 13% were recipients of income assistance. In addition, 10% identified as youth, 4% identified as older workers, 5% Acadian/Francophone, 4% as African Nova Scotian and 2% identified as Aboriginal.



The province conducted a follow-up survey with LMA and STTF clients who had completed their intervention more than 3 months prior to contact. Of the LMA and STTF clients contacted during the follow up survey, 80% indicated that their intervention prepared them for employment. The great majority were satisfied with the programs and services they had received through the LMA and STTF.

The LMA and STTF funding commitments in Nova Scotia assisted vulnerable Nova Scotians in gaining skills and supports required to help them attach to the labour market, or in the case of employed citizens, to help them remain competitive in their job.

"This program is respectful to persons and their abilities"

"I think it's a good program because it helps us with disabilities be independent. So I think East Novability should keep this program going because there are people out there need to find a job and have some disabilities."

- Program participants

ⁱⁱⁱ While women are the most represented, female members of the other 9 priority groups would be included in the 38%.

LMA Priority Areas for Programming

Nova Scotia's 2010-2011 LMA Annual Plan identified four areas of programming focus:

Priority Area 1: Client Access and Service Provision

Objective: Create access to programs for all clients regardless of income attachment

Highlights:

- Assisted multi-barriered Aboriginal adult learners develop a learning plan to move forward in their career development through employability, literacy and essential skills training.
- Provided employability and self-esteem training to youth for entry into the workforce or continuing in adult education opportunities.
- Facilitated integration of Francophone immigrants into the labour market by supporting a job fair and entrepreneurship consulting services.

*"I recommend this training program to other youths, trying to decide what they want to do in life. It helped me out a whole lot."
"We learned a lot about interview skills and labour rights for jobs here in Halifax. I'm very grateful and hope that this workshop will be available to many more newcomers to Canada."
- Various program participants*

Priority Area 2: Labour Market Skills Development

Objective: Increase literacy, numeracy, and occupation-specific skills through training and skills development programs.

Highlights:

- Supported over 220 clients in more than 9 communities through the Adult Learning Program GAP (ALP-GAP), which increases participants' employment potential from both a practical and academic standpoint by teaching life skills, adult learning and work experience to integrate participants back into the workforce.
- Supported recent immigrants in accessing software that focused on career, workplace and essential skills training in order to increase employability skills.
- Supported a construction training and job readiness program for unemployed African Nova Scotians in the trades sector by providing enhanced skills, certifications and workplace-based competencies.

*"[I] learned a lot of things that I thought I already knew...but really didn't."
"I found the program very helpful. Many things were taught and I learned something from everything."
"I learned a lot about myself and what I am capable of."
- Various program participants*

Priority Area 3: Workforce Attachment and Retention

Objective: Link unemployed clients directly with jobs and help them to maintain those jobs.

Highlights:

- Assisted in developing the capacity of employers in Nova Scotia to meet current and future labour market requirements in trades and technology through the training, recruitment and retention of skilled, diverse women.
- Supported the delivery of business development counseling and planning to entrepreneurs from targeted groups of all ages.

"This program was great in helping me, if it was not for this program I would be on welfare. I am happy that I got my job. I can give my kids a good Christmas. And after the program is over I still have my job." - Program participant

Priority Area 4: Workforce Development

Objective: Support employed Nova Scotians in the workplace by helping them keep and advance in their jobs.

Highlights:

- Assisted unemployed and employed low-skilled immigrant women increase their self-employment capabilities by acquiring certifications, business counseling and language training.

*"...able to write resume/cover letter in a professional way; better understanding on Canada's culture in workplace; Thank you"
"Very beneficial in learning workplace communication, networking, acquiring skills that I can transfer to other jobs..."
- Various program participants*

STTF Priority Areas for Programming

The two-year Strategic Training and Transition Fund had three areas of programming focus:

Priority Area 1: Workforce Response Strategy

Objective: Support individuals, employers and communities affected by workforce adjustments, lay-offs and closures.

Highlights:

- Funded re-training and transition supports for individuals who were displaced by industry decline in Nova Scotia. Services included the provision of employment counseling, workshops, upgrading and training programs.
- Supported an initiative to align the fish harvesting sector with DFO initiatives in the areas of eco-labeling, sustainability and certification.

"I loved my course immensely - great teachers and nice to say I attended NSCC so I can brag about being a college graduate. Being computer illiterate I sure learned a lot Great time doing portfolio, resume and speech craft."
- Program participant

Priority Area 2: Workforce Stabilization and Development

Objective: Facilitate the continued attachment of individuals to the labour market through workplace-based training.

Highlights:

- Supported the development and delivery of financial management training to small business owners in rural Nova Scotia.
- Supported the provision of essential skills and occupation-specific training with a guaranteed job upon completion to over 150 Nova Scotians. The Health care, Tourism and trucking sectors were supported via this initiative.

"Excellent, timely intervention to prepare for selling season."

"Helpful Business Information [including] the knowledge to complete your own books."

"It is very helpful to people that are not right sure how taxes work and what you can do to help yourself in business."

"Very valuable course. I already knew some marketing things I should be doing, but didn't know how to go about doing them. This course gave me a good structure to start working with to start implementing marketing initiatives."

- Various program participants

Priority Area 3: Labour Market Growth and Development

Objective: Implement innovative workforce development initiatives to respond to emerging business growth areas.

Highlights:

- Provided wage subsidies to companies that were expanding and creating new jobs to support workplace growth.

"I have really enjoyed being in this program. It was very informative about workplaces and education. Hope we will continue to have these programs, I have found employment through this funding. Thank you."
- Program participant

LMA Success Stories

ReachAbility

Four clients who participated in LMA programming for persons with disabilities reported benefit from the supports provided. They saw the program as “*a definite boost to self-esteem*” because they felt empowered. The program focused on employability skills such that one client stated “[the focus on] *overcoming barriers that stopped me from succeeding in the workforce and at school really helped me, now I have a resume I can be confident with when applying for a job in future*”. Another said: “*I feel more confident in interviews talking about the skills I have*”.

Yet another client credits the program with immense benefit, moving her live in a completely different direction:

“I left the program feeling motivated to reach my employment and academic goals. My confidence was uplifted by the group during the various exercises. [I had] support and encouragement from fellow participants and reachability throughout the program. The program has not only prepared me to know my skills; it has prepared me to have confidence to use my skills. Skills I didn’t know I had until I came to reachability. The program helps a lot ... positive opportunities to prepare for the future... I enjoyed it”

3 Trades Construction Employability Training

Participants of the 3 Trades Program enjoy success by becoming self-sufficient members of society.

A 46 year old man who self-identified as not able to “read or write very well” and had been told he was “unteachable” completed the 12 week Trades Program without missing a day. He received one on one support for safety certification testing.

At the end of his course, he took the Canadian Adult Achievement Test (CAAT) and scored a post-high school score in literacy. He was “over the moon” with this result as he had “never been given a grade before in his life”. He went on to join a trade union that recognized his work ethic and paid for further training. His experience was successful enough that he referred his roommate and brother to future 3 Trades programs.

The past 7 graduates of the program are now all employed, with six out of the seven able to remain employed largely due to the help of wage subsidies funded through LMA.

The certifications graduates of the Program have increase their opportunities for employment. One in particular is excited for the opportunity to work fulltime again resulting from his G3 Galvanizing certification.

Participants of the 3 Trades Program have a sense of accomplishment and the opportunity to live productive lives. Many are excited to be able to work fulltime and no longer need Income Assistance. This program is important especially now that jobs in trades will be in more demand in the near future.

“Excellent program, I feel confident that I can find a job with skills that I have been taught... enhances others who feel that they are too young to retire. Thank you so very much”

“This was excellent and I now feel prepared to enter into the workforce with confidence. The older worker program was a wonderful program and it is because of the interviewing skills acquired there that I have my job. The facilitators were amazing”

“The OWL Project was a great experience. It has not only built my self confidence but has given me new skills with which to find employment. Owl was a helpful program with terrific facilitators that taught me so much. I feel very hopeful that I will find rewarding work. ”

- Various program participants who were older workers