

# FINAL REPORT

## Careers Nova Scotia Transformation Project

Department of Labour & Advanced Education

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## Executive Summary

This is the final report addressing the CAREERS NOVA SCOTIA TRANSFORMATION PROJECT, prepared for Employment Nova Scotia (ENS) and the Department of Labour and Advanced Education (LAE).

This Project had four phases including:

1. **Phase 1** – Reviewing and commenting on the discussion paper issued by LAE to invite Nova Scotians to offer their opinions on future career services delivery.
2. **Phase 2** – Completing a jurisdictional review and benchmarking exercise to determine how others, nationally and internationally, are responding to contemporary labour market challenges and opportunities.
3. **Phase 3** – Leading a comprehensive outreach and engagement process with key stakeholders, including users of the career services system.
4. **Phase 4** – Updating earlier work by undertaking a follow-up jurisdictional review in key provinces and an analysis of the impact of other policy changes that have taken place.

Nova Scotia's economic stability is tied to the province's ability to compete and respond to changes in the global market, a point forcefully made in the original discussion paper. Our future prosperity also requires a vibrant and adaptable workforce - strong in both numbers and in skills.

In an era of globalization, there is a growing challenge associated with dramatic shifts in the contemporary labour market, affecting many countries. These include:

- The looming demographic challenges which have significant implications for labour market supply.
- Changing work patterns, including more part-time and project-based work and greater mobility among workers.
- Rapid and relentless technological change with the half-life of new knowledge becoming exponentially shorter.
- Job displacement at the same time that the knowledge economy continues to grow and demand new skills, aptitudes and higher level qualifications – the embodiment of the conundrum recently noted in the Conference Board of Canada's salutary study, *From not Enough Jobs to Not Enough Workers*.

These factors have created the need for a paradigm shift in how we think about and plan for a lifetime of employment to ensure that people are not left behind.

Emerging trends and challenges in the contemporary labour market also highlight the need for intensive career support for individuals from all sectors and circumstances throughout their lives. Career management, once thought of as the sole purview of the professional, has taken on new meaning for all workers. Career development is about lifelong learning, and equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills and tools to make choices and to be able to personally adapt to an evolving labour market.

Within Nova Scotia, the drivers for change in the way in which career and employment services are delivered are similar to those facing many Western economies, with some uniquely Nova Scotian dimensions.

Our demography is more dramatically skewed to an older cohort and our labour force participation rate is one of the lowest in the country. The continued impact of globalization and the often disruptive impact of rapidly evolving technology are factors that will continue to challenge Nova Scotia workers and their families. Over the past several years Nova Scotians have witnessed significant economic challenges – in forestry, in manufacturing and in our traditional industries. At the same time, there are new opportunities, like the shipbuilding contract and other large projects underscoring the urgency of ensuring the Nova Scotia workforce is up to the challenge of meeting these future requirements.

Going forward, an important part of that change process, of adapting to the challenges enumerated above, is making sure that Nova Scotians have the right skills for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

Throughout the report of the Nova Scotia Commission on Building the New Economy – *Now or Never* – Chairman Ivany underscores the importance of skill development and innovation as important bookends to future economic stability and growth. Labour market considerations figure prominently in the Commission’s analysis and solution-finding in respect to addressing that “combination of economic and demographic factors”, that has Nova Scotia “teetering on the brink of long-term decline.”

The impetus for the transition to a new model for career services in Nova Scotia has been driven by a number of complex factors, including many of those enumerated above.

Transitioning to a new, more integrated model of career services has, in part, been enabled by the opportunity presented by the devolution of federally-supported career and employment support services to the province. In July 2009, the Government of Canada (Service Canada) transferred responsibility for the delivery of its labour market programs and services to the Province of Nova Scotia, through the Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA). These services became the responsibility of Employment Nova Scotia (ENS). This was in addition to the network of provincial services already funded by the Nova Scotia government through ENS.

At the same time that the devolution of federal services to the province was taking place, the Department was being called upon to address a range of other emerging challenges – skill shortages, the need to better align labour supply and demand, the need to ensure training is more relevant to labour market requirements and challenges within the apprenticeship system.

Perhaps, the strongest case for change in the way in which career services in Nova Scotia are delivered arises from the **as-is state of the current career services delivery system**, characterized by the following factors:

- Through the devolution process, it became clear that there were areas of the province that were essentially over-served, but also areas where gaps in service existed;
- As a result of the devolution, Nova Scotia, a small jurisdiction, now has 104 separate employment service providers, a number that could be streamlined with services more effectively deployed to address duplication and overlap, gaps in services and the need to provide services to a broader clientele;
- Current service providers operate in silos, an approach that is antithetical to the need for a more integrated approach to career service delivery and the requirement to serve a broader range of career service needs;
- Another challenging feature of the current career service delivery system is the lack of consistency – current services presently lack:

- Comprehensive service delivery standards;
  - Uniform professional standards for career counsellors and career practitioners;
  - Commonly-branded career services throughout the province with an accompanying brand promise that means the service you receive in Guysborough is to the same standard as you would receive in Lower Sackville;
  - Defined regions for service delivery that provide predictability and clear access for clients;
  - Consistency of service delivery from one area of the province to another; and
  - Consistent and proven approaches to serving remote clients, including some gaps in services and the lack of more flexible service delivery channels, including virtual services and self-service options.
- Current services have evolved under very different conditions that are not reflective of the contemporary labour market. The former federal employment services system was designed in response to the 1990's labour market - a very different environment characterized by surplus labour. This was a markedly different paradigm than the labour market of the twenty-first century.

As an initial step in service transformation and at the outset of this project, the Department of Labour and Advanced Education issued a discussion paper on future service delivery to invite Nova Scotians to offer their opinions as part of an extensive consultation undertaken.

The discussion paper, entitled *A New Vision for Employment Services in Nova Scotia – Responding to Change*, (Annex A) outlined a new vision for employment services. The focus of the discussion paper was on developing a model that will support the employment needs of **all** Nova Scotians and address both the short-comings of the services presently offered, as well as the complex requirements of the current and future labour market.

Since devolution, LAE officials have been working with service providers to find innovative solutions and strategies to achieve more value with the resources available for labour market development. LAE had also recognized and explored a number of leading practices from other jurisdictions. Service providers themselves have also offered input on ways to improve service delivery.

The findings of this project suggest the need to offer services to a broader range of Nova Scotians and to do so in an integrated, commonly-branded service delivery structure underpinned by an effective governance model and commonly-applied standards for both service delivery and for career practitioners.

This report summarizes the key features that leading practice models in career services delivery exhibit. Following an extensive benchmarking exercise and a consultation process that included input from more than seventy groups and organizations, the findings arising from this study strongly support the need to transition to a new model for career services delivery in Nova Scotia to be built on the following **'principles'**:

1. A collaborative approach is essential to a successful transformation and should include input and participation from all stakeholders – current service providers, other government departments, economic development leaders and the employer community.

2. While providing a consistent and commonly-branded service, the design of the career services delivery network must optimize the capacity for flexibility in the service delivery system.
3. The transition process must optimize the capacity for local responsiveness to emerging labour market issues – challenges as well as opportunities - within that framework of a high quality and results-oriented, consistent and commonly-branded service delivery structure.
4. Optimizing the use and impact of technology and encouraging innovative practices, including the use of the virtual channel, will be critical success factors.
5. Establishing professional standards for career practitioners and career counselors and overall program standards for the service will be important factors in the quality management of the new career services program.
6. Effective marketing of the services through the transformation process will be critical to the ultimate success achieved.
7. A focus on outcomes and results will build confidence in the new model.
8. Respecting the value of specialized expertise is an important foundational principle.
9. Strong governance needs to be a central feature of the transformed service delivery infrastructure.
10. Paving the way for client success through a commitment to breaking down systemic barriers for clients.
11. The need to take an enterprise risk management approach and to ensure the overall sustainability of career services programs through the transformation process will be important cornerstones for future success.
12. The need for agility in responding to change.
13. Positioning this transformation as a critical success factor in the successful management of the labour force and human resource planning dimensions of major projects in Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada.
14. Effective process will be important throughout the transformation initiative.
15. Developing and leveraging an early win strategy.

It is equally clear from this project that there are many challenges. Change and change management is always complex and anxiety-provoking. Because of this, communication and ongoing engagement with key stakeholders in the actual implementation process will be pivotal to success.

Perhaps, the greatest opportunity for LAE in this transformation process is to create a more integrated service delivery system, synergizing its efforts with those of other key players within that system – community-based career services providers, the Departments of Community Services (DCS), Economic and Rural Development and Tourism (ERDT) and Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD), the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration, economic development stakeholders and, particularly, the employer community. Optimizing results will be dependent on the effective horizontal management and engagement with these key collaborators.

The report notes the importance of responsiveness and flexibility in the re-designed service delivery system by not being solely fixated on bricks and mortar, but being open to alternate delivery channels – virtual, itinerant, self-service and outreach, as required and as clients prefer.

This report offers a broad range of recommendations designed to help guide the transformation process. These are listed immediately following this executive summary and at the end of this report, accompanied by key conclusions.

Among stakeholders, there is broad support for the need for change. Evidence gathered during this project suggests that the challenges associated with the evolving labour market are becoming better understood. More than ever, employers understand that the stakes are high and that the search for talent and talent management will, in coming years, become increasingly competitive on all fronts. Stakeholders understand the need for a more collaborative approach with economic development policy makers and practitioners, and greater alignment with the needs of the employer community.

While there is understandably some trepidation among some career services providers, there is also a clear understanding of its need, and an acknowledgement of the fundamental importance of providing career services to a broader population. Stakeholders also recognize that there is some duplication and overlap, as well as gaps in service that need to be addressed through the transformation process.

Overall, the results of this project speak compellingly to the case for change to a new model for career and employment services in Nova Scotia.

Perhaps, most importantly, the case for change is grounded in the realization that our future prosperity as a province depends on it. Faced with challenging circumstances related to demography, labour shortages and a labour market dominated by SMEs, Nova Scotia needs to be 'smart'; to leverage its greatest resources – its human capital and innovation potential – to seize opportunity, to optimize future prospects, and to proactively manage and mitigate economic threats and risks going forward.

The case for change recognizes that the labour market issues currently challenging Nova Scotia are not exclusive to Canada or the Atlantic Region. Rather, they are very much part of the global landscape and, as such, are likely to increase the level of competitiveness for talent and human resources, a phenomenon expected to become even more intense over the next 20 years.

Complacency is not an option.

Perhaps, most importantly, this project also reinforces that LAE appears to be well-positioned to manage a successful transition to a new model. It has an experienced cadre of collaborators - service and government partners, the employer community, and educators - with which to collaborate. Internally, the Department has a number of complementary initiatives underway or completed that are strategically important to this transformation process – successful introduction of the Labour Market Programs Support System (LaMPSS), changes to apprenticeship, and involvement in the Atlantic Workforce Partnership, among others. More broadly, there is a clear understanding of the fundamental importance of a restructured career services system in underpinning our future economic development prospects and our prosperity. Faced with labour shortages, employers also appreciate the importance of human resource planning and some of the current challenges; a factor, that bodes well for their partnership in a renewed effort to optimize our human capital assets.

## Recommendations

Based on the comprehensive jurisdictional review and benchmarking exercise and the extensive consultation undertaken as part of this project, GATN advances the following recommendations for consideration by LAE.

1. **Recommendation 1 – LAE proceed with the implementation of a new CNS model built around the principles identified above and designed to address the career needs of all Nova Scotians.**
2. **Recommendation 2 – That the new model of career services be developed and organized within a commonly-branded, client-centered consistent service delivery structure with the capacity to be able to respond to local circumstances and to be operated within the framework of a high quality and results-based program.** In this regard, LAE would establish the goals, requirements, the policy, service standards, and the process. Within this framework for an integrated service delivery model, local requirements would also need to be addressed. An important option for consideration, effectively implemented in other jurisdictions and explored through this project, is the issuance of a *Request for Proposal (RFP)* process to invite career services providers to form innovative partnerships to offer this new model of service delivery in accordance with the established vision and standards, leveraging the existing assets, bringing local collaborators together and being responsive to the unique needs and diversity that exists within the province. This approach has been successfully utilized in several provinces and, well-executed, potentially offers the most flexibility in being able to respond to the changing paradigm for career services as detailed in this report.
3. **Recommendation 3 – If the issuance of an RFP were to be the chosen approach, before initiating this process, it is recommended that senior officials of LAE undertake stakeholder meetings prior to issuing an RFP. These meetings would enable departmental officials to profile the case for change, the vision, and the objectives of the change and to detail how the process will be undertaken and managed. If the RFP is the preferred methodology, it would likely also be helpful to issue it first as a draft so that potential bidders could comment on and offer input prior to the final document being issued.**
4. **Recommendation 4 – If the RFP is the chosen implementation methodology, in addition to the focus on current service providers, wherever possible and practical, it is recommended that LAE officials also provide bi-lateral briefings to the employer community, local industry organizations and economic development agencies, representatives of other departments, and training providers to socialize the concept and model for career services and to secure their feedback and ideas.**
5. **Recommendation 5 – As part of the implementation of a new model of career services in Nova Scotia, LAE should establish and empower an internal transformation team to lead this initiative. The roles and responsibilities for such a team will ideally be formalized with a project charter, an executive sponsor and strong governance around the transformation process itself.**
6. **Recommendation 6 – LAE articulate standards for career practitioners, as well as service standards as key benchmarks against which to develop the new model of career services.**
7. **Recommendation 7 – Prior to the actual transformation process, LAE develop a branding and marketing plan for the transformed career services initiative.**
8. **Recommendation 8 – LAE take a leadership role within government in the horizontal collaboration to optimize the crucial role of career services as the ‘spine’ that will support both economic development imperatives and labour market needs.**



9. **Recommendation 9** – The ‘findings’ section of this report provides a broad range of input and advice received from key stakeholders and through the benchmarking exercise undertaken throughout all phases of this project. It is recommended that senior officials of LAE review these findings and take them into consideration in designing the best path forward to address the transformation process.
10. **Recommendation 10** –In light of the strong support for the ‘virtual channel’ identified during the outreach and engagement process, that LAE include the virtual channel as part of the service transformation taking into account the findings associated with this issue as identified in the separate study completed on virtual services.
11. **Recommendation 11** - LAE develop address the issue of how career services that are highly specialized, such as psycho-educational assessments which are in demand more sporadically will be delivered in the new model. Other jurisdictions include the cost of procuring these services locally within the contract with providers. Some stakeholders suggested that these services could be delivered itinerantly with either LAE or one or another of the contracted regional providers assuming centralized responsibility for their availability, deployment and ongoing management. Regardless of the approach taken, these services are seen to be an important feature of the transformed career services delivery system.
12. **Recommendation 12**– As part of the transition process, the transformation team should develop a system to accurately monitor the implementation of the transformation process. This will be important in addressing issues and challenges as they emerge and to LAE and their partners in formulating appropriate and timely response strategies to manage and efficiently and effectively address the myriad complex issues likely to arise during the transition.
13. **Recommendation 13** – As a parallel initiative, LAE will need to develop a system for monitoring performance within a transformed career services system. Once transformed, performance metrics will be important in gauging the impact on clients. In addition, LAE should develop a logic model and an evaluation framework to be undertaken two – three years following implementation of the new career services system. This framework will ideally be focused on quantitative and qualitative results-based evidence and will help determine how the new career services delivery system is working.
14. **Recommendation 14** - LAE fully cost out the transformation process and understand, in advance, the financial implications of this transition and new approach. This is particularly important in light of new fiscal arrangements with the federal government in respect to labour market programming and other changes being implemented.
15. **Recommendation 15** – In recognition of the appetite for opportunities to improve standards, professional credentials, and to participate in professional development/networking events so evident during this project, over time, LAE might wish to facilitate the development of an interactive practitioner portal that contributes to the standardization, horizontal collaboration, and professional development potential of those working in the new career services model to share lessons learned, approaches to problem solving and leading practices. This might be able to be developed in tandem with work being considered in opening up the virtual channel.

## 1 Introduction

This is the final report addressing the CAREERS NOVA SCOTIA TRANSFORMATION PROJECT, prepared for Employment Nova Scotia (ENS) and the Department of Labour and Advanced Education (LAE).

This Project had four phases:

1. **Phase 1** – Reviewing and commenting on the case for change in career services in Nova Scotia as outlined in the on-line discussion paper prepared as part of the outreach and engagement process with key stakeholders and Nova Scotians;
2. **Phase 2** – Undertaking a jurisdictional review and benchmarking exercise to determine how others are delivering these services in response to contemporary labour market challenges and opportunities;
3. **Phase 3** – Leading a comprehensive and in-depth outreach and engagement process with key stakeholders. This process comprised three key components including the issuance of the above-mentioned discussion paper; direct outreach to a targeted group of stakeholders and focus groups with key constituencies including persons with disabilities, youth, parent counsellors and parents who had completed the training for “Parents as Career Coaches”; and
4. **Phase 4** – Updating the earlier work by undertaking a follow-up jurisdictional review in key provinces and an analysis of the impact of other policy changes that have taken place.

### 1.1 Organization of This Report

This report is organized in 6 sections as outlined below:

1. Introduction;
2. The Context – Key Factors Impacting the Need for Change and the Policy Environment;
3. Key Findings Arising from the Literature Review and Benchmarking Exercise;
4. Results of the Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement process;
5. Model Considerations – Design Features and Principles; and
6. Conclusions and Recommendations.

The Report also includes the following Annexes:

- Annex A – **The Discussion Paper on which the Public Consultation was Based**
- Annex B - **Summary of Key Findings Arising from the Literature Review and Benchmarking Exercise**

## 2 The Context – Key Factors Impacting the Need for Change and the Macro Policy Environment

Nova Scotia's economic stability is tied to the province's ability to compete and respond to changes in the global market. This point was made forcefully in the discussion paper issued as part of the original consultation process associated with the transformation to Careers Nova Scotia. That ability requires a vibrant and adaptable workforce - strong in both numbers and in skills.

In 2013, Nova Scotians elected a new government. This government has had an ambitious agenda focusing on a range of reform initiatives, including in the education and post-secondary education sectors. Its early focus on entrepreneurship through investments in six *sandboxes*, engaging universities, the Nova Scotia Community College and the private sector throughout the province offers another avenue for young people – creating their own job. The Nova Scotia government is also making significant changes in its approach to economic development. These changes, with the accompanying public debate, have helped Nova Scotians focus on the future.

*“The economic and population challenges we now face in Nova Scotia, and dramatically so in our rural regions, demand new vision, innovative approaches, greater collaboration and a greater willingness to take on the risks associated with economic change and progress”.*

*The Nova Scotia Commission on Building the New Economy  
Now or Never*

Nowhere has that future been more extensively examined than in the Report of the Nova Scotia Commission on Building the New Economy – *Now or Never* - the so-called Ivany Report. Its *crie de coeur* is, perhaps, best expressed in the adjoining excerpt from the report

Throughout, the Ivany Report underscores the importance of skill development and innovation as important bookends to future economic stability and growth.

The Ivany Report underscores the importance of skill development and innovation as important bookends to future economic stability and growth.

In the announcement accompanying the tabling of the Commission's report, Chairman Ivany noted that “because of a combination of economic and demographic factors, we are teetering on the brink of long-term decline.” Labour market considerations figure prominently in the Commission's analysis and solution-finding in respect to the problems identified.

This challenging demography constitutes an urgent agenda to make sure that the labour force of the future is up to the challenges this future will inevitably present and, ultimately, must be the basis of the case for change in career services being contemplated.

Ivany said Nova Scotia's population is expected to decline over the next 20 years as young people continue to leave the province to search for work. The report notes that by 2036, the province expects to have 100,000 fewer working-age people than it did in 2010. This constitutes an urgent agenda to make sure that the labour force of the future is up to the challenges this future will inevitably present and, ultimately, must be the basis of the case for change in career services being contemplated.

Because of its status as one of the 'oldest' provinces, the demographic challenge is an issue that is of considerable significance for Nova Scotia now and into the future.

Ivany isn't alone in the focus on demographic challenges; this continues to be a preoccupation of policy makers virtually everywhere. In a recently released report – *From Not Enough Jobs to Not Enough Workers* – the Conference Board of Canada

concludes that “serious labour shortages in the world’s advanced economies will create unprecedented challenges for business leaders and policy makers over the next 15 years and beyond.” Because of its status as one of the ‘oldest’ provinces, the demographic challenge is an issue that is of considerable significance for Nova Scotia now and into the future.

In addition, the continuing impact of the slow-growth environment arising from the global financial challenges over the past five years and its aftermath of stubbornly high unemployment in many countries, including parts of Canada, adds a further dimension of complexity to the situation.

Beyond the demographic challenges, there are other significant challenges that need to be addressed.

We know that the jobs of the future will most often required a new skill set -those who have attained post-secondary education and are highly skilled. Even today, we are seeing jobs go unfilled because there are not enough people with the skills and experience to fill these jobs, a factor that creates challenges to employers.

Jobs go unfilled because there are not enough people with the skills and experience to fill these jobs, a factor that creates challenges to employers.

One dimension of addressing the challenges associated with labour shortages is consideration of how best to animate and optimize sources of under-utilized and under-represented labour in the economy. The federal government’s release of the *Report of the Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities* on January 16, 2013 places the spotlight on actions employers can take to accommodate people with disabilities in their workplaces, as well as the benefits to both individuals and businesses. The report also recognizes the need for business leadership and effective community partnerships. As persons with disabilities are a key constituency of current employment support and career services providers in Nova Scotia, the findings of this report have relevance to LAE as it advances its Careers Nova Scotia transformation initiative.

This consideration also underscores the broad importance of all under-represented groups in the labour force of the future – Aboriginal and African Nova Scotians, women and youth.

Further, the data reveals that Nova Scotia has one of the lowest levels of labour market participation in Canada. This means that there are more people who are not in the workforce that, with appropriate training and interventions, could help mitigate the imbalance that exists in labour supply and demand and which is expected to widen in the future.

The data reveals that Nova Scotia has one of the lowest levels of labour market participation in Canada.

The continued impact of globalization and the ubiquity and often disruptive impact of rapidly evolving technologies are factors that will continue to challenge Nova Scotia workers and their families. Over the past several years Nova Scotians have witnessed significant economic challenges – in forestry, in manufacturing and in our traditional industries – that serve to clearly and compellingly illustrate these challenges. At the same time, there are new opportunities, like the shipbuilding contract and other large projects that underscore the urgency of ensuring the Nova Scotia workforce is up to the challenge of meeting these future requirements.

Beyond Nova Scotia, the policy environment in relation to labour market programming in Canada has been equally fluid and dynamic. Several provinces have moved decisively to transform their career services delivery systems. The Province of British Columbia (BC) successfully implemented a major transformation of its career services system in April 2012. Benchmarking undertaken as part of this project confirms that many provinces are facing challenges similar to those being encountered in Nova Scotia and are having to adapt and adjust their approach to the delivery of career and employment services. These changes are outlined in greater detail in Section 4 below and are instructive to LAE in considering its transition to a new, contemporary and more responsive model of career services in Nova Scotia.

Nationally, the federal government has been implementing policy changes which are also having a significant impact on labour market programming. These include changes to the Employment Insurance Program, the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and in immigration.

The changes introduced to the Employment Insurance (EI) system have been among the most extensive in recent years. Originally announced in the 2012-2013 fiscal year federal budget, and implemented in 2013, the changes in the EI program have been significant. Highlights include the introduction of new regulations that further define several factors such as type of work, wages, commuting time, working conditions, hours of work, and personal circumstances, when defining "suitable employment." The new rules also place EI claimants in one of three categories – long tenured workers, frequent claimants and occasional claimants – with accompanying differential benefit regimes.

While analysis of the impact of these changes was not in scope for this project, the anticipated changes in EI were a matter of concern for some of the informants with whom we met during the consultation process. Some informants felt these changes could result in a reduction in the number of applicants qualifying for EI, thus, potentially precipitating an increase in demand for career services and other income support programs. At the time of the updating of this report, we do not have any statistics or evidence that this is in fact the case; however, it is an area that LAE will likely wish to carefully monitor.

In addition to the changes in EI, the federal government has recently undertaken a comprehensive overhaul of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP).

Responding to public concern, in the introduction of these changes, the federal government noted that the intent has been to ensure that TFWP is used as intended, as a last and limited resort to fill acute labour shortages on a temporary basis when qualified Canadians are not available.

By limiting access to the program, tightening the labour market assessment and implementing stronger enforcement with tougher penalties for employers who break the rules, the intent has been to encourage businesses to make greater efforts to recruit and train Canadians for available jobs, including increasing wages.

The federal government is also making changes in immigration. One of the key features of the changes to immigration is forging the link between labour supply and demand; in short, immigration is strongly linked to qualifying new entrants who have the skills and capabilities that are in demand within Canada.

Importantly, this latter approach signals a trend that is emerging as a prominent feature of contemporary labour market programs in a number of jurisdictions; that is, targeting and incentivizing labour market aspirants to follow key occupational areas for which there is demonstrable labour market demand. This imperative to create a stronger alignment between labour demand and supply is also leading to innovations in training, including ‘just-in-time’ training to respond to immediate occupational training needs, as well as the refinement of on-the-job training and apprenticeship programs.

Importantly, this approach to focus immigration on securing the skills that the labour market demands signals a trend that is emerging as a prominent feature of contemporary labour market programs in a number of jurisdictions; that is, targeting and incentivizing labour market aspirants to follow key occupational areas for which there is demonstrable labour market demand; in short, forging a stronger link between labour supply and demand.

Beyond these changes, federal-provincial fiscal arrangements related to labour market programming have also been undergoing a transformation. The province has signed a new ‘skills and training’ agreement with the federal government - the Canada-Nova Scotia Job Fund Agreement - designed to assist unemployed Nova Scotians and workers with low skill levels to continue to benefit from effective programs and services.

Under the new Canada-Nova Scotia Jobs Fund Agreement, there is an increased emphasis on employer engagement and involvement in the development and delivery of employment services, to ensure that people are trained for existing jobs. Employers will play a more central role in skills training. Under the previous *Labour Market Agreement* (LMA) employers weren't obligated to invest in training. Under the new Job Fund Agreement (JFA) they are required to contribute financially, or in-kind, to the training of workers under 2 of the 3 funding streams.

Under the Canada-Nova Scotia Jobs Fund Agreement, there is an increased emphasis on employer engagement and involvement in the development and delivery of employment services, to ensure that people are trained for existing jobs.

These policy considerations, trends and the accompanying dynamic agenda show no sign of slowing down. This is the backdrop against which LAE’s initiative to transform its career services delivery system will take place. Ultimately, these factors constitute an important aspect of the ‘case for change’ in Nova Scotia’s career services delivery system.

## **2.1 The Current Situation in Nova Scotia - The Case for Change in Nova Scotia’s Career Services Delivery System**

The impetus for the transition to a new model for career services in Nova Scotia has been driven by a number of complex factors, including many of those enumerated above.

Transitioning to a new, more integrated model of career services has, in part, been enabled by the opportunity presented by the devolution of federally-supported career and employment support services to the province.

In July 2009, the Government of Canada (Service Canada) transferred responsibility for the delivery of its labour market programs and services to the Province of Nova Scotia, through the Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA). Approximately \$80M in funding for Employment Benefits and Support Measures (EBSMs), along with 120 full time staff and an

existing network of service delivery agencies, were transferred from Canada to Nova Scotia. These services became the responsibility of Employment Nova Scotia (ENS). This was in addition to the network of provincial services already funded by the Nova Scotia government at that time through ENS.

Through this transition process, a commitment was made to devolve these federal services in an 'as-is' state, and to allow for a period of stabilization for purposes of both transferring staff and service providers prior to any initiative to restructure these services.

During that stabilization period, the Department undertook several important administrative improvements necessary to support the transition to a new model for career service delivery. This included beginning the process of agreement consolidation and standardization. During this time, the Department also created a class-leading, innovative IT-enabled business solution called LaMPSS (Labour Market Programs Support System) designed to bring all aspects of service delivery under one administrative system.

LaMPSS is a sophisticated IT-enabled case management system with a broad range of capabilities including:

- The capacity to create the afore-mentioned standardized service delivery agreements;
- Maintenance of important client and case management information and related functions (such as the *Return to Work Action Plan*);
- The ability to perform customized reporting;
- The basis for making payments to clients; and
- The ability for LAE to be able to more effectively evaluate the impact of employment programs on its clients.

The LaMPSS system is broadly available to both service providers and employers and, importantly, for the transition process, users now have had extensive experience with its use.

At the same time that the devolution of federal services to the province was taking place, the Department was being called upon to address a range of other emerging challenges – contemporary labour market challenges that a new career services delivery system needs to be able to effectively address. These include:

- The oft-cited issue of changing demography within the province, including the aging of the population and the outmigration of youth; a phenomenon that is creating the likelihood of skill shortages in the future;
- The need to sharpen labour force planning in the face of evolving economic circumstances;
- Concerns with the apprenticeship program which, ultimately have been addressed on a fast-track through the establishment of a special operating agency – the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency – now responsible for apprenticeship programs;
- The presence of ongoing economic challenges within the Province. The challenges associated with the forestry sector and the closure of pulp mills in the province were very

high profile during the consultation process undertaken within this project. Key informants understood that these challenges created demand for a response capacity to more appropriately assist impacted workers through adjustment measures, retraining and assistance in making the transition to new employment opportunities. It is recognized that the career services delivery system of the future needs to be able to effectively respond to these economic dislocations – rapidly and with agility;

- The ubiquity of technology, of technological change and its impact on the labour market which continues to drive new requirements for training and for the range and type of career services in the future.

Bringing the former federal services under the jurisdiction of the province and the implementation of the LaMPSS system have, in effect, been the cornerstones to begin the process of transformation to a new, integrated career services delivery system – a career services delivery system able to address these complex future challenges.

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Since devolution, LAE officials have been broadly consulting with service providers to find innovative solutions and strategies to achieve more value with the resources available for labour market development. LAE had also recognized and explored a number of leading practices from other jurisdictions. Service providers themselves have also offered their strategies to improve service delivery.

In considering the change process and the case for change, a fundamentally important factor is the design of a new service delivery system that will effectively address the short-comings of the current delivery model – **the as-is state of these services** - as characterized by the following factors:

- Through the devolution process, it became clear that there were areas of the province that were essentially over-served, but also areas where gaps in service existed;
- As a result of the devolution, Nova Scotia, a small jurisdiction, now has 52 separate contracts with employment service providers, a number that could be streamlined with services more effectively deployed to address duplication and overlap, gaps in services and the need to provide services to a broader clientele;
- Current services operate in silos, an approach that is antithetical to the need for a more integrated approach to career service delivery and the requirement to serve a broader range of career service needs;
- Another feature of the current career service delivery system is the lack of consistency – current services presently lack:
  - Comprehensive service delivery standards;
  - Uniform professional standards for career counsellors and career practitioners;
  - Commonly-branded career services throughout the province with an accompanying brand promise that means the service you receive in Guysborough is to the same standard as you would receive in Lower Sackville;
  - Defined regions for service delivery that provide predictability and access for clients;



- Consistency of service delivery from one area of the province to another; and
- Consistent and proven approaches to serving remote clients, including some gaps in services and the lack of more flexible service delivery channels, including virtual services and self-service options.
- Current services have evolved under very different conditions that are not reflective of the contemporary labour market. The former federal employment services system was designed in response to the 1990's labour market - a very different environment characterized by surplus labour. This was a markedly different paradigm than the labour market of the twenty-first century. This is a labour market characterized by the kind of challenges outlined above. The service delivery system of the future needs to be able to effectively address these challenges.

As the precursor to service transformation and at the outset of this project, the Department of Labour and Advanced Education issued a discussion paper on future service delivery to invite Nova Scotians to offer their opinions as part of an extensive consultation undertaken.

The discussion paper, entitled *A New Vision for Employment Services in Nova Scotia – Responding to Change*, (Annex A) outlined a new vision for employment services. The focus of the discussion paper was on developing a model that will support the employment needs of **all** Nova Scotians and address both the short-comings of the current services, as well as the complex requirements of the current and future labour market.

The key objective of this transformation process is supporting and advancing Nova Scotians along a workforce continuum and ensuring a current and future labour supply for Nova Scotia employers through:

- Client-focused service delivery;
- Service excellence; and
- Maximum reach and access.

## 2.2 Summary

An overriding conclusion arising from the examination of the context under which this career services transformation is being contemplated is that the case for change to a new model of career services delivery in Nova Scotia is strong.

Further, the analysis indicates that a new model for effective career planning services must:

- Clearly recognize the requirements of a knowledge intensive economy and have the flexibility to address the diverse needs of a broad range of Nova Scotians;
- Be able to respond effectively to both emerging challenges and new economic opportunities, including responding to changing economic circumstances such as the closure of a large employer;

- Offer innovative approaches and multiple entry points to effective career decision making (including the virtual and self-service channels) and clear pathways to employment;
- At a time of significant on-going change, equip users with the knowledge, skills and capabilities to manage their careers over a lifetime;
- Effectively engage employers – both urban and rural – to better understand their future needs for employees, particularly in light of anticipated skill shortages; and
- Ensure that there is alignment between labour market demand and supply, a factor that has implications for the type of training being offered.

Further, given the dynamics of the contemporary labour market, characterized by the need to retrain and up-skill more frequently, there will be the requirement to provide service to a broader array of clients, rather than only serving those who are unemployed or in receipt of social and/or disability benefits.

A new model must, however, be able to assure current users, and, particularly, those with multiple and more complex barriers to employment – including under-represented groups such as persons with disabilities, Aboriginal persons, African Nova Scotians, youth and women - that their interests will be addressed both during and following the transition to a new career services delivery model. As was evident in the comprehensive outreach and engagement process undertaken as part of this project, this has been a point of concern amongst current service providers. It will be an issue that will need to be carefully managed through the actual transformation process to a new system of career services in Nova Scotia.

This project also underscores the fact that Nova Scotia is not unique in facing the challenges associated with a more complex labour market and a rapidly changing economy. These are issues and challenges that are present globally, and are features of most Western economies.

Going forward, an important part of that change process, of adapting to the challenges enumerated above, is making sure that Nova Scotians have the right skills for the jobs of today and tomorrow. This entails:

- Having the confidence to grow and export our products and capabilities;
- Supporting entrepreneurs and business skill development;
- Being able to leverage our investments in research and development in ways that will enhance our innovation quotient and innovation eco-system; and
- Creating opportunities for our youth to enable them to find good jobs and satisfying careers here.

### 3 The Literature Review and Benchmarking Exercise – Implications for the Transformation to Careers Nova Scotia

In an era of globalization, there has been a dramatic shift in the contemporary labour market that is impacting many countries. Common features include:

- Demographic challenges that have significant implications for labour market supply, now and into the future;
- Changing work patterns, including more part-time and project-based work and greater mobility among workers;
- Rapid and relentless technological change with the half-life of new knowledge becoming exponentially shorter; and
- Job displacement at the same time that the knowledge economy continues to grow and demand new skills, aptitudes and higher level qualifications.

These factors have created the need for a paradigm shift in how we think about and plan for a lifetime of employment to ensure that people are not left behind.

The literature review undertaken as part of this project reinforces the importance of active employment policies as being critical in increasing social inclusion and reducing labour market friction and inequality, while increasing growth and productivity and contributing to overall economic prosperity.

Emerging trends and challenges in the contemporary labour market highlight the need for intensive career support for individuals from all sectors and circumstances throughout their lives. Career management, once thought of as the sole purview of the professional, has taken on new meaning for all workers. Career development is about lifelong learning, and helping individuals make choices and adaptations to an evolving labour market.

The literature review and the jurisdictional/benchmarking analysis undertaken through this project, reinforces the fact that most Western democracies are facing many of the same challenges that Canada and Nova Scotia face. Moreover, it also strongly reinforces the fact that the case for broadening career services is strong in the face of this relentless change.

This project examined trends evident across a broad range of analogues and documented leading practices in the delivery of a comprehensive range of career services. Analogues examined include within the European Union, Australia and New Zealand and, within North America, the United States and Canada.

The imperative to align occupational choice with labor market demand is broadly evident in the analogues examined and is driving a significant policy shift in most Western democracies, a policy shift that has also taken root in Canada.

These leading practices nationally and internationally reveal a focus on:

- Innovation;
- Professional standards (both practitioner and program levels);
- Good governance;

- The importance of partnership development, including with employers;
- Quality management; and
- A diversity of access channels, including the virtual and self-service channels, to meet a broad spectrum of client need - unemployed and employed persons, youth with education, and disadvantaged youth, women entering or re-entering the workforce, persons with disabilities and minorities.

Effectively meeting this diversity of need means a commitment to excellence and a robust range of career services characterized by multiple pathways to enter and exit, and flexible services customized to the unique requirements of users.

The summary of key findings arising from the literature review and benchmarking exercise is included in **Annex B**.

This section of the report highlights the key features of career services within leading practice models examined as part of the jurisdictional review and benchmarking exercise.

### 3.1 Key Features of Career Services within Leading Practice Models

The literature review culminated in the identification and examination of seven major areas that leading practice models suggest must be included in the successful implementation of a modern, responsive career services continuum. These are areas that Nova Scotia will ideally want to address in its transformation initiative and include the following:

1. **Service integration is a key imperative** - As documented in the policy environment earlier in this report, systems change is being driven by a range of complex external and internal factors. On the one hand, demographic changes, constraints associated with public sector finances and a changing labour market paradigm are placing a greater strain on public services. On the other hand, advances in developing integrated case management systems and the more widespread use of data analytics has made it possible to manage client information across program boundaries. In its assessment of program integration, the University of Toronto's Mowat Centre concludes that support systems in human services delivery have not evolved to cope with the complexities and presenting circumstances of individuals' needs<sup>1</sup>. The analysis points to the reality that many clients experience inter-related difficulties and challenges that cross traditional program lines – e.g., disability, chronic health issues, unemployment and homelessness. The results include the following challenges:
  - Conditions are often treated in isolation. Individuals with complex needs are often seen by multiple agencies and caseworkers creating confusion, time constraints for clients and poor outcomes;
  - A lack of coordination and information sharing means that interventions are not always sequenced to optimize results while early warning signs may be missed;
  - In many jurisdictions services have expanded in an ad hoc, unplanned and uncoordinated manner. A high number of small service providers co-exist within a fragmented system that is difficult for clients to navigate.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://mowatcentre.ca/wp-content/uploads/publications/73\\_the\\_integration\\_imperative.pdf](http://mowatcentre.ca/wp-content/uploads/publications/73_the_integration_imperative.pdf)

The forward path for service integration in career services comprises a focus on clear client pathways, an outcomes orientation, inter-governmental integration, inter-sectoral integration and place-based integration, all factors that are designed to improve client service;

2. **The Importance of School Guidance** - Career guidance begins in the school system. For too long, school guidance has been focused on helping students with the decisions they face immediately upon leaving school and linked to curriculum support decisions, rather than the guidance required for long term career pathways. The excerpt from New Zealand, noted in the adjoining text box, epitomizes the importance and emerging interest in more effective career guidance as being an indispensable tool in empowering youth to be life-long career managers;
3. **The Importance of Guidance through Post-Secondary/Tertiary Education** – Continuing the theme of the fundamental importance of career guidance, leading practice models focus on ensuring all students access services and develop the skills to manage their learning throughout their lives, incorporating experiential learning linked to the labour market. The literature review suggests that career services typically have been underdeveloped at the post-secondary level, arguably, a critical time in the lives of young people making the transition to work. A study undertaken by the World Bank concludes that within the post-secondary education environment, it is even more common than in schools for decisions about whether and how to offer career guidance to be left to each institution<sup>2</sup>. The Study further notes that “career guidance is only likely to be given prominence if a counsellor has had particular training in this area or if the institution’s administration accords importance to it.” With an ever-burgeoning array of program choices in a more open and competitive environment, the link between particular course of study and labour market destinations has seemingly become less direct. Linking programs to employment outcomes can be used as a key marketing tool for attracting new students.

A 2012 study by the Hanover Group on career services in post-secondary institutions in the United States outlined the following top ten leading practice attributes of a successful career resource centre at the post-secondary level as identified by students.<sup>3</sup> These include:

- Quality and number of companies to interview with;
- Offering a variety of different job opportunities;
- Helping students with job search strategies;
- Usefulness of resume critiquing services;
- Offering assessment tests to find the right major and potential job;
- Career services providing assistance to research companies;
- Offering the opportunity for mock interviews;
- Providing notification of application deadlines;

*International interest in career education and guidance is increasing as governments acknowledge the personal, social and economic benefits of equipping school students with the attitudes, knowledge, and transferable skills they will need to become self-reliant career managers and lead positive and fulfilled lives*  
*Career Education and Guidance in New Zealand Schools*

<sup>2</sup> [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1126210664195/1636971-1126210694253/Case\\_Studies\\_Emerging\\_Issues.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1126210664195/1636971-1126210694253/Case_Studies_Emerging_Issues.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.hanoverresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Best-Practices-in-Career-Services-for-Graduating-Students-Membership.pdf>

- Offering seminars about potential majors and careers.

Within Canada, the availability of career counselling varies greatly throughout post-secondary institutions. Some are located within personal counselling services, often resulting in a weak link to career choice and labour market linkages. Some counselling services happen incidentally through program specific areas such as, co-operative work placements, and on-campus recruiting. Although these services are no doubt helpful, this more ad hoc approach does not offer the level of career guidance students need to effectively navigate the complexities of the contemporary labour market;

4. **Career Centers Need to Serve a Broad Range of Clientele** - Leading practice approaches to broadening the appeal of career services to a wider range of users includes:
- Making centers more attractive;
  - Separating benefits administration areas from areas of career counselling practice, while emphasizing respect and privacy throughout the Centers;
  - Ensuring adequate availability of staff through appropriate ratios;
  - Ensuring that front-line staff are appropriately trained and qualified;
  - Ensuring that LMI information is comprehensive and understandable; and
  - Paying attention to branding and marketing.

For example, access to services virtually, especially in some rural areas where internet access may be challenging or where literacy or digital literacy may present barriers need to be effectively understood and proactively managed if they are to be used on a widespread basis.

Leading practice models also point to the importance of local partnerships, between existing stakeholders, including career services, employers, labour, and colleges, among others. These include defining policy responses to local issues, and defining clear referral mechanisms and a range of career resources to help the individuals using these services. Strong local partnerships can also serve to mobilize rapid response mechanisms to respond to emerging issues and to facilitate the training and financial resources necessary to those seeking career counselling or employment;

5. **Professional Standards for Career Services Staff** - This review points to the fact that career guidance is weakly professionalized in most countries in both the adult and student setting. There are various models internationally which can provide guidance to Nova Scotia; notably Germany, the Netherlands, Austria and the United States. There are also international credentialing bodies including:
- The International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG) offers the [Educational and Vocational Guidance Practitioner \(EVGP\) certification](#);
  - The [Global Career Development Facilitator \(GCDF\)](#)<sup>4</sup> is offered by NBCC International<sup>5</sup>.
  - [Career Management Certification](#) is offered by the Institute of Career Certification International (ICCI)<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.cce-global.org/GCDF>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.nbccinternational.org/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.careercertification.org/whycertify>

In Canada, certification is mandatory for Career Counsellors in Québec. Voluntary certification for career development practitioners is in place in Alberta, British Columbia, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia and, is in development in Ontario.

Within our province, the Nova Scotia Career Development Association is a not for profit organization that provides strategic leadership to Nova Scotia professionals in career development. The Association promotes effective practices through the communication of information, providing professional development and encouraging the adoption of frameworks promoting enhanced client-centered services.

The literature distinguishes between the respective roles of career practitioners and career counselors; the former most often defined as a broad-based role, and the latter viewed as a more highly specialized function.

In Canada, there are two “streams” with respect to certification available through the Canadian Council for Career Development (CCDC)<sup>7</sup> – one for Career Development Practitioners and the other for Career Counselors. While there is overlap in these roles, the scope of practice, the requisite competencies and road to certification are distinct.

Career counselors have specialized counselling competencies acquired through formal training/education in counselling assessment and processes, including administering and interpreting diagnostic tests related to career development. They have a unique scope of practice beyond the work of career practitioners in that their counselling skills include a clinical or functional understanding of the psychological/emotional impact of employment barriers.

The work of career counselors focuses mainly on the career decision-making dimension and provides individuals who have been assessed by career practitioners as having multiple, complex employment barriers with an in depth evaluation of their career development options.

Career practitioners also play a valuable role in facilitating clients to be able to take charge of their own career development by assisting them in the process of identifying and accessing resources, planning, and managing for their career-life development; conducting formal needs assessment; and, in the development and management of a return to work action planning process.

Given the reality of career service delivery paradigms, the literature suggests that the contracting out of career services to third parties has, in some cases, resulted in a loss of consistent training for staff.

The literature review and benchmarking exercise underscores the importance of having professional standards in place for career practitioners and career counselors.

Notwithstanding, there are cautions that need to be considered in respect to professional standards. As noted above, there is not a one size fits all approach. The literature makes a clear distinction between career counselors, career practitioners and career information specialists. In any final analysis, leading practices suggests that a balance needs to be struck in creating a differentiated workforce with the focus on addressing the standards required along the staffing continuum, indexed to their specific role and function.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://cccda.org/cccda/index.php/about-cccda>

In Canada, as referenced above, there is a significant body of work on the key competencies and standards for career guidance practitioners through the Canadian Council for Career Development (CCDC). The Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners provide a framework within which a variety of roles can be identified. This framework was developed following a thorough process of consultation and consensus building. Extensive reference to this work is noted throughout the OECD literature as a leading practice.

The CCDC works with its provincial members, such as the Nova Scotia Career Development Association, to promote these standards and the adoption of licensing and regulations throughout Canada. The exception of the need for strong professional regulation is in Quebec, where licensing for career specialists has been in existence since 1963. Voluntary certification is in place in [Alberta](#) and [British Columbia](#). A key question or challenge is the ongoing funding or resourcing of the body that currently oversees this work, especially if more demand is created through the adoption of these standards throughout the Provinces<sup>8</sup>.

- 6. Program Standards** - Beyond the foregoing discussion on standards for staff competencies among career services providers, an important companion piece in consideration of overall service quality is the criticality of the development and use of program standards and guidelines. These are seen to be particularly important in decentralized systems and in systems in which government either contracts out, or outsources the services. Standards can apply to either processes, outcomes and, typically form an important component of the accountability framework for career services. Standards throughout the OECD countries include generic (industrial production model); sector specific; and voluntary guidelines. Equally important, standards are best used when there is a strong sense of ownership by those developing them. In Canada, the *National Life/Work Centre* has created an applied research body of knowledge. The *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs* has established important career management tools, ideas, and can serve as a clearinghouse for updating leading practices for use of practitioners in the field. The challenge is to ensure that the system is not ‘product rich’ and ‘delivery poor’. Therefore, it is critical to develop and provide local staff with ongoing training and access to resources, in order to take full advantage of these programs.<sup>9</sup>
- 7. Labour Market Information and ICT** - A well-designed LMI resource has the potential to improve the matching process of firms and workers in job search, and reduce labour market friction. A comparative analysis of selected LMI studies in five OECD countries concludes that Canada’s publically funded and produced LMI is a solid policy instrument that, perhaps, is one of the best in the world. A common thread throughout the literature is that Canada’s LMI is weak in knowledge transfer, in effect, in transferring this knowledge to user friendly services and products and ultimately utility for clients – an issue that goes directly to the matter of its practical usability. In this regard, the previously mentioned Blueprint work holds significant promise, as it focuses more on competencies and skills to help clients move across occupations, rather than the typical LMI focus solely on occupations.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://cccda.org/cccda/index.php/certification/canadian-standards-guidelines-for-career-development-practitioners-sg>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.blueprint4life.ca/blueprint/home.cfm/lang/1>



The National Life/Work Centre has also developed the popular website, the *Real Game*, an engaging, contemporary, experiential career exploration site, used extensively in schools, with further additions and updates for the adult population.<sup>10</sup>

The literature review and benchmarking exercise puts a fine point on the necessity of paying closer attention to early school leavers, who are often not ready to navigate the world of training, or work. Successful policies for school drop-outs can be seen in Scandinavia, where an intensified, individualized approach is used to combine personal, educational and occupational guidance. A more local, small but significant example is the Pathways model, developed in Ontario, and adapted locally in Spryfield, Nova Scotia.<sup>11</sup> The most recent results for 2012-2013 show continued success in high school attendance and credit accumulation amongst disadvantaged youth.<sup>12</sup> Operated with local partner Chebucto Pathways, this program has served youth in Spryfield since 2010 utilizing volunteers to supplant school personnel. The program is primarily focused on increasing high school graduation rates. An important feature of Pathways is its focus on outcomes and reporting on key metrics such as credit accumulation and attendance.

In Denmark, municipalities are legally obligated to make contact with youth on at least two occasions a year up to the age of 19, with a focus on the mutual obligation to have a right to training and education. Locally, Phoenix Youth Centre provides a specialized employment centre, cutting across boundaries, to help youth with housing and other personal supports while building their self-confidence to engage in training or employment. Phoenix has programs targeting youth at risk of school leaving, those already having left the school system and also focuses on preventative services. This practice of providing an integrated holistic approach to problem solving for at-risk youth addresses the earlier-referenced challenge associated with the fragmentation of services and the tendency of service delivery systems to ‘treat the symptoms’ in isolation of the overall client requirements. This program embodies that **integration imperative** explored above in ensuring that clients get the full range of often-interconnected services they need and is illustrative of a leading practice that should be incorporated within the career services delivery system.

Nova Scotia can learn from some of the models deployed elsewhere that provide a more integrative approach to career guidance along that continuum from school to work.

The literature review and benchmarking exercise has been enormously helpful throughout this project as a filter for the input, insights and ideas advanced by stakeholders throughout the outreach and engagement process.

The findings arising from the literature review and benchmarking exercise provide very useful insights into the features that leading practice models are incorporating into career services programming and, in this project, have been useful in helping to provide the basis for key principles that should underpin Nova Scotia’s new model of service delivery.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.lifework.ca/lifework/therealgame.html>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.pathwaystoeducation.ca/en/about-us/pathways-model>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.pathwaystoeducation.ca/sites/default/files/pdf/Results%20summary%202012-2013.pdf>

In summary, the literature review concludes that the case for having a coherent set of policies, programs and practices to achieve a quick return to work by the majority of the unemployed and a high quality set of employment services for disadvantaged workers is very strong. Moreover, the overriding focus across all jurisdictions reviewed is on providing all labour market participants, the tools and skills to negotiate an ever changing labour market over a lifetime.

## 4 Findings

This section of the report addresses four key areas:

- A short overview of the key findings arising from the benchmarking exercise;
- A summary of the issues and challenges likely to be encountered in the transformation to a new career services delivery model;
- A summary of recent career service delivery changes in British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba and their implications for Nova Scotia;
- An overview of the results of the consultation undertaken as part of this project.

### 4.1 Findings from the Benchmarking Exercise

The results of the benchmarking review generally support the direction that LAE has proposed for the transformation of career services delivery. Essential directions include:

- a. Development of an integrated model of service delivery that aligns closely to leading practice features of career services delivery – a focus on clear client pathways and a strong outcomes and results orientation;
- b. Broadening the range of services and extending these services to all Nova Scotians is an appropriate direction in the context of contemporary economic, labour market and social realities that are being faced;
- c. The *virtual channel* can, for some, augment ‘bricks and mortar’ delivery of service and serve a broader population with a range of options that can include self-serve, as well as the potential for co-management of their cases. At the same time, this project, along with other work that LAE has undertaken in this area, shows that virtual services are not all created equal and there are leading practices that ideally will be emulated in any implementation of virtual services in Nova Scotia. These leading practices, drawn from both Scandinavian and New Zealand models include:
  - The inclusion of a diversity of online career planning and management tools that are user-friendly and intuitive and which provide decision support to users;
  - The ability of a virtual user to be able to ‘save’ their work or maintain a portfolio on line so that they can return to the site later to continue the interaction; and
  - The option to connect with a ‘live’ career practitioner, as may be required.

While the use of the virtual channel can contribute to greater efficiency for site-based career practitioners, it is important to acknowledge that not all users will be able to rely exclusively on the virtual channel. And, in recognition of concerns related to the digital divide and in a province with an extensive rural demographic, it is important to understand that not all users will have access or the knowledge to effectively benefit from the virtual channel. On the other hand, there may be other constituencies, like many recent immigrants, and youth who are well-acclimatized to the virtual channel and will be more likely to favour it over in-person interactions;

- d. Itinerant services and, in some cases, provincial-level services such as technical aids, assessment and diagnostic services and other, as-needed services could be bundled and delivered more efficiently as a mobile service, ensuring that all regions have equal access;
- e. Simplifying administration and accountability frameworks and focussing on outcomes have the potential to drive efficiencies and management information into the system that will support ongoing service refinement and a better understanding of service delivery through an appropriate monitoring and reporting framework. With its award-winning LaMPSS System already implemented and familiar to users, LAE is well-positioned for the future in this regard, although there are refinements that would make the system more user friendly and enhance information for measuring performance and outcomes;
- f. Positioning the system to more effectively and proactively respond to emerging economic/labour market issues, challenges, and dislocations [such as the closure of a major employer] with a more dynamic and 'rapid-response' capability is a common objective of transition and service transformation; and
- g. The goal of consistency – of decision making, service, coverage, staff decision making, the 'look and feel' of career service centers – is another common pursuit for service transformation.

#### 4.2 Issues and Challenges through the Transformation Process

Both the benchmarking process and the outreach and engagement process identified the issues and challenges likely to be encountered in service transformation. In undertaking transformation, LAE will need to monitor these and prepare for them throughout the planning cycle. These include:

- a. **The change management process** - Change management is always challenging and will need to be carefully managed. The anticipation of change can create apprehension. Both the benchmarking exercise and the consultation process with identified key issues arising from the anticipation of change. This underscores the need for a structured, open and effective change management process as the transformation initiative advances. While stakeholders broadly express the view that change is required, throughout the engagement process, there were a range of issues identified, including uncertainty in respect to their own roles in a transformed system and concern in relation to the potential impact on clients, on their boards and general uncertainty in respect to the unknown;
- b. **The need for clarity on the matter of how specialized services will be provided** - Concern that the transition is a euphemism for a shift to a 'one size fits all' model and that specialized services will be replaced with more generic services came forward during the engagement with stakeholders. As illustrated by comparable initiatives studied during the jurisdictional review, these concerns can be expected to dissipate once there is greater insight into an actual model and its key features. Sharing the vision and the proposed model to stakeholders early in the planning and execution cycle will be an important part of any service transformation initiative;
- c. **The dynamism of the current policy and fiscal environment** - Concern that evolving policy changes in respect to fiscal arrangements and the general state of public sector finances

may impact the manner and ultimate features of a career services transformation initiative will need to be understood and considered in the transformation process;

- d. **Clarity in respect to how the new model will work** – Above all, stakeholders and ordinary Nova Scotians will need to be well-informed in respect to the changes. Paying attention to explaining the changes and having a strong and effective marketing campaign will go a long way in addressing organizational concerns, in terms of what a new system of career services might look like and how it will improve access and overall results. This is particularly important in the context of the potential disconnect that could arise in ‘offering a solution to a problem that ordinary Nova Scotians may not know exists’ – in short, Nova Scotians will need to understand why change is needed;
- e. **The professional and program standards issue** – While there is support for a stronger focus on staff and program standards, there are also concerns which will need to be addressed during the transformation process. Factors include how these standards will be applied, to whom, and the implementation process to be followed in achieving them. Care will need to be taken to ensure that standards are clear and transparent, that they emulate national benchmarks and that current career service providers are given appropriate time to transition to the new standards; and
- f. **The matter of clearly defining the career services continuum** – There are dichotomies in respect to the nature of services that should be offered and their objectives. There are some who strongly support the more developmental approach to helping people move toward ‘careers’, while others believe that the focus should be on moving clients into ‘jobs’. Still others are centrally vested in the leading practice of seeing career services as empowering individuals with the tool kit to be able to be their own life-long career manager. Defining the career services continuum will be an important element of the transformation process and ensuring the desired outcomes.

The logistical challenges associated with implementing and managing a transformation process of the scale and magnitude contemplated by LAE are also underscored in both the benchmarking exercise and throughout the outreach and engagement process. Notwithstanding, there is recognition that Nova Scotia has a relative advantage in having already advanced a service integration initiative, including the development of a new ICT system – LaMPSS – that will be enormously helpful in the next stages of transformation. This will make the transformation process easier.

A salutary finding that arises from the benchmarking exercise and the extended dialogue with key stakeholders is the importance of the effective management of the transformation process itself. Overall, for a successful result, these foregoing issues, and others which will arise incidentally, will need to be proactively and effectively managed through the transformation process.

### 4.3 Findings Arising from the Jurisdictional Review

Because the Province of British Columbia (BC) implemented a major transformation of its career services system in April 2012, the consultant team saw it as a very useful analogue from which to learn and study its implications in respect to the transformation process underway in Nova Scotia. The BC model and the approach taken were analyzed through examining both the pre and post-

implementation processes in BC as part of the jurisdictional review undertaken through Phases 2 and 4 of this project.

The focus of this examination of the BC experience was on better understanding the process utilized and to identify both critical success factors, as well as challenges to be addressed.

A distinguishing feature of the BC experience was the simultaneous implementation of a new model of service delivery along with the implementation of a new *integrated case management* (ICM) system supporting social and employment services programming across several departments of the BC government.

In implementing a new model of employment services delivery, BC faced a situation similar to Nova Scotia, in having taken over federal LMDA programs devolved to the province in 2009. Like Nova Scotia, these programs were in addition to the provincially-funded programs also being operated within the province. The newly acquired programs and services were also delivered by community-based service providers resulting in comparable duplication and overlap.

To transition these services to a new model, BC issued a *request for proposals* (RFP) inviting service providers to form partnerships to deliver a new model of employment services. Implemented in April 2012, BC now has almost two years' experience in operating the program under the new model. It is a commonly-branded model and one which incorporates several innovations, including a strong focus on results and rewarding results within the funding model.

The use of an RFP process to procure new service delivery capacity is an approach that has also been successfully adopted by several provinces.

Based on the review undertaken in Phase 4 of this project, these changes have, reportedly, gone well; service providers are acculturating to the new model and, perhaps, most importantly, the transition has been seamless for British Columbians. This is a model that includes both self-service features, as well as full services developed on the basis of a *multi-dimensional needs assessment* (MDNA). Of notable importance is the retention of specialized services in BC within an integrated service delivery model, a clear recognition of the needs that exist in being able to respond to a diversity of clients.

The greatest reported challenge in making this transition to a new delivery model in BC resided in undertaking the service transformation at the same time as implementing the new ICM system.

Arising from this significant career services delivery transformation process, BC is now embarking on an important program evaluation initiative to determine the impact and results of these changes. An outside contractor has been contracted to manage this multi-faceted evaluation process, expected to take 2-3 years.

In addition, during Phase 4 of this project, outreach was also undertaken with senior officials of Manitoba and Saskatchewan to better understand recent changes that these provinces have made in their career services delivery systems. Interesting findings that have relevance for Nova Scotia as it contemplates its own transformation process include the following:

- In Saskatchewan, the development of new funding framework for agencies and career services partnered organizations which includes a *lean approach* (bundling of services) and risk management tools that will help determine the tenure of funding for partnered organizations – i.e., those organizations with the optimal profile from a risk perspective (lowest risk) will receive longer term funding agreements, thereby, providing a higher level of funding security and freeing them up to focus on mandate and mission mastery in respect to client interventions. This is being established around a purpose-built results-based outcomes framework;
- The early stage initiative in Manitoba to develop a promising new concept of certifying service providers. As a potentially important quality management tool. Planning is underway with the Institute for Citizen Centred Service (ICCS)<sup>13</sup> on a new approach to certifying service providers within a framework of professional standards that puts the client at the centre of the service delivery structure and makes positive outcomes paramount in a results-based framework.

Extrapolating from the examination of other jurisdictions that have pursued similar transformation initiatives, the following highlights point to some of the key findings arising that will be instructive to Nova Scotia:

- a. The importance of stakeholder engagement and communication so that the proposed changes are clearly understood, that the case for change is effectively made, the vision and objectives are clear, and the desired outcomes are clearly articulated;
- b. The fundamental importance of an integrated, commonly-branded and easily-understood service delivery structure that offers consistency and quality regardless of the location where services are offered;
- c. The importance of providing clarity in respect to roles and responsibilities, goals/objectives for the service, service standards and governance and accountability expectations/frameworks while, at the same time, inviting innovation and creativity in customizing these service delivery structures to optimally respond to local social and economic requirements – urban/rural environments, the economic situation and other contextual factors that link to the availability of opportunities for employment; and
- d. The importance of effective governance throughout the transformation process itself. Ideally, this will be a process that will engage service providers, secure their insights and input in an effort to make the transformation process as smooth as possible;
- e. The need for effective communication at all levels throughout the process;
- f. The need to engage both training providers and employers in a fundamentally different way in establishing the pathway to the workforce of the future. The current trend to forge a stronger and more proactive alignment of labour market demand and supply will be the cornerstone of the new system. This will find expression in a fulfillment track that links training to match labour market requirements and in incentivizing those going through the process to focus on areas where labour market attachment is a possibility;

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.iccs-isac.org/en/about/index.htm>

- g. While the focus on employment is important, it is equally important to recognize the requirement, in a transformed service delivery system, for specialized services for those with complex barriers to employment, whether the causative factors relate to a physical or mental disability, or are the result of environmental factors including educational deficits and/or the results of poverty, or indeed, a combination of factors. Specialized services assessments are employment-related assessments conducted by qualified assessors. Generally, the purpose of these services is to effectively assist case-managed clients who have significant and complex employment-related assessment needs to achieve the highest level of labour market participation possible;
- h. The importance of branding and marketing the changes to the career services delivery system during the transformation process. This was an area on which BC officials offered interesting insights and were able to outline some of the lessons learned through their implementation process, insights that will be of importance to Nova Scotia;
- i. The importance of consistency throughout the delivery system, including professional standards for staff and program standards for service delivery so as to provide assurance to the public and users of the system that they will receive a similar level of service wherever they may be within the province; and
- j. The importance of being able to deploy a range of service options tailored to client need and which includes both full and self-service options, as well as the virtual channel.

#### 4.4 Results of the Consultation

The outreach and engagement process was designed to secure the input and views from a full range of key stakeholders through a variety of channels and methodologies.

The outreach and engagement phase was implemented through three separate but related pathways including:

- a. **A Web-based Interface** – This modality provided stakeholders with access to a downloadable copy of the *Discussion Paper*, a downloadable copy of the press release issued at the commencement of the project, and a web-based form through which stakeholders could post comments, thoughts, and perspectives on the proposed transformation process. This approach enabled broad input from Nova Scotians generally, as well as from groups or organizations which are part of the networks of those who were engaged in the targeted consultation sessions. As detailed below, there were a total of 65 submissions through the web interface, including 60 e-mail and 5 voices messages;



Responses Received			
Week	Emails	Voice Mails	Total Contacts
Jan 30 - Feb 01	8	2	10
Feb 04 - 08	4	1	5
Feb 11 - 15	5	1	6
Feb 18 - 22	6	0	6
Feb 25 - Mar 01	9	0	9
Mar 4 - 8	8	1	9
Mar 11 - 15	20	0	20
Mar 18 - 22			0
Mar 25 - 29			0
<b>Overall Totals</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>65</b>

Table 1 - Totals of Emails and Voicemails Received

b. **Targeted Outreach** – This included participation from nearly 30 organizations, with total participation estimated at 70 individuals. The list of targeted groups and organizations included a full range of stakeholders with an interest in career services, as well as industry associations in key sectors, employers and other government departments. The stakeholder list was actually expanded during the targeted outreach phase, with additional groups added to the list. The format utilized for the targeted outreach included:

1. **Key informant interviews** – in-person interviews conducted by one of four consulting team members with individual targets;
2. **Group interviews, with two or more participants** – used with specialized service providers, industry associations representing clusters of employers and other government departments; and
3. **Focus group sessions** – four focus groups sessions were conducted with:
  - Persons with disabilities;
  - Parents and coaches of parents as career counsellors;
  - Youth; and
  - Career counsellors.

The focus group sessions were completed last in the consultation process; the advantage of the timing being that, by this point in the research, the issues and findings were well in-focus, enabling a more probative approach in respect to the examination of key issues. This created a unique environment within each focus group through which open and candid discussion could take place, and emerging theories and ideas tested as related to the proposed transition to a broader range of career services offerings in Nova Scotia.

The sessions themselves were poignant, personalized and very moving, with many participants sharing their compelling personal stories of struggle, failure, and success as they continue to navigate their career paths.

In the case of parents and practitioners, the sessions focused on their information needs, methods, and tools to help youth and young adults, in particular, understand their interests and motivations, and the link between their skills and inclinations, and matching opportunities in the labour market.

The sessions with persons with disabilities and the session with youth served to highlight, in very personal ways, the role of and need for specialized services for those members of society who face unique barriers, challenges, and who often face a relatively more limited range of employment and career opportunities in the labour market.

For the focus groups and the interviews, customized supporting materials were developed. However, refreshingly, in every case, the discussion was guided by the enthusiasm of the participants and their keenness to both engage and share their views. Overall, the targeted consultations, including the focus groups, were a very satisfying and illuminating experience.

Overall, stakeholders were uniformly helpful, generous with their time and insightful with their observations throughout the proceedings. The consultant team owes a debt of gratitude to the participants; and

- c. **Written Submissions** –all stakeholders had the option of providing formal written submissions, individually or on behalf of the organization they represented. In all cases, the confidentiality of those providing input had been assured, unless they explicitly indicated an interest, in writing, in having their submission sent to the Department. Unless the group or individual providing input requested to go on record with their submission, no comments have been attributed. Where explicit permission has been given to share the content of a submission, these were transmitted to LAE.

The results of the outreach and engagement process are summarized in the following section based on a thematically-grouped composite of all input received.

**Voice Messages:** While small in number (5), voice messages expressed fear of losing rural career services and concern for those with specialized career service needs, along with more proactive strategies for employing persons with disabilities.

**Web Submissions:** The web-link included a web-based dialogue box wherein participants could provide their comments on the discussion paper and the proposed transition. A total of 60 responses were generated through this avenue. Highlights of these responses, using language reflected in the responses, included the following:

- a. Concern over the **issues faced by older workers**, including access to information about benefits for older workers, those who wish to retire; and information on CPP and OAS;
- b. Concern about the availability of **labour market information**, including information about job postings and the details within, as well as the services that are available;

- c. Concern for the labour market **needs of immigrant communities**, including a recommendation that the capacity to serve the immigrant community be developed throughout the networks. Another comment suggested that settlement for new Canadians is too focused in urban areas and that there needs to be more of a focus on rural areas as well. Others felt that new immigrants need help in specific areas, including the establishment of new businesses, entry into medical professions, and IT;
- d. Many offered the view that **the approach to career services transformation as outlined in the discussion paper released as part of the consultation would be a positive step**, owing to the potential efficiencies and reach that would be possible in enabling the extension of services to a broader range of client need;
- e. **Comments reflected an appreciation of the move toward higher standards** and recommended a focus on professional development as an enabler of the shift to professional and program standards. Views expressed in this regard suggested that the capacity needs to be developed sector-wide, with well-trained career practitioners, with more collaboration between groups, and with encouragement of better HR practices. Concern was also expressed in regard to the need for better training of caseworkers and career counsellors and that a new model, properly implemented, could help provide more uniform, higher-quality services;
- f. **Branding was highlighted as an important consideration**. Some applauded the common brand of career centers saying it “makes sense.” Some respondents also spoke about their own centre’s perspective and stated that it is “inclusive” and that they “don’t label clients” when they come in; all staff are cross-trained and able to work with any client. There was some debate on whether a new system should focus on ‘careers’ or ‘jobs’;
- g. **Informants who were aware of the approach being taken in BC were generally supportive** of that model, and some felt that it offers an example of a leading practice;
- h. **Employment insurance was highlighted** as an issue with the lack of flexibility, particularly, for seasonal workers. This was the most frequent observation related to changes to EI, which, in the earlier phases of the project were just being implemented. Respondents also felt that underemployment and a system of low wages for high education levels was negatively impacting the labour market;
- i. One comment reflected the **role of small business and their need for support** in several areas;
- j. **The importance of rural career services was frequently** repeated;
- k. Issues with **trades and apprenticeship were also frequently mentioned**, the primary concern being that people are not able to obtain apprenticeship hours and required courses and that often the pay received is less than projected pay. These comments pre-date the recent, extensive changes made to the apprenticeship systems through the establishment of a *special operating agency* and proactive approaches within the Atlantic region and nationally to address issues related to the apprenticeship program;
- l. In terms of persons with disabilities, the point was made that **practitioners are seeing more clients with mental health barriers and who are new to career services**, making the

point that the demand for these services will likely increase, a phenomenon that was also reported in the literature review;

- m. The importance of **viewing the transformation through the gender lens** was also a recurring theme;
- n. **Issues for practitioners also emerged**, including the impact of the transition on their employment but, also an appreciation for the opportunities a new career services model might present;
- o. The experiences of and **challenges for youth was a recurring theme**. Comments highlighted the incongruity between student debt and beginning wages, the high level of training and investment in the training made by both employers and government, and the high entry level threshold of experience that is demanded for jobs. Some highlighted the gap between old model of vocational education and the NSCC, with the result that youth who are not academically inclined have limited access to entering the trades; and
- p. **Barriers to employment were also noted**, including transportation in rural areas, with a suggestion for support of driver's education as a legitimate training opportunity.

Comments made through the website channel reflect a number of similar themes expressed in the broader consultation - themes respecting the need for:

- Professional standards for practitioners;
- Access to professional development for career practitioners;
- Continuation of specialized services for groups requiring these services and the need for this to be explicitly reflected in the new model; and
- Recognition of rural and urban differences in access to services, including the barrier that lack of access to transportation in rural areas creates.

#### 4.5 Summary

The findings arising from this project strongly support the need to transition to a new model for career services delivery in Nova Scotia. The general directions established in the initial discussion paper, measured against the benchmarking exercise, the jurisdictional review, and global trends are solidly founded.

Above all, the findings suggest the need to offer services to a broader range of Nova Scotians, particularly in light of the rapidly evolving labour market, and to do so in an integrated, commonly branded service delivery model.

The overall recommendations formulated by the consultant team for LAE in the proposed career services transformation process within Nova Scotia, ultimately, borrow from a number of the analogues reviewed while, at the same time, take into consideration the reality of the contemporary evolving labour market in Nova Scotia and its unique features, including its salient feature – very challenging demography

Lessons learned, however, are instructive and can serve to mitigate risk through the transformation process, a process which, by its very nature and with the number and diversity of stakeholders, is complex and multi-dimensional.

It is equally clear from this project that there are many challenges. Change and change management is always complex and anxiety-provoking. Because of this, communication and ongoing engagement with key stakeholders in the actual implementation process will be pivotal to success.

Perhaps, the greatest opportunity for LAE in this transformation process is to synergize its efforts with those of other key players within the career services system – community-based career services providers, the Departments of Community Services (DCS) and Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD), economic development stakeholders and, particularly, the employer community. Optimizing results will be dependent on the effective horizontal management and a renewed engagement with these key collaborators.

## 5 The Case for Change to a New Model of Career Services

There is broad-based support for the fundamental concept of the need for change in the career and employment services delivery system. Evidence gathered during this project suggests that the challenges associated with the evolving labour market are becoming better understood. Employers understand that the stakes are high and that the search for talent and talent management will, in coming years, become increasingly competitive on all fronts.

Stakeholders understand the need for a more collaborative approach with economic development policy makers and practitioners, and greater alignment with the needs of the employer community.

While there is understandably some trepidation among current career services providers in respect to change, there is also a clear understanding of its need, and an acknowledgement of the fundamental importance of providing career services to a broader population.

Overall, the results of this project speak compellingly to the case for change to a new model for career and employment services in Nova Scotia. In large part, this case for change arises from the 'as-is' state of current services as detailed in Section 2 of this report. The transfer, in 2009, of formerly federally-operated, career-related services to the Province has resulted in a system that needs to be streamlined and more fully integrated in a manner that will address the needs of the NS labour market. Stakeholders recognize that there is some duplication and overlap, as well as gaps in service that need to be addressed through the transformation process. This alone, though, is not the primary driver for transformation.

Perhaps, most importantly, the case for change revolves around the evolution of the labour market in Nova Scotia to one which, like many other jurisdictions, is characterized by:

- **Changing demography and, particularly, the aging of the workforce** - with one of the 'oldest' populations in Canada and the highest reported rate of disability, this means that the recruitment of talent going forward in Nova Scotia is likely to be hyper-competitive. It also underscores the importance of ensuring that there is not a skills mismatch in a very tight labour market;
- **The expectation of labour shortages** – this is a phenomenon which will impact investment, large project development and potentially drive up the cost of development, even impacting the ultimate viability of particular projects. Economically, the stakes are very high;
- **The ubiquity of technology** - its pervasiveness, its global presence and its continuous impact on the way that work is done and on the workforce is a factor that continues to have a transformational impact and for which ongoing adaptation will be required;
- **The recognition of the changing nature of work** – characterized by more part-time and project-based work, the requirement for greater mobility among workers and the reality of an increasingly complex world where highly skilled workers with advanced expertise in science technology engineering and mathematics (STEM) are required and for which there are labour shortages;

- **Economic dislocations** - arising from a variety of factors, including technological change and globalization, and the need to be proactively responsive to these challenges with a 'rapid-response' capability;
- **The need for changing policy responses** – the imperative of aligning training with labour market demand including the need to incentivize those taking training differently, so that they are supported in training programs for which there is clear and demonstrable labour market demand and pathways to a real job; and
- **The overarching need for an integrated commonly-branded service delivery system** – in the interest of addressing duplication and gaps in career services, the development of an integrated career services delivery system that puts the client at the centre and which offers consistency throughout the province.

As noted in the discussion paper issued as part of this project, the case for change means that:

- More Nova Scotians will need career services in the future;
- These services will be required by all Nova Scotians;
- These services will need to have a rapid-response feature that will enable quicker mobilization in the face of threats and real opportunities, hence, the capacity for greater agility, responsiveness and flexibility.

It is equally clear that the workforce of the future will need to consider career change more often, will need to up-skill more frequently, will need to have the flexibility to respond to technological change and will need to be more personally proactive in responding to changes in the workplace – both emerging threats and new opportunities.

The conditions under which Careers Nova Scotia is evolving to this new model also means that the training and career services programming can no longer afford to be misaligned with the economic development imperatives of the province and with the explicit needs of employers. **The three need to be triangulated and brought into an orbit where the mutual interests and objectives of all three are considered as a related eco-system designed to enhance the province's overall prosperity, and its innovation quotient.** It is for this reason that collaboration and a commitment to horizontal engagement needs to underpin the transformation process – at the governmental level, through partnerships forged at the community level, among career services practitioners, and with employers.

## 5.1 The Principles Underpinning Transformation to a new Career Services Delivery System

Meetings held with key stakeholders and industry during the consultation not only provided valuable insights regarding the proposed direction espoused in the discussion paper, but also included input on the transformation process itself and the foundational principles that should underpin that process.

The input received from stakeholders consulted and the insights gained through the examination of leading practices in other jurisdictions, resulted in the development of fifteen key principles to underpin a new model of career services in Nova Scotia. These can provide guidance to the

transition team and provide assurance and predictability for current service providers. Moreover, these principles will be useful in communicating the underlying objectives of the transformation process to stakeholders, including all Nova Scotians. They will also serve as an accountability framework and as a means to measure effectiveness throughout the transformation process.

These principles include:

- 1. A collaborative approach is essential to a successful transformation** and should include input and participation from all stakeholders – current service providers, other government departments, economic development leaders and the employer community. This collaborative approach will require LAE to assume a leadership position in providing horizontal collaboration with the Departments of Education and Early Childhood Development, Community Services and Economic and Rural Development and Tourism and the Office of Immigration. Internally, it will mean that LAE is synergized with training institutions, including the NSCC and actively mobilizing employers to both help shape the transformation process and to become participants in the new model. An important dimension of this horizontal management initiative will be to ensure that LAE works with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to create alignment, linkages and continuity in respect to career guidance and the boundary interface between the services and support mechanisms of both departments, particularly in the area of career guidance;
- 2. While providing a consistent and commonly-branded service, the design of the career services delivery network must optimize the capacity for flexibility in service delivery.** This concept of ‘flexibility’ embodies the idea of customizing the service delivery network to respond to local requirements and labour market realities and to constantly be open to modify the service delivery approach and infrastructure to respond to emerging issues, both threats and opportunities. Flexibility in service delivery means not being solely fixated on bricks and mortar, but being open to alternate delivery channels – virtual, itinerant and outreach, as required. It means resisting the concept of one size fits all in designing how the system will work. On the client impact side, flexibility means building in sufficient latitude in the funding model to be able to accommodate diverse client requirements while still operating within a strong accountability framework; understanding that client interventions need to respond to their presenting circumstances and that, in some cases, the pathway to employment and out of poverty may require taking a longer term view;
- 3. The transition process must optimize the capacity for local responsiveness.** As noted above, this principle doesn’t detract from the concept of the integrated, commonly-branded and consistent service delivery organization, but does acknowledge the divergent circumstances throughout the province. These include urban and rural differences, the potential for the digital divide, the demographic diversity that exists throughout the province, the predominance of certain industries or opportunities in particular areas and the asset base, economic and otherwise, that can be leveraged locally and regionally. Respecting and encouraging local responsiveness, and demonstrating efficacy in responding to local requirements will ideally be a feature of this new model. As an example, the career services delivery system needs to be constituted in such a way that it is able to respond effectively to both emerging threats, as well as opportunities. If a major



employer were to fail, the delivery system needs to have the capacity to help workers make the transition to new employment. Similarly, if an investor was establishing a new operation that required specialized skill sets, the career services delivery system needs to be able to support this requirement, quickly and efficiently. To the greatest extent possible, the career services delivery structure will develop the capacity to accommodate this local responsiveness feature within the framework of a high quality and results-oriented, consistent and commonly-branded service delivery structure;

4. **Optimizing the use and impact of technology and encouraging innovative practices** will be critical success factors. Marketing the self-service and virtual channels and encouraging and rewarding innovative approaches to service delivery will result in a more dynamic and cost-effective career service delivery model. Innovative practices such as linking the local career services delivery structure with local economic development agencies and local employers in a collaborative approach will serve to leverage local partnerships, promote a shared understanding of challenges and opportunities and concentrate efforts on mutually beneficial solution-finding;
5. Establishing **professional standards for career practitioners and career counselors and overall program standards for the service** will be important factors in the quality management of the new career services program. Development and adoption of standards need to be undertaken sensitively, needs to be harmonized with leading practices and the requirements of certifying bodies. Implementation needs to be undertaken in a transparent and predictable manner that supports current practitioners to qualify for eventual designation without fear of negative impacts on their employment;
6. At a time when services are being significantly modified and a broader clientele will require services, **effectively marketing the services as part of the transformation process** will be critical to the ultimate success achieved. In this regard, Nova Scotians need to understand the case for change and, particularly why change is required. They need to understand the objectives of the service, the nature, extent and type of services to be provided and the pathways to accessing this service. The vision of Careers Nova Scotia as the 'spine' of a transformation of the NS labour market and an important ligature to economic development and wealth creation needs to be better understood, both within government and among service providers. The transformation process itself offers the opportunity to accomplish this through a concerted effort at marketing these changes;
7. **A focus on outcomes and results** will build confidence in the new model. This new model is ultimately about responding to an evolving labour market, to enabling a better alignment of training with labour market needs and ensuring that Nova Scotians are able to get a job. Measuring and evaluating outcomes, particularly, in respect to how Careers Nova Scotia is addressing labour market challenges will be important in building confidence in the new model and in demonstrating its efficacy in responding to future threats and opportunities. This may require adjustments in LaMPSS to facilitate more precision in information on outcomes and results;
8. **Respecting the need for specialized services** is an important foundational principle. The focus groups undertaken as part of this project underscore the complexities and unique

needs of specific constituencies requiring services within the career services continuum. Responding to the career service needs of all Nova Scotians means that a client-centered program needs to be able to provide these specialized services to persons with physical disabilities, mental health issues, linguistic and visible minorities, youth and women within an integrated, optimally responsive service delivery system. The specialized skills and the cultural competencies required to deal with particular client groups need to be valued and leveraged in the transformation process;

9. **Strong governance** needs to be a central feature of the transformed service delivery infrastructure. Program results, accountability and successes will be enhanced if underpinned by a strong governance structure both during the transformation process itself, and as the regional delivery network becomes fully operational. LAE will need to be prepared to provide guidance on governance expectations;
10. Paving the way for client success through **a commitment to breaking down systemic barriers for clients**. The outreach and engagement process, and particularly, the focus groups underscored some of the complex barriers clients face in undertaking career planning and training. For example, according to interview participants, it is not uncommon for clients entering training in the fall semester to do so without having official notification or certainty of funding at the time of the commencement of their program, a factor that may exacerbate their stress-level and which may have an overall deleterious impact on training outcomes. Process improvements and measures respecting efficiency and consistency in decision-making need to make Careers Nova Scotia services as client-focused as possible - in effect helping clear away any barriers making a client's successful mastery of their chosen career path more challenging than it ordinarily might be. For persons with disabilities, this may mean the provision of an appropriate technical aid that will enhance the likelihood of a successful outcome; for a single parent it may mean having access to funding for transportation or child care;
11. The need to **take an enterprise risk management approach and to ensure the overall sustainability of career services programs through the transformation process** will be important cornerstones for future success. Paying attention to program costs, achieving optimal efficiencies and developing cost effective service delivery channels to provide services to a broader and more diverse range of clients will be a challenge, though a necessary feature of overall model accountability;
12. The need for **agility in responding to changes**, whether in relation to fiscal arrangements between the federal and provincial governments, economic challenges and opportunities or other changes impacting service delivery;
13. **Positioning this transformation as a critical success factor in the successful management of the labour force and human resource planning dimensions of major projects in Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada**. Monitoring and proactively addressing labour supply and demand issues will be critically important in the human resource and labour force planning dimensions of major projects in Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada, whether shipbuilding, the Maritime Link or other projects. Careers Nova Scotia will need to take a proactive approach in this regard, including helping mitigate the impact of these large

projects on SMEs who may be consequently challenged by changes in the availability of labour or skills as a result of major projects;

14. **Process will be important throughout the transformation.** Underlying a successful transition to a new model of career services in Nova Scotia will be several factors:

- A clear and transparent process underpinned by a project charter and an executive sponsor;
- Discussion and consultation with the stakeholder community both in advance and during the transition. This includes current service providers, industry and employers, other government departments, political leaders and Nova Scotians generally;
- Establishment of a broadly-representative transformation team with clear terms of reference and a mandate and mission;
- Willingness to establish supporting structures and committees to address specific challenges or help design specific service delivery features; and
- A commitment to monitoring impacts, results and to strong communication throughout the process.

15. **Developing and leveraging an early win strategy.** Success breeds success; throughout the transformation process, it will be important to acknowledge and celebrate key milestones and results as a means to validate outcomes and reinforce the contribution of all the players whose efforts cumulatively will be instrumental in assuring a successful outcome.

## 6 Conclusions and Recommendations

This project confirms that the case for change to a new model for career services in Nova Scotia is strong. It is required to address both duplication, as well as gaps in the current service delivery structure.

Perhaps, most importantly, the case for change is strong because our future prosperity as a province depends on it. Faced with challenging circumstances related to demography, labour shortages and a labour market dominated by SMEs, Nova Scotia needs to be 'smart'; to leverage its greatest resources – its human capital and innovation potential – to seize opportunity, to optimize future prospects, and to proactively manage and mitigate economic threats and risks going forward.

The case for change recognizes that the labour market issues currently challenging Nova Scotia are not exclusive to Canada or the Atlantic Region. Rather, they are very much part of the global landscape and, as such, are likely to increase the level of competitiveness for talent and human resources, a phenomenon expected to become even more intense over the next 20 years.

The project illustrates that LAE is well-positioned to manage a successful transition to a new model. It has an experienced cadre of current service providers with which to collaborate in transitioning to that new model. Internally, the Department has a number of complementary initiatives underway or completed that are strategically important to this transformation process – changes to apprenticeship, involvement in the Atlantic Workforce Partnership, and a cadre of effective Sector Councils, among others. More broadly, there is a clear understanding of the fundamental importance of a restructured career services system in underpinning our future economic development prospects and our prosperity. Employers are also beginning to appreciate the importance of human resource planning and some of the current challenges; a factor, that bodes well for their partnership in a renewed effort to optimize our human capital assets.

Based on the comprehensive jurisdictional review and benchmarking exercise and the extensive consultation undertaken as part of this project, GATN advances the following recommendations for consideration by LAE.

**1. Recommendation 1 – LAE proceed with the implementation of a new CNS model built around the principles identified above and designed to address the career needs of all Nova Scotians.**

Nova Scotia is not a homogenous environment. In this transformation, the needs of rural and urban job seekers need to be taken into account and the fact that the opportunity environment is different across the Province also needs to be recognized in the model design. There are some unique challenges in rural areas, including transportation and availability of jobs which will need to be considered. Further, as the current career services infrastructure includes the network of services previously funded by the federal government, operating alongside provincially funded services, these will need to be brought together and re-focused under a new commonly-branded model. Ideally, this service delivery infrastructure will have all the important features that leading practice models illustrate, as detailed throughout this report;

**2. Recommendation 2 – That the new model of career services be developed and organized within a commonly-branded, client-centered consistent service delivery structure with the**

**capacity to be able to respond to local circumstances and to be operated within the framework of a high quality and results-based program.** In this regard, LAE would establish the goals, requirements, the policy, service standards, and the process. Within this framework for an integrated service delivery model, local requirements would also need to be addressed. An important option for consideration, effectively implemented in other jurisdictions and explored through this project, is the issuance of a *Request for Proposal* (RFP) process to invite career services providers to form innovative partnerships to offer this new model of service delivery in accordance with the established vision and standards, leveraging the existing assets, bringing local collaborators together and being responsive to the unique needs and diversity that exists within the province. This approach has been successfully utilized in several provinces and, well-executed, potentially offers the most flexibility in being able to respond to the changing paradigm for career services as detailed in this report.

3. **Recommendation 3 – If the issuance of an RFP were to be the chosen approach, before initiating this process, it is recommended that senior officials of LAE undertake stakeholder meetings prior to issuing an RFP. These meetings would enable departmental officials to profile the case for change, the vision, and the objectives of the change and to detail how the process will be undertaken and managed. If the RFP is the preferred methodology, it would likely also be helpful to issue it first as a draft so that potential bidders could comment on and offer input prior to the final document being issued.**

Key steps in advancing to the point of the issuance of an RFP include:

- Negotiation of current contract extensions with career services providers to offer stability during the transformation process;
- Articulate and distribute the proposed model and the RFP process in 'draft' form and socialize this through LAE staff-managed meetings with current and interested service providers throughout the Province. These meetings will ideally outline the model, the vision and objectives of the transformation, the accountability framework, program standards and financial dimensions. These meetings will also outline the process to be followed in transitioning to the new model. The visibility of senior LAE management and the executive sponsor in these meetings will be important;
- In this process, it will be important for LAE to be clear in their orientation and position on the range of services, including specialized services, and delivery channels anticipated to be provided under the proposed new rubric for career services;
- LAE should also outline expectations and evaluation criteria associated with key values in the RFP process, including expectations related to the need to form local partnerships to underpin service delivery, engagement of the employer community, service innovation, and expectations in respect to service delivery modalities/channels, among other factors;
- It will also be important to outline the financial framework and parameters for the transformation, including overall budgetary goals as a benchmark against which to measure progress and accountability;
- Messaging will ideally underscore and encourage innovation in respect to proposed methods to manage an integrated suite of services including client intake and service delivery in compliance with the service delivery goals;
- LAE will be able to mine these sessions for useful feedback that will precipitate changes within the process, enabling adjustments to the service procurement terms, as appropriate, before the issuance of the final RFP;

- These sessions will also enable LAE to provide early input on the design of the evaluation framework that will be used to monitor, measure, and report on the results of the transition and to also underscore the importance the Department is placing on client outcomes; and
  - Finally, these sessions will enable LAE to clarify the qualifications being sought of respondents to the RFP - one important threshold criterion might be having 2 - 5 years' experience in Nova Scotia delivering comparable programming.
- 4. Recommendation 4 – If this is the chosen implementation methodology, in addition to the focus on current service providers, wherever possible and practical, also provide bi-lateral briefings to the employer community, local industry organizations and economic development agencies, representatives of other departments, and training providers to socialize the concept and model for career services and to secure their feedback and ideas.**
- 5. Recommendation 5 – As part of the implementation of a new model of career services in Nova Scotia, LAE should establish and empower an internal transformation team to lead this initiative. The roles and responsibilities for such a team will ideally be formalized with a Project Charter, an executive sponsor and strong governance around the transformation process itself.**

Based on the review of other analogues that have advanced similar initiatives, process governance throughout the transformation process is critical to minimizing turbulence and optimizing results. Collaboration with service providers and partners will be important throughout this process. As part of the governance structure established in respect to the transformation process, LAE should establish a change management strategy and plan that outlines, in a stage-gated process, the evolution to the new model, including how professional development regarding standards for career practitioners is to be undertaken, the period of time involved and other factors. This will serve to reduce uncertainty and invite engagement. An important feature of the governance structure for the transformation initiative will be the inclusion of an enterprise risk management approach which identifies potential risks and develops appropriate mitigation/management activities while, at the same time, continuing to identify and address emerging risks.

- 6. Recommendation 6 – LAE articulate standards for career practitioners, as well as service standards as key benchmarks against which to develop the new model of career services.**

Ideally, these standards for practitioners and service standards will be developed collaboratively with service providers, leveraging the approach taken by leading practice analogues and those involved in certification, and sensitively applied so as to reduce any anxiety among current staff.

- 7. Recommendation 7 – Prior to the actual transformation process, LAE develop a branding and marketing plan for the transformed career services initiative.**

Branding and brand promise will be important as a declaration of the value-set inherent in the changes to be reflected in the transition to a new model of career and employment services in Nova Scotia. Understanding these values will assist the career service delivery infrastructure to acculturate more easily to the new model and will, over time, build brand equity that will underpin these services and how they are perceived by users.

Given the magnitude of the proposed transition to a new delivery model for career services, LAE may want to revisit the brand pyramid for career services including undertaking an assessment and re-thinking of:

- The brand foundation;
- The brand promise and the pillars on which that promise is based;
- Its brand values and brand essence to determine their conformance to future directions as being developed in the transformed service delivery system; and
- Its brand positioning.

This could, ultimately, lead to a redesigned brand pennant that will become the outward face to transformed career service delivery system, consistently applied to all points of service delivery throughout the province.

Marketing of the new services will also be critically important. In serving a broader clientele, it will be important that all Nova Scotians are aware that this is a resource they can utilize. It will also be important to reassure current users of these services and to telegraph to them that these services continue to be available to specific populations - women, visible minorities, persons with disabilities.

An important aspect of the marketing plan will focus on addressing the employer community and should clearly telegraph the value proposition that these services can provide to employers. Employer engagement will be a key element in the ultimate success of more effectively linking labour market supply and demand.

The marketing plan will also include information on how to access services including detailing any changes in delivery points, as well as the availability of the virtual channel.

**8. Recommendation 8 – LAE take a leadership role within government in the horizontal collaboration to optimize the crucial role of career services as the ‘spine’ that will support both economic development imperatives and labour market needs.**

For the new model of career services to be effective, intra and interdepartmental collaboration and coordination will be an important indicator of success and a precursor to the range of desired outcomes from this initiative.

On an intra-departmental basis, it will be important for LAE to work with the NSCC, with other programs within the Skills and Learning Branch, Sector Councils and the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency to coordinate the product and service refinements identified in this project. In this regard, the findings identified a number of key issues and challenges in training and labour market matters, in respect to the documented phenomenon of skills mismatch, challenges in respect to the timeliness and range of supports available to those in training, among other issues. LAE will need to ensure that the results associated with these initiatives, and, indeed, any new issues that are brought forward during the transformation process are addressed in a timely manner and the results shared with service delivery partners.

On an inter-departmental basis and inter-governmental basis, it will be important for LAE to work with the Provincial Departments of Education and Early Childhood Development,

Community Services and Economic and Rural Development and Tourism, as well as the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration to address the issues related to the mandate of these departments in regard to the career services transformation process. Partnership and alignment with the Department of Community Services is particularly crucial in the evolution to a new model of career services. The findings associated with access to career counselling and guidance in the P-12 system, as identified by stakeholders in this project, and the more recent report on education, are noteworthy and also bear further examination. And the ligature between a new career services initiative in supporting economic development, wealth creation and labour market outcomes is of crucial importance to economic developers.

The federal government has introduced changes to EI, the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, immigration and fiscal arrangements related to labour market programming. In transforming to a new model of career service delivery, LAE will need to carefully assess the potential impact of these changes, continue to monitor their implementation and coordinate efforts with relevant federal departments and agencies.

- 9. Recommendation 9 – The ‘findings’ section of this project provides a broad range of input and advice received from key stakeholders and through the benchmarking exercise throughout all phases of this project. It is recommended that senior officials of LAE review these findings and take them into consideration in designing the best path forward to address the transformation process.**

It is recognized that not all of these issues fall within the mandate, jurisdiction or authority of LAE. Notwithstanding, for those that do not, perhaps, LAE could serve in a brokerage role to engage others, as appropriate, on the nature of the issues and their importance to the career services transformation process, and to mobilize a response. Many of these issues appropriately fall within the foregoing role of LAE assuming responsibility for horizontal collaboration.

- 10. Recommendation 10 –In light of the strong support for the ‘virtual channel’ identified during the outreach and engagement process, that LAE include the virtual channel as part of service transformation taking into account the findings associated with this issue as identified in the separate study completed on virtual services.**

- 11. Recommendation 11 - LAE develop address the issue of how career services that are highly specialized, such as psycho-educational assessments which are in demand more sporadically will be delivered in the new model. Other jurisdictions include the cost of procuring these services locally within the contract with providers. During this project, some stakeholders suggested that these services could be delivered itinerantly with either LAE or one or another of the contracted regional providers assuming centralized responsibility for their availability, deployment and ongoing management. Regardless of the approach taken, these services are seen to be an important feature of the transformed career services delivery system;**

- 12. Recommendation 12– As part of the transition process, the transformation team should develop a system to accurately monitor the implementation of the transformation process. This will be important in addressing issues and challenges as they emerge and to LAE and their partners in formulating appropriate and timely response strategies to manage and**



**efficiently and effectively address the myriad complex issues likely to arise during the transition.**

- 13. Recommendation 13 – As a parallel initiative, LAE will need to develop a system for monitoring performance within a transformed career services system. Once transformed, performance metrics will be important in gauging the impact on clients. In addition, LAE should develop a logic model and an evaluation framework to be undertaken two – three years following implementation of the new career services system. This framework will ideally be focused on quantitative and qualitative results-based evidence and will help determine how the new career services delivery system is working.**

This will be essential for overall program accountability of the new career services delivery model. It will also help gauge how clients and service providers are acculturating to the new career service delivery model and will assist on-going program management and informed decision-making. Design of the evaluation framework may also precipitate changes to the LaMPSS system.

- 14. Recommendation 14 - LAE fully cost out the transformation process and understand, in advance, the financial implications of this transition and new approach. This is particularly important in light of new fiscal arrangements with the federal government in respect to labour market programming and other changes being implemented.**

A financial assessment of the proposed model was not within the scope of this assignment and, although the expectation is that the steady state operation of the new model should not be more expensive, it is possible that the transformation could trigger costs, even if episodic and limited only to the transformational effort. LAE needs to quantify the implications of this from a financial perspective. This analysis should generate results that will assist in setting system financial targets and goals and, therefore, inform design elements and the shaping and development of the RFP.

- 15. Recommendation 15 – In recognition of the appetite for opportunities to improve standards, professional credentials, and to participate in professional development/networking events so evident during this project, over time, LAE might wish to facilitate the development of an interactive practitioner portal that contributes to the standardization, horizontal collaboration, and professional development potential of those working in the new career services model to share lessons learned, approaches to problem solving and leading practices. This might be able to be developed in tandem with work being considered in opening up the virtual channel.**

## **Annex A – The Discussion Paper on which the Public Consultation was Based**

A new vision for  
**employment  
services**  
in Nova Scotia

Responding to change

*careers.novascotia.ca*

# At a glance

- Nova Scotia is on the edge of massive changes in opportunities and employment
- We are attracting more jobs and more employers than any time in our history
- We want you to be ready to take advantage of these opportunities

Now, more than ever, Nova Scotia needs an employment services system that can assist everyone—from young people entering the labour market to veteran workers looking for a change, to persons with disabilities, to newcomers and immigrants.

## Employment Services—our challenges

- The way we offer employment services now doesn't reach everyone who needs these services
- Young Nova Scotians making career plans and decisions need better information and help
- We need to train and up-skill underemployed and disadvantaged groups
- We also need to be able to help people whose jobs may be threatened before they lose them—not after they become unemployed

## We're looking at new ways to serve you better

- We want your ideas and input
- What can we be doing different or better?

This document provides information on our new approach to deliver employment services to Nova Scotians. Now we want to hear from you. Tell us how we can better help you get a job.

## The nature of work is changing...

- New technologies that have changed the way we work- often for the better
- More service jobs
- Fewer manufacturing jobs
- More competition from other countries
- The impact of global economic issues

This is the new reality. Our future depends on being able to compete and respond to changes in the global market. Nova Scotians need to be able to seize the new and emerging opportunities.

## ...and so is Nova Scotia's workforce

Nova Scotia has an aging workforce. By 2019, the working age population of 18 to 64 is forecast to shrink in Nova Scotia by 36,000.

- We have an out-migration of young Nova Scotians
- Not so long ago you could depend on working in the same job for a lifetime
- Now, most people can expect to work at many jobs during their lifetime- for many that is an exciting prospect

## **What does this all mean for Nova Scotians?**

- It means that Nova Scotians have to adapt to these changes
- It means that there is a world of new opportunities for youth making career decisions It may mean the need to retrain more often
- It may mean that the best job for you may be the one that you create for yourself- bringing out your inner entrepreneur
- Good career planning and decision-making needs good information-for those entering the workforce for the first time, for those changing careers and for those that need specialized services.

## **What do Nova Scotians need to take advantage of these opportunities?**

- Good information and good advice on career planning and career options
- Good training
- Sometimes retraining
- A flexible employment services system
- The tools and the toolkit to be able to manage these changes over their lifetime

## We need to prepare Nova Scotians

There are many new and exciting opportunities available, including:

- Shipbuilding contract
- Information technology
- Engineering
- The future of forestry and other valuable resource industries

*Jobs that will let young people stay home and build a good life here!*

### Where are we now?

In 2009, the federal government transferred the funding and responsibility of delivering employment services to the Province of Nova Scotia.

The provincial Department of Labour and Advanced Education created Employment Nova Scotia to oversee and provide funds to 55 organizations that offer employment services across the province. The employment services include career counselling, job searching, resume writing, and help with training options.

Right now, employment services in Nova Scotia focus mainly on people who are on or have recently been on Employment Insurance. As well, the 55 organizations do not provide the same employment services. In other words, a person in Yarmouth may receive a different level of support than a person in Antigonish.

## Where do we want to go?

### A new vision for employment services

Over the past year, Employment Nova Scotia has been working on a completely new vision and design for employment and career services in Nova Scotia.

The focus is on developing a model that will support the employment needs of all Nova Scotians

- So workers can thrive in a rapidly changing labour market, and
- So that workers can continue to look after their families

### The objectives are to:

- Make sure that available funding gets to where it is needed the most
- Maximize funds available for investment by increasing operational efficiency and reducing duplication
- Support the vision that every potential worker in the province is working to their fullest potential, and
- Put service standards in place to ensure accountability to those who need the services and to taxpayers

At a time when public money is scarce, these services must work well and provide value for taxpayers.

At the same time, Nova Scotians want employment and career services that provide:

- Better access
- Solid information on where the good jobs are and how to get them
- A consistent level of services across the province, and
- High quality and effective services that lead to a pay check and a good job



# Welcome to Careers Nova Scotia

The ultimate vision is for a province-wide network of employment centres branded Careers Nova Scotia centres.

This will mean that all Nova Scotians will have access to a similar level of services across the province, whether they are in a rural or urban area. Therefore, a person in Yarmouth will receive the same level of support and services as a person in Antigonish.

These centres will provide support for

- young people entering the labour market
- career planners
- job seekers, and
- employers throughout Nova Scotia

A primary focus of these centres will be to help Nova Scotians get good jobs linked to labour market demand today and prepare the workforce for tomorrow.

Flexible. Responsive. Proactive.

*Careers Nova Scotia* will be a single-window through which all Nova Scotians can get the career and employment services they need.

This system means that people will only need to tell their story once.

Careers Nova Scotia will also work with employers who are having trouble getting workers so that their current and future needs are met.

This network will be available in rural and urban areas.

In addition to the traditional service centre, we are also looking at other options to provide employment services. This includes:

- online services, and
- mobile services which includes a staff person travelling to where the service is needed

### **Next steps-three-part consultation**

The consultation strategy will consist of three parts:

- 1** **Establishing a temporary website** to receive feedback and input from a broad range of stakeholders, interested parties and citizens. You will be able to respond by e-mail, voicemail, online, or through written submissions.
  
- 2** **Targeted outreach to those that may be impacted** by the proposed changes. This includes:
  - o Current service providers and current/potential users of the employment and career services system
  - o Other government partners
  - o Community-based organizations
  - o Employers
  - o Industry associations
  - o Economic development organizations
  - o Organizations representing traditional users of career services including persons with disabilities, visible minorities, and women, among others
  
- 3** **Setting up focus groups and other avenues** to provide further feedback on the key findings identified during this review and consultation process.

The consultation ends March 1, 2013.



# Make your views known

We want to hear from many Nova Scotians including stakeholders, employers, citizens and interested parties.

To make it easy for you to respond and comment, we are providing multiple channels through which you can make your views known:

**Online at**  
[www.careers.novascotia.ca/transformation](http://www.careers.novascotia.ca/transformation)

**Through e-mail**  
[Newcareerservices@gov.ns.ca](mailto:Newcareerservices@gov.ns.ca)

**By leaving a message** at this toll free number  
1-855-260-6977

**By providing a written submission**  
to the following address:

A New Vision for Career Services in Nova Scotia –  
Project Team  
PO Box 23,  
Halifax, NS B3J  
2L4

## Key Issues for consideration

You are invited to offer your comments on any aspect of the proposed new career services model.

In particular, we want to know your thoughts...

- Do you agree that existing employment and career services need to change? What do you think are the key reasons for this change?
- In the context of a rapidly changing labour market in Nova Scotia, does it make sense to you to provide enhanced career services to more Nova Scotians? Why?
- What do you think of the overall planned vision of Careers Nova Scotia centres? Is it the right vision for Nova Scotia at this time? Do you have any suggestions for changes to the vision?
- What suggestions would you make regarding how the services of Careers Nova Scotia could be organized to provide fair and equal access to all Nova Scotians?
- What can we do to get Nova Scotians to take proactive steps to prepare for jobs of the future?
- In your view, what are the key features of modern career services for Nova Scotians? What services need to be provided?
- Are there risks that you can see in this transition process? If so, what are these and what are your suggestions for reducing this risk?
- What do you see as the benefits of this new approach to providing access to career services for more Nova Scotians?
- Are there leading practices that have been developed in Nova Scotia or elsewhere that you think should be incorporated into the new vision? If so, how would you incorporate these?



## Annex B – Summary of Key Findings Arising from the Literature Review and Benchmarking Exercise

A summary of key findings derived through the literature review and the benchmarking exercise includes the following:

- a. The appeal of service integration in the delivery of human and social services has never been stronger and consideration of the integration imperative is an area that is ubiquitous in the literature. In a global survey, KPMG in partnership with the University of Toronto's Mowat Centre, in the School of Public Policy and Governance, conducted a global survey of active integration schemes across 22 jurisdictions to examine the characteristics of current integration initiatives. This survey addresses the key drivers, types of integration, enablers and the conditions necessary for reforms to succeed. The study also identifies where the integration agenda is heading. Interestingly, that forward path aligns closely to leading practice features of career services delivery – a focus on clear client pathways, an outcomes orientation, inter-governmental integration, inter-sectoral integration and place-based integration<sup>14</sup>;
- b. Among the analogues reviewed, there is a theme of broadening the approach to career services - one that focuses on imparting knowledge to enable individuals to manage their careers over a lifetime through lifelong learning and by developing the capacity to be flexible and adaptable to the extent of being able to respond and acculturate to change as it evolves. The new career planning and management paradigm is viewed as a lifelong process;
- c. To maintain growth and competitiveness, far more attention needs to be paid to under-represented populations - youth, Aboriginals, women and persons with disabilities, 'third-age' workers, and minority linguistic and cultural populations. Within all these populations there are sub-populations who face multiple barriers, and require intensive services of longer duration. This is not only good social policy; it is also good economic policy. The literature also underscores the importance of cultural competency among career practitioners in appropriately addressing the needs of minority populations;
- d. Research identifies that Canada has one of the best LMI system in the world, but more attention needs to be paid to dissemination and knowledge transfer issues, particularly to youth. LMI needs to be tailored to meet the needs of end-users – those seeking employment. Public-private partnerships designed to co-ordinate the dissemination of this information through national portals have improved. Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and the virtual channel, already well-exercised by prospective immigrants, offers significant potential for broadening service delivery;
- e. Career guidance needs to be embedded in the school system using a learner-centred approach and a wider variety of role models and mentors. Career guidance is equally important for students following vocational/occupational streams, as well as academic streams. Throughout many OECD countries, the literature suggests that career guidance is marginalized, focused on academic students, and only at certain transition points, usually just prior to school leaving. The literature review and benchmarking exercise concludes that throughout all OECD countries, the role of guidance counselors in school is not a

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<sup>14</sup> [http://mowatcentre.ca/wp-content/uploads/publications/73\\_the\\_integration\\_imperative.pdf](http://mowatcentre.ca/wp-content/uploads/publications/73_the_integration_imperative.pdf)

protected or well-resourced role. Further, guidance counselors are often seen to identify more readily with academic-based career choices, at the expense of a wider range of options. Additionally, they are called upon to deal with personal and social issues, further diminishing the time available in the critically important guidance role. Leading practice models focus on ensuring all students access services and develop the skills to manage their learning throughout their lives, incorporating experiential learning linked to the labour market. This can be partially achieved through building career education into the curriculum. This is an area where collaboration with the Department of Education is required. There is a need to include programs that focus on a realistic linkage with occupational activities, and are more immersive, rather than stand alone, or ‘strands’ of career guidance within a personal development course;

- f. Within the literature, community based service delivery is seen as having both strengths and weaknesses. The ability to be flexible, close to the community, to better understand local labour market issues, and the ability to more intimately understand the end user and targeted groups is a significant asset to be leveraged. However, within the literature, these services are also seen as having challenges. Services may be fragmented, often underfunded, and with a high level of variability in respect to the level of professional preparation amongst the staff;
- g. The literature review underscores the fact that career services can be strengthened through the application of clear standards, including competency-based standards for both career practitioners and career counsellors, the designation of program standards and the utilization of differentiated, yet, well-defined staffing roles. Attention needs to be paid to quality management through monitoring, data collection, audit and defined operational requirements; and
- h. More formal partnerships with a variety of service providers and institutions at local levels, including labour, education providers and employers can help identify gaps and more quickly navigate and redirect resources for solutions. Governments have a strategic leadership role in animating and developing these strategic partnerships.

The jurisdictional review also identified several key issues that all countries examined continue to attempt to address in the areas of career development. These include:

- a. Career development has a key role in reducing friction in labour markets, by ensuring the maximum potential of all individuals, including those who are socially and economically excluded from the labour market;
- b. The research shows that women’s attachment to the labour force is the most sensitive to tradeoffs among other income security options, and is most sensitive to childcare costs and availability. Low income women need the most intensive and longest duration of employment services, to move from low income jobs to jobs that pay a good living wage. The literature review revealed that intensive and specialized services have been shown to have a good success rate with low-income women. These include *transition programs* designed to assist women to overcome educational, attitudinal and structural barriers to realize job aspirations; and acquire the skills to enter the labour force or job training. The literature review suggests that these programs were shown to be effective , and particularly effective for women with disabilities, aboriginal women, visible minorities, low income women and women entering the workforce following time at home raising children. Contemporary research also shows that young women have made significant

progress in post-secondary education, exceeding their male counterparts; however, they are still under-represented in the sciences, technology, and engineering and mathematics (STEM), thereby, creating a continuing occupational segregation. This also holds true for women in the trades;

- c. Persons with disabilities are under-represented in the workforce, and over-represented among the poor. Canada has one of the lower rates of persons in receipt of disability pensions in relation to other OECD countries. In part, this is because of strict gate-keeping; however, it comes at the cost of social exclusion. It is estimated that there may be as many as one in five persons with disabilities in Canada, with no benefits, no employment and almost no income.

Disability matters because many persons with disabilities wish to work on either a part time or full time basis if ensured the right level of support. Public spending has been more focused on passive payment of benefits, as opposed to active strategies designed to engage employers, invite accommodation and optimize supports to enable persons with disabilities to find success in the workplace.

The literature review also notes that an increasing share of new disability claims is for mental health reasons, accounting for a third of all new claims, a phenomenon that was reinforced in discussions with stakeholders during the consultation. This phenomenon is now more frequent among younger adults. Changes in the nature of work may be making it more difficult for some groups within this population to compete and succeed. Employer-friendly supports and incentives are needed to provide work environments that strengthen, rather than compromise, the mental health of workers.

The literature identifies a trend towards persons with disabilities wishing to have greater choice in how they ultimately access services, with some wanting to opt for utilizing mainstream services, perhaps, in an effort to offset the perception of stigma that historically has accompanied disability.

Beyond the imperative to provide more active measures to persons with disabilities to enable them to secure labour market attachment, the literature review underscores the importance of assisting all under-represented groups in entering the labour market – in fact, identifies this source of under-utilized and under-represented workers as a potential antidote to labour shortages.

- d. Throughout all OECD countries, youth have been hit the hardest by recession and subsequent labour market changes. Today's labor market was supposed to be seller's markets for generation Y – the so-called millennials. Since the recession of 2008, these predictions have not materialized. Depending on the province, youth employment has stagnated or increased. There is a profound incongruity between the optimistic projections for the millennials and the contemporary labour market reality. Historically, considerable research and effort has been focused on youth at high risk for poor labour marker attachment and the literature is replete with analysis of the results of these programs. However, there is now an emerging issue and growing attention to a population of youth called *Poorly Integrated New Entrants* (PINES). The OECD defines PINES as “young people who often have qualifications: diplomas and degrees who frequently go back and forth between temporary jobs, unemployment and/or inactivity. The designation of PINES

is a new term, introduced in the OECD 2010 publication, *“Off to a Good Start: Jobs for Youth.”* This research notes that PINES represent 30% of youth in transition in Europe and 21% in US (OECD, 2010). This group is worrisome because they are, in theory, prepared for labour market and should be able to contribute. Some of the documented barriers facing PINES include:

- Growth of knowledge jobs (requiring post-secondary education) versus entry-level jobs (those not requiring post-secondary education or highly refined skills). The number of youth with post-secondary education in Canada has driven up qualification standards in both sectors with the result that some post-secondary graduates are getting stuck in entry-level jobs and, at the same time displacing other youth who typically occupied these jobs;
  - Recessions, and particularly, the 2008 recession have the greatest impact on youth - the last in the door and the first out. Furthermore, youth tend not to receive the career and employment services that at-risk youth might access;
  - High tuition costs and student debt means they often have to struggle to earn while they learn;
  - There are diversity of complex barriers for youth, especially for rural and remote youth, Aboriginal and visible minority youth and youth with disabilities;
  - The absence of a consistent model of career services; no national youth school-to-work strategy; no income security for youth; and
  - Canadian youth are the most educated in the world, but often struggle to find work commensurate with their education. The literature speaks compellingly to the need to understand the skills that employers need and for employers to actively participate in career development.
- e. The OECD literature also notes an increasing concern for the participation of the older worker, the so-called third-age within the literature. Older workers experiencing either voluntary retirement or displacement have traditionally not been the focus of employment programs. They have to either turn to income supports or navigate their way to general employment services. However, older workers experience many barriers to finding new jobs or keeping existing ones. The OECD literature advocates for a three pronged approach to retaining older workers in a productive capacity:
- Invest in mid-career lifelong learning and training and improve the training investment by adapting training to address specific needs (i.e. short-course training and use of prior learning assessment and recognition [PLAR]);
  - Specific modules focused on areas of deficit or where skills need to be buttressed; and
  - Promoting later retirement to encourage greater investment in training of older workers.

As has been noted earlier in this report, there is a strong policy shift toward targeting and incentivizing labour market aspirants to follow key occupational areas for which there is demonstrable labour market demand – forging a stronger link between labour market supply and demand. This is also leading to innovations in training, including ‘just-in-time’ training to respond

to immediate employer-identified occupational training needs, as well as the refinement of on-the-job training and apprenticeship programs. These measures clearly require the active engagement of employers.

To illustrate, in his monograph *“Lessons for a New Context – Workforce Development in an Era of Economic Challenge”*, Robert Giloth, perhaps sums up the imperative of employer engagement best in the following observation:

*“Workforce Development is a necessary component .....if low-skilled and low-income workers are to fully benefit from new employment opportunities. The phrase workforce development, however, implies more than employment training in the narrow sense; it means substantial employer engagement, deep community connections, career advancement, human service supports, industry-driven training and the connective tissue of networks. Building on the lessons learned from past efforts, the new workforce paradigm contains an array of job strategies, including sector and place-based employment strategies, adult education and short and long-term training programs that are customized to different employer and job seeker groups.”<sup>15</sup>*

In its 2012 report and strategy document, *Working as One: A workforce Development Strategy for Toronto*, the focus is on the concrete ways the City of Toronto is working with and for employers and job-seekers to deliver services that achieve results for both.

*Working as One* identifies three critical areas where further progress is essential to better serve employers and job seekers, to connect demand and supply and to build an integrated approach to workforce development. These are:

1. Integrated approaches to planning are key to coordinated actions and matching strategies to needs;
2. Coordinating and simplifying system access is essential given the network of services and information employers and job-seekers need;
3. Customizing services is about moving beyond “one size fits all” approaches that are rarely effective when working either with employers or job-seekers.<sup>16</sup>

Focusing on employer engagement and linking labour market supply and demand needs to be a key feature of the reform of career services delivery in Nova Scotia.

The literature review also resulted in other important suggestions in respect to the organization of a responsive career services delivery system. These include:

- The need to move from an approach that emphasizes immediate occupational assistance to one designed to empower a person to take charge and manage their careers and skill development requirements over a lifetime. The literature emphasizes the importance of facilitating and enabling the individual to identify lifelong learning and career management goals and recognizes that having this skill is indispensable to thriving in the contemporary, rapidly evolving labour market;

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<sup>15</sup> [http://www.frbsf.org/community-development/files/Giloth\\_Robert.pdf](http://www.frbsf.org/community-development/files/Giloth_Robert.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> [http://www.frbsf.org/community-development/files/Giloth\\_Robert.pdf](http://www.frbsf.org/community-development/files/Giloth_Robert.pdf)



- At the program delivery level, a key imperative throughout the jurisdictions reviewed is the importance of identifying cost effective methods to expand career services to accommodate lifelong access. The key focus among leading practice models is on finding the right mix of in-person services, individual or group services coupled with the use of ICT and web-based products and channels (virtual access). There is also a focus on outreach and itinerant services. Taken together, these are approaches that facilitate a greater measure of choice and access and enable expansion to a broader base of the population in a cost-effective manner;
- Incorporation of the concept of considering modern career services along a continuum with specific strategies deployed to meet the unique requirements of the users along that continuum, often punctuated with key milestone events within the lifelong career path – i.e. labour market entry as a youth, at career transition points, and for older workers. This continuum focuses on the importance of career services ideally beginning at the school level, through to readily available/accessible career services throughout the life cycle. Typically, these latter services are community based career services, or services provided on an itinerant and/or outreach basis, or through the virtual channel. Multiple pathways and access to services at key transition points are critical to effective career decision making;

The literature review concludes that the case for having a coherent set of policies, programs and practices to achieve a quick return to work by the majority of the unemployed and a high quality set of employment services for disadvantaged workers is very strong. Moreover, the overriding focus across all jurisdictions reviewed is on providing all labour market participants, the tools and skills to negotiate an ever changing labour market over a lifetime.