

# Accountability Report

2016–2017

Department of Labour and Advanced Education  
July 2017

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# Labour & Advanced Education's 2016-17 Accountability Report

## 1. Accountability Statement

The accountability report of the Department of Labour and Advanced Education for the year ended March 31, 2017 is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the Department of Labour and Advanced Education Business Plan for the fiscal year just ended. The reporting of the department's outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments and opinions by Department of Labour and Advanced Education's management.

We acknowledge that this accountability report is the responsibility of the Department of Labour and Advanced Education management. The report is, to the extent possible, a complete and accurate representation of outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in the department's 2016-17 Business Plan.

Original signed by:

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Hon. Labi Kousoulis  
Minister

Original signed by:

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Duff Montgomerie  
Deputy Minister

## 2. Message from the Minister and Deputy Minister

We are pleased to share with Nova Scotians the activities and accomplishments of the Department of Labour and Advanced Education for 2016-17.

Through the efforts of management and staff across the department and partners across the province, we celebrated many accomplishments over the past year. Each of these accomplishments has helped to build a more skilled, competitive and innovative workforce and fair, safe, productive and inclusive places to work and learn.

- We worked to do things differently by advancing innovation in Nova Scotia. The Innovation Team, which serves as a collaborative partnership between government and post-secondary institutions, established five working teams to identify new and emerging opportunities. Over \$2.6 million has been allocated to projects under these working committees. An additional \$1.8 million in funding was provided by LAE to support investments that will create community innovation spaces and enable the development of a regional innovation network. We also supported seven sandboxes to encourage collaboration in taking concepts from ideation to execution.
- We have strengthened the accountability of our post-secondary system through new Memoranda of Understandings, increased institutional reporting from outcome agreements, standard financial reporting, Innovation Team Working Committees, the Excellence and Innovation Fund, the Strategic Investment Fund and special funding agreements.
- We launched Nova Scotia Works, the province's new employment services system. The new system will provide improved front line services and supports to help Nova Scotian youth and job seekers better understand, prepare for, and fill the needs of the province's job market. It will also help businesses recruit, manage and develop the talent they need to be more productive here at home and around the world.
- We continued our efforts to build a culture of safety within our own department, throughout the public service, and in workplaces across the province. This year, we focused much of our efforts on workplace mental health, and on injury prevention in the health care sector. We also introduced new authorities to address challenges presented by high-risk, repeat violators.
- We further improved the delivery of labour services, concluding an average of 80% of cases within six months, along with new supports for self-represented parties in Labour Board matters. We have achieved an average 95% success rate for conciliation matters over the past 10 years. And, we are building awareness of minimum labour standards among vulnerable groups.
- We continued to work with businesses and employers to promote their participation in work experience programs, like Co-operative Education and Graduate to Opportunity. We enhanced the Connector program and Graduate to Opportunity to expand opportunities here in the province for new graduates and those under-represented in our labour market.

Eleven projects received one-time funding from LAE to increase experiential learning opportunities for post-secondary students.

- The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency is working with provinces and territories to align apprenticeship technical training to support consistency in training and higher completion rates for apprentices and employers who work across Canada. This year, the Agency amended the general regulations and 43 trade regulations to align programming with national and regional harmonization recommendations.
- And, the department is working across government to advance the Province's focus on youth by leading the development of the Youth Employment Action Plan, working closely with the Premier's Delivery Unit, and co-leading the implementation of the Transition Task Force recommendations to help students successfully transition into the workforce.

We look forward to working with our many partners in the year ahead as we continue to build a safer, more prosperous and vibrant province for all Nova Scotians.

Original signed by:

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Hon. Labi Kousoulis  
Minister

Original signed by:

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Duff Montgomerie  
Deputy Minister

### 3. Financial Results

	2016-17 Estimate	2016-17 Actuals	2016-17 Variance
Program & Service Area	(\$thousands)	(\$thousands)	(\$thousands)
<b>Department Expenses:</b>			
Administration	722	744	22
Corporate Policy and Services	3,942	4,468	526
Safety	14,975	13,807	(1,168)
Labour Services	7,886	7,160	(726)
Skills and Learning	129,597	140,012	10,415
NS Apprenticeship Agency	10,901	12,971	2,070
Higher Education	54,051	60,276	6,225
School Cap Amortization	4,920	4,920	-
Community College Grants	137,277	137,277	-
<b>Total Departmental Expenses Labour &amp; Advanced Education</b>	<b>364,271</b>	<b>381,635</b>	<b>17,364</b>
<b>Total Departmental Expenses Assistance to Universities</b>	<b>380,605</b>	<b>441,626</b>	<b>61,021</b>
<b>Total: Departmental Expenses</b>	<b>744,876</b>	<b>823,261</b>	<b>78,385</b>
Ordinary Revenues	7,774	11,286	3,512
Fees and Other Charges	1,599	1,465	(134)
Ordinary Recoveries	125,682	138,278	12,596
<b>Total Revenue, Fees and Recoveries Labour &amp; Advanced Education</b>	<b>135,055</b>	<b>151,029</b>	<b>15,974</b>
Ordinary Recoveries	9,500	26,350	16,850
<b>Total Revenue, Fees and Recoveries Assistance to Universities</b>	<b>9,500</b>	<b>26,350</b>	<b>16,850</b>
<b>Total: Revenue, Fees and Recoveries</b>	<b>144,555</b>	<b>177,379</b>	<b>32,824</b>
TCA Purchase Requirements	1,100	5,959	4,859
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	264.6	252.3	(12.3)

#### Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:

The Department of Labour and Advanced Education expenses were \$17.4 million or 4.8% higher than estimate primarily due to a \$10.0 million investment in the Center for Employment Innovation, \$7.0 million related to federally funded Labour Market Programs, \$2.7 million for participation in the federal Post-Secondary Institutions Strategic Infrastructure Fund (SIF) for the Centre for Ocean Venture Entrepreneurship (COVE) project, and \$2.5 million for the launch of the provincial cost-shared Apprenticeship Management System, fully recoverable from other jurisdictions. These

increases were partially offset by savings of \$2.6 million due to lower than anticipated uptake on the Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive program and \$2.2 million in other operational and vacancy savings.

Assistance to universities expenses were \$61.0 million or 16.0% higher than estimate primarily due to a \$25.0 million investment in the Nova Scotia Research Trust, a \$19.7 million contribution towards specified university capital projects approved as part of SIF of which \$16.6 million was recoverable from the federal government, a \$4.5 million investment in the Ocean Frontier Institute led by Dalhousie University, a \$4.0 million investment in St. Francis Xavier Mulroney Institute, \$4.3 million in various other investments to support post-secondary research and innovation infrastructure, and a \$3.5 million increase in university operating grant funding.

#### **Revenue, Fees and Recoveries Variance Explanation:**

The Department of Labour and Advanced Education ordinary revenue, fees and recoveries were \$16.0 million or 11.8% higher than estimate primarily due to increased recoverable spending of \$7.0 million for federal Labour Market Programs, \$3.5 million TCA revenue received from the Federal Government for NSCC projects as part of SIF, \$2.7 million spending on the COVE through the SIF, \$2.5 million investment in a provincially cost-shared Labour Apprenticeship Management IT system, and \$1.1 million in interest income collected from students.

Assistance to University recoveries were \$16.8 million or 177.4% higher than estimate primarily due to funding received from the Federal Government for capital university projects approved as part of SIF.

#### **TCA Purchase Requirements Variance Explanation:**

TCA was over budget by \$4.9 million primarily due the participation in the Federal SIF program for the Nova Scotia Community College.

#### **Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation**

The 12.3 FTE variance is due to staff turnover.

## **4. Measuring Performance**

### **4.1 Advancing Government's Priorities**

#### **4.1.1 People:** *Nova Scotia's population is growing, productive and thriving.*

- Enhance opportunities for workforce participation of youth, older workers and marginalized communities; and improve communities and social well-being.

#### **LAE's Strategic Actions:**

##### **Recruit and retain international and interprovincial students**

- The department is encouraging post-secondary recruitment and retention through programs such as Study and Stay. Over 120 applications have been received for this program which aims to recruit and support 50 international students from China, India and the Philippines to study at NSCC or a Nova Scotia university in September 2017.

- The Stay in Nova Scotia Program provides employment and labour market support to 50 international students in their final year of post-secondary study from across the province. The objective of this program is to support international students to live, work and build meaningful professional connections in Nova Scotia.
- We are also working with EduNova to respond to regional opportunities for the Atlantic Growth Strategy. EduNova helps market Nova Scotia as a study destination with financial support from LAE and is managing projects as well as other international recruitment activities.
- The department is participating in a study on the economic impact of international students in Atlantic Canada through the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training.

### **Recognize prior learning and international qualification**

- The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) program sponsored projects in a variety of sectors including, engineering, home building, and trucking and supported the review of the RPL process for credit on entry at two post-secondary institutions. It assisted with the development of a competency-based essential skills framework to support learners without a high school diploma. It further supported a RPL Symposium to build stakeholders' understanding of RPL tools and best practices.
- The Fair Registration Practices Act Review Officer has been assessing the registration practices of regulatory bodies to ensure their registration practices are transparent, impartial, objective and procedurally fair as well as providing support to build an understanding of best practices and available tools.

### **Help Nova Scotians meet their full employment potential**

- In 2016, the department launched its new employment services system, Nova Scotia Works. The new system will strengthen Nova Scotia's workforce by providing better front-line services and support for youth, job seekers and employers. It will also result in more consistent service offerings across the province.
- The Skills and Learning Branch continues to offer a suite of programs that help unemployed Nova Scotians to prepare for and secure work with skills training, employment assistance, self-employment services and work experience opportunities.
- The Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive and the Workplace Education Initiative supported employer and employee participation in workplace training.

### **Connect youth, apprentices, and post-secondary graduates with employment opportunities**

- Through the Post-Secondary Education Sandbox Program, the department continues to grow a culture of entrepreneurship in the post-secondary education sector. Post-secondary institutions work with business and industry to facilitate the development of new entrepreneurship and experiential learning programs that fill any gaps identified by industry/community. In 2016-17, the seven sandboxes worked together to develop an intensive Innovation Bootcamp and a Speaker Series to advance the culture of entrepreneurship. An eighth ocean-themed sandbox led by Dalhousie University has also been established. These initiatives support international students and students from under-represented groups and connect students with entrepreneurs and other employers (e.g. social enterprises), in both urban and rural areas.



- Eleven projects in progress in 2017 are engaging experiential learning students at post-secondary education institutions across Nova Scotia to expand experiential learning opportunities. Events have also been held to promote awareness of experiential learning to create more opportunities for students.
- The Graduate to Opportunity Program continues to grow. As of March 2017, the program had received more than 300 applications and approved more than 280 positions.
- In early 2017, Government announced \$100,000 to expand the Connector Program, which will be delivered by the province's Western Regional Enterprise Network. More young people and newcomers to Nova Scotia will have the opportunity to connect with business and community leaders in Western Nova Scotia. The Connector Program is a networking initiative that helps local businesses and organizations connect with new graduates, immigrants, and international students who are interested in starting and growing their career in Nova Scotia. The program pairs individuals with local employers, civil servants and community leaders. Since 2009, the Halifax Partnership's Connector Program has helped more than 800 people secure full-time jobs in the Halifax area.
- In 2016, the Student Summer Skills Incentive supported summer jobs for 780 students with wage subsidies to non-profit organizations throughout the province, which enabled them to provide post-secondary students with career-related summer jobs.
- The department will continue to Co-Chair the Transition Task Force with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and has established project teams to advance the recommendations provided in the report, *From School to Success: Clearing a Path*. We are also leading horizontal government collaboration on attraction, participation and retention of youth in our workforce.
- The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency actively supports Nova Scotia Youth, ages 16-19, to explore and pursue opportunities in the skilled trades. Each year, school boards across the province receive annual WorkIT grants to support hands-on learning activities in the skilled trades for their students. In addition, the Agency's youth outreach coordinator travels to schools across the province to meet with school personnel and classrooms to share the benefits of a trades education. This year, the Agency provided funding to the Tourism Human Resources Sector Council to launch a new summer youth apprenticeship program in the culinary arts. Existing programs - Building Futures for Youth and TestDrive - increased their engagement with students and employers to provide summer apprenticeship placements in the Construction and Motive Power sectors. Students in these three programs receive high school co-op credits as well as practical hours towards an apprenticeship should they register as apprentices with the Agency.

#### **Enhance programs and opportunities for under-represented groups and persons with disabilities**

- The 2015-19 Memorandum of Understanding between the Province of Nova Scotia and Nova Scotia Universities states that "high quality, relevant learning opportunities in higher education should be accessible to qualified Nova Scotians." This includes working towards increasing access and affordability for under-represented groups, identifying effective measures to enhance affordability and increase access to university for low-income students, and convening a working group to explore opportunities to create a common data collection process to track

student who identify as being a member of a group, some of which are considered under-represented.

- The Universities and Colleges Division also supports several committees that are working towards the goal of enhancing programs and opportunities for under-represented groups in Nova Scotia. This includes work in the following areas: Francophone Medicine, African Nova Scotians in Health Programs, and Inter-Departmental Aboriginal Education.
- In early 2017, government announced it was enhancing the Graduate to Opportunity program to encourage more businesses to hire women, people with disabilities and other diverse graduates. Employers will now receive an additional 10% subsidy in the first year for diverse and international hires. Employers who hire a female graduate in a non-traditional occupation, a graduate who self-identifies as a person with a disability, a racially visible person, or an Aboriginal person, or an international graduate, are eligible to receive a 35% first-year subsidy.
- The START program continues to assist unemployed individuals attach to the labour market and has an increased focus on encouraging skill development and employment opportunities for under-represented groups, while assisting employers in accessing and training the workforce they need. Incentives are being negotiated with employers based on several factors including client skill levels, needs and barriers, representation in the workforce, the location of the employer, the sector the job supports, the situation in the local labour market, and the need of the employer.
- The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency is implementing recommendations from the Diversity and Inclusion Framework and Action Plan to promote and increase diversity in the apprenticeship system and ensure appropriate supports for all Nova Scotians who want to participate in the system. A Corporate Strategist/Chief Diversity Officer has been hired to coordinate, ensure the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the framework. Pilots have been funded with East Preston Empowerment Academy, Immigrant Settlement Association of Nova Scotia, and Women Unlimited to attract and support diverse apprentices. A conference was held this year with Aboriginal organizations to generate greater awareness of the apprenticeship system. A women-in-trades symposium was held to identify supports to improve workplace conditions for female apprentices and experience success in the system. Diversity training has been held with Agency staff to develop cultural competence and identify their role in the Framework.
- Through the One Journey program, we will continue to enhance support, skill development, and employment opportunities for under-represented groups. One Journey is a partnership between the department, industry and community. This program provides skill development and employment opportunities to unemployed or underemployed Nova Scotians where there is an identified industry labour shortage.

Supporting Measures: People

MEASURE	BASE YEAR DATA (2015-16)	2016-17 YEAR DATA		
	Unless otherwise indicated	Status Update	Progress Check	2017-18 Target
Number of Nova Scotia employers and employees participating in workforce development and training through the Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive, and the Workplace Education Initiative	1700 employers 8000 employees (2014-15)	1790 employers 8192 employees  408 Employers (WIPSI) 4561 employees (WIPSI) + 1382 Employers (WEI) 3631 Employees (WEI)	Met expectations	1700 employers 8000 employees
Increased participation of youth, older workers, new immigrants and marginalized communities in employment programs	35.9% Youth (47.5% for 18 to 34) 30.7% Diversity Groups	Youth 34.5% (18 to 30) (46.5% if 18 to 34) Diversity Groups 30%	Stable, continue to have large participation of youth and diverse populations	Youth 36% Diversity Groups 30%
Number of recent post-secondary graduates placed in full-time roles with Nova Scotia employers through the Graduate to Opportunity (GTO) Program	120 new placements	175 new placements	Increasing demand and number of placements	250
Number of youth and immigrant matches with Nova Scotia employers through the Connector Program	323 Connectees 109 Employed (2014-15 data)	444 Connectees 151 Employed	Saw a significant increase over last year	600 Connectees 200 employed
Careers Nova Scotia cost for service delivery (administration and infrastructure)	48%	27%	Stayed within target range	15% to 30%

MEASURE	BASE YEAR DATA (2015-16)	2016-17 YEAR DATA		
	Unless otherwise indicated	Status Update	Progress Check	2017-18 Target
Number of new (active) employers in the apprenticeship system	141	252	Exceeded expectations	Maintain
Percent of apprentices who represent diverse populations	9.44%	10.41%	Slight increases in all diverse populations and more women choosing to be apprentices in non-traditional trades	10%
Number of students participating in Sandbox programming/events	657 (2014/15)	3,874 (2015/16) PSE and High School students	Exceeded expectations	N/A- Sandboxes continue to be active in student outreach and activities
Number of recruited and engaged mentors for Sandbox students	49 (2014/15)	93 (2015/16) Data not yet available for 2016-17	Sandboxes have developed mentor connections with community and industry partners to support sandbox students	N/A- Sandboxes to continue to make mentor connections
Turnaround time for funding for disability services provided to post-secondary students via technology	Ranging from 3 weeks to 3 months (2014/15)	Ranging from 2 days to 2 weeks	Implemented an on-line disability grant application and school portal to automate approval of grants	Maintain

**4.1.2 Innovation:** *Nova Scotia has a strong and globally competitive economy and a sustainable, modern government.*

- Create the climate for private sector and social enterprise economic growth to support OneNS economic goals and innovate and achieve sustainable delivery of public services.

LAE's Strategic Actions:

#### **Foster innovation through research and development (R&D)**

- A key recommendation of the report, *New and Better Ways, A Field Guide for Nova Scotia's Innovation Ecosystem*, is to establish Research Nova Scotia (RNS). In 2016-17, two working committees have been established to advance this work – a RNS Working Committee and a RNS Advisory Committee. The goal is to transition the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation (NSHRF) and the Offshore Energy Research Association (OERA) to RNS in 2017. RNS will foster collaboration and contribute to improved social and economic outcomes for Nova Scotians focusing on areas aligned with NS priorities, such as: ocean science and technology, information and communications technology, clean technology, financial services, life sciences, aerospace and defense, health and wellness, resource sectors and social innovation.
- The Research Nova Scotia Trust (\$25M) was established and \$2M was provided to NSRIT with work on-going to establish the Research Opportunity Fund. Funding for universities and the NSCC through the Tri-Council Agencies and the number of research grants awarded to universities and NSCC through the agencies is anticipated to improve since the establishment of Research Nova Scotia. The number of Graduate Scholarships awarded for post-secondary students that align with R&D goals and provincial priority industry sectors exceeded expectations and the program was given full program funding a year earlier than anticipated.

#### **Harmonization with the Atlantic Provinces**

- In 2016-17, the Occupational Health and Safety Division worked with its Atlantic regional counterparts to develop a work plan approved by the Council of Atlantic Premiers to implement mutual recognition for several types of safety equipment and safety training. Similarly, the Technical Safety Division and its counterparts developed an initiative approved by the Council of Atlantic Premiers to introduce regionally-recognized licensing for several regulated trades.
- The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency is working with provinces and territories to align apprenticeship technical training to support consistency in training and higher completion rates for apprentices and employers who work across Canada. In the fall of 2016, the Agency amended the general regulations and 43 trade regulations to align programming with national and regional harmonization recommendations. In the Atlantic Region, the development of common processes, curriculum standards, apprentice logbooks and exam banks for 10 trades is ongoing.

Supporting Measures: Innovation

MEASURE	BASE YEAR DATA (2015-16)	2016-17 YEAR DATA		
		Status Update	Progress Check	2017-18 Target (if applicable)
Funding for universities and the NSCC through the Tri-Council Agencies and the number of research grants awarded to universities and NSCC through the agencies	Benchmark	CIHR: \$9,043,592 (61 projects) NSERC: \$32,260,930 (770 projects) SSRHC: \$11,548,103 (80 projects) <u>Total funding for 2015-16</u> <u>\$52,852,625</u>	Supports under Research Nova Scotia are anticipated to improve success rates	N/A
Number of Graduate Scholarships awarded for post-secondary students that align with R&D goals and provincial priority industry sectors	120 (2014/15)	310	Exceeded expectations and it was decided to increase to full program funding one year earlier than anticipated	N/A

#### **4.1.3 Education:** *Skilled Nova Scotians drive a knowledge and innovation economy.*

- Increase workforce participation and entrepreneurship by improving early childhood and P-12 education and continually improving opportunities for skills development through post-secondary education and apprenticeship.

#### LAE's Strategic Actions:

##### **Explore opportunities for Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning Renewal**

- The department has eliminated the fee for adult learners to achieve their GED through the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning.
- We will continue to advance the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning Renewal to better understand the challenges and opportunities adult learners face, identify gaps in the current system and develop a strategic roadmap that outlines changes required to address the existing gaps. The Adult Education team is working with consultants and stakeholders to gain a better understanding of the current state of the adult education system in Nova Scotia and across Canada.

##### **Encourage employer participation in co-operative education**

- The number of post-secondary students and Nova Scotia employers participating in co-op work placements through the Strategic Cooperative Education Incentive (SCEI) met expectations and the budget was fully committed. In 2016, the SCEI program supported work placements for 512 students at 342 organizations over the three terms.

##### **Promote sustainable universities**

- Nova Scotia worked with its post-secondary institutions to develop Outcome Agreements in 2016-17. The Outcome Agreements serve as a component of the funding accountability relationship between universities and government. One percent of the university operating grant in fiscal 2018-19 will be conditional upon the universities reporting and delivering on the outcomes and related performance measures. These agreements respond to the *Universities Accountability and Sustainability Act*, which allows the Minister to enter outcome agreements with universities to promote the long-term sustainability of the institution and advance social and economic priorities of the province. The agreements also respond to the recent Auditor General's report, which recommended that LAE "identify specific outcomes, including timeframes and reporting processes, in future agreements with universities."

##### **Promote apprenticeship as a viable post-secondary option**

- The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency continues to promote apprenticeship as a viable post-secondary option by actively with Early Education and Childhood Development and provincial school boards to reach approximately 6,000 students per year through school presentations, schools programs, summer programs, actively supporting Skills Nova Scotia, and through WorkIt grants for school boards to take part in career exploration in the trades. The ground work is being laid for expanded NSAA Youth Apprenticeship Programs such as Serve It Up, Test Drive, and Building Futures for Youth.

Supporting Measures: Education

MEASURE	BASE YEAR DATA (2015-16)	2016-17 YEAR DATA		
		Status Update	Progress Check	2017-18 Target (if applicable)
Number of post-secondary students and Nova Scotia employers participating in co-op work placements through the Strategic Cooperative Education Incentive	560 Students 360 Employers	512 student placements 342 employers	Met expectations and budget is fully committed	560 Students 360 Employers
Number of learners that achieved their high school diploma through the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning	541 (2014/15)	442 Graduating Adult Learners in 2015/16 (Latest data available)	Met expectations, GED for free implementation should increase numbers in 2016/17	550



## 4.2 Advancing Departmental Core Responsibilities

### Key Activities:

#### **Recognition of Prior Learning and International Qualification Recognition**

- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) assessment tools are useful in many contexts and they have been used to assist newcomers to Nova Scotia have their skills assessed in their field of practice. There are several different activities that can address those identified gaps including participating in bridging programs. This year the International Qualification Recognition (IQR) program sponsored bridging programs for individuals seeking to gain access to the financial services field (Chartered Personal Accountant-CPA), nursing, pharmacy, and the dental professions. These bridging programs supported 343 individuals as they worked towards obtaining their license to practice in Nova Scotia. Through the support of the IQR program internationally educated nurses now have access to occupation specific language assessment here in Nova Scotia.
- Multi-Stakeholder Work Groups, a nationally recognized model to support international qualification recognition, have been created for 13 occupations to help identify and remove systemic barriers to licensure for newcomers. Comprised of regulatory bodies, educational institutions, employers, immigrant settlement associations and government, the process recognizes that each group has a role to play to remove systemic barriers and help make the best use of the skills of internationally educated newcomers.

#### **Steward Federal-Provincial Labour Market Agreements**

- The department manages two Federal–Provincial/Territorial labour market transfer agreements aimed at addressing Nova Scotia’s labour market opportunities, challenges and the building of a skilled, adaptable and inclusive workforce. The agreements include: the Labour Market Development Agreement and Canada Job Fund Agreement. LAE will continue to administer and improve the delivery of programs and services under these devolved agreements to achieve shared federal-provincial labour market outcomes and to ensure that the resources are efficiently and effectively deployed. Over the past year, the province has engaged stakeholders and has been working with the federal government and other provinces and territories to shape a new generation of labour market transfer agreements that are client-centred and outcomes-focused.

#### **Support employers to access and build a skilled and adaptable workforce**

- Employer Engagement Specialists are now in place in Nova Scotia Works Employment Centres. This new team will work to help employers understand workforce requirements, find qualified employees and to further explore relevant employment programs and services.
- The Start Program continued to partner with hundreds of employers to help them fill positions with qualified unemployed workers.
- The One Journey program was used to respond to industry skill shortages through the delivery of essential skills and occupation specific training to unemployed Nova Scotians.
- Business Workforce Consultants, hired over the past year, continue to expand the reach of strategic workforce support to businesses.

- The Workplace Initiatives Division enables employers to be more competitive through the Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive, Workplace Education Initiative and various online HR tools.

### **Assure quality post-secondary programming**

- The 2015-19 Memorandum of Understanding between the Province of Nova Scotia and Nova Scotia universities recognizes the importance of measuring educational quality and universities agree to support the following measures: 1) The universities will utilize a Program Quality Assurance Key Performance Indicator (KPI), which consists of four metrics: statement of approval of programs at the institution; first cycle review; ongoing review with external reviewers; and institutional responsiveness to review recommendations and 2) the universities will utilize three Student Experience KPIs: student satisfaction with educational experience; student experience post-graduation; and student progress within the Nova Scotia post-secondary education system.
- In order to ensure that students have access to high-quality post-secondary programs, LAE has conducted reviews of specific programs offered through Nova Scotia's universities. We will continue to partner with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development on a review of the Education programs offered at five universities (Acadia, CBU, MSVU, StFXU and USA) to develop recommendations for curriculum improvements and to strengthen the teacher education system in the province.
- As a result of the review of the nursing programs at the three nursing schools (Dal, StFXU and CBU) a new common curriculum was implemented in the 2016-17 academic year. In addition, one key goal is to strengthen precepting and mentorship relationships between professional Registered Nurses, in practice settings, with the students they teach.
- The implementation of the recommendations from the review of the engineering program at Dalhousie and the affiliate schools providing the first two years of engineering education (Acadia, SMU, StFXU, and CBU) is underway as well as the recommendations from the review of the undergraduate nutrition programs at Acadia, MSVU and StFXU.

### **Promote workplace health and safety cultural changes**

- Moving forward from the achievements under the 2013-17 Workplace Safety Strategy, LAE will continue to work with Workers' Compensation Board in a collaborative manner to ensure a productive partnership.
- The department collaborated on the development of a Workplace Safety Action Plan for the health and community services sectors with other government departments/agencies and leading health sector organizations.
- In 2016-17, the department more than doubled the number of targeted safety inspections, from 615 to 1262.
- A Training Safety Practices and Oversight program is being developed to enhance and oversee student safety in pre-employment programs within the private career college sector.
- Specialized LAE staff resources have been increased to support compliance with safe work practices at the recently-opened Donkin mine and other mining industry operations.
- The department worked with the Workers' Compensation Board and other partners to identify resources and supports to address workplace mental health issues. PTSD is recognized as a

hazard to which emergency responders may be particularly exposed. Together with Workers' Compensation Board and the Tema Center Memorial Trust, the department hosted Nova Scotia's first Workplace Mental Health and PTSD Conference in the fall of 2016.

### **Enhance Occupational Health and Safety legislation and regulations**

- May 2016 amendments to the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (in force June 2017) introduced new powers to address challenges presented by high-risk, repeat violators. Related policy and decision-making criteria were developed in consultation with a working group of external stakeholders.
- Working with Atlantic regional counterparts, the department developed initiatives to establish mutual recognition for several types of safety equipment and safety training, and to pursue harmonization of licensing for several trades subject to technical safety regulation. The department also continues to participate actively in a range of initiatives to pursue harmonization, mutual recognition and cooperative work at the national level in the field of occupational health and safety.

### **Increase awareness and accessibility of information**

- The Labour Services Branch is implementing an awareness framework with a focus on temporary foreign workers, new immigrants, and youth, ensuring accessibility of information and awareness around minimum labour standards. The branch also exceeded expectations by conducting a total of 110 awareness and/or audit sessions with employers (73 for Labour Standards and 37 for Conciliation and Mediation Services).
- The Student Assistance Division continues to provide outreach to secondary students to build awareness of available options to finance post-secondary study. In 2016-17, 100% of all secondary schools in Nova Scotia that were willing to host Student Assistance were visited at least once.

### **Enhance accountability through measurement**

- The Safety Branch implemented system updates including the AMANDA Mobile Transition and AMANDA Call Tracking projects, and improvements to Technical Safety data systems. Work is continuing with the development of metrics to enhance evaluation of safety outcomes.
- The Higher Education Branch has strengthened accountability through increased post-secondary education institutional reporting from outcome agreements, standard financial reporting, Innovation Team Working Committees, the Excellence and Innovation Fund, the Strategic Investment Fund and special funding agreements.
- The Skills and Learning Branch continued its work in building an evaluation culture. This included evaluation training, evaluation framework and logic model development and measurement of outcomes. The Workplace Education Initiative and the Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive underwent program evaluation and process review to ensure program objectives were being achieved, and to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of both programs. The evaluation sought to ensure programs are providing a seamless continuum of training to employers and employed Nova Scotians.
- The department introduced new regulatory provisions to acquire post-graduation labour market attachment statistics to determine the effectiveness of training programs that lead to

trained-for jobs in 1-2 years. This information will be used to apply regulatory measures to existing and proposed programs to protect student and government training investments.

- The Labour Services Branch is continuing the development of a new IT case management system that will enhance data collection, storage and retrieval.

#### **Improve processes for client service and program delivery**

- In 2016-17, the department's Safety, Skills and Learning and Higher Education branches continued to work toward implementation of related recommendations from the 2013 and 2015 Auditor General's Reports and are on track to achieve full implementation in 2017.
- As part of the Government of Nova Scotia's Lean Six Sigma initiative, the Skills and Learning Branch completed a review of the Graduate to Opportunity Program, making a number of program and process improvements that shorten approval time. This involved significant changes to the LaMPSS System to make it more user friendly for businesses accessing employment programs. Other Lean Six-Sigma projects have been started that will yield further improvements to program delivery.
- The Labour Services Branch has developed a client satisfaction survey to help identify improvements in the labour service programs delivered to Nova Scotians. The Labour Services Division has achieved the service delivery standard of concluding an average of 80% of cases within six months and is on track to achieving the same standard for Labour Board matters, along with new supports for self-represented parties.
- The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency is developing a shared Apprenticeship Management system with the Atlantic Provinces and Manitoba that will lead to increased administrative efficiencies and client accessibility.
- The department has been working toward the development of user requirements to inform the development of virtual employment services delivery, which will complement the new in-person services offered at Nova Scotia Works Centres. The Skills & Learning Branch has also invested in online career planning tools, as well as online training development that will lead to course offerings in career planning for students and their parents, as well as courses for employers regarding the benefits of hiring older workers and creating age-friendly workplaces.

## 5. Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act

The *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act* was proclaimed into law on December 20, 2011. The Act provides for government employees to be able to come forward if they reasonably believe that a wrongdoing has been committed or is about to be committed and they are acting in good faith. Section 18 of Act states:

*Each deputy head shall prepare an annual report of disclosures, including any findings of wrongdoing, recommendations and actions taken and shall make this report available to the public.*

The following table identifies all disclosures reported to the Deputy Minister of Labour and Advanced Education:

Information Required Under Section 18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2016-17
The number of disclosures received	0
The number of findings of wrongdoings	0
Details of each wrongdoing	N/A
Recommendations and Actions taken on each wrongdoing	N/A