

Skills Development Program Guidelines

Department of Labour and
Advanced Education

Employment Nova Scotia

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IMPORTANT:

BEFORE YOU CONSIDER APPLYING TO THE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The Skills Development Program is accessed by working closely with a Case Manager at a Nova Scotia Works Employment Services Centre. Information about a Centre near you can be found at <https://novascotia.ca/works>.

As this set of guidelines will tell you, the Skills Development Program is for individuals who cannot find work with their skills or experience. If you have interest in this program you are encouraged to contact Nova Scotia Works as soon as possible to explore your eligibility for the program; it is never too early to do so but it can be too late. In order to access the program individuals must develop a Return to Work Action Plan and make an intensive effort to look for work (job search) with their current skills and experience. Nova Scotia Works can help guide you through this process well in advance of making application to the program to ensure you take the right steps to find work. If you are unable to find work they will assist you to determine whether the Skills Development program will be the right program to assist you. Nova Scotia Works Centre submit your application to Employment Nova Scotia for assessment and decision regarding its approval.

About the Program

The Skills Development (SD) program is an employment program that provides financial assistance to Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) eligible participants to help them obtain the skills training they need to find employment. It is designed for those who need to learn additional basic to advanced skills to help them find sustainable employment.

Eligible participants lack marketable skills and need new or additional occupational skills to improve their employment prospects but are otherwise job ready. Eligible participants are those who are unable to find and secure employment with their existing skills. Those requesting support through this program must attend training on a full-time basis. The training may be provided through public or private training providers.

About Participant Eligibility

LMDA ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANTS

- ▶ Must be unemployed
- ▶ Must be job ready but lack marketable skills and need additional occupational skills to improve their employment prospects – see note about marketable skills below
- ▶ Must be Canadian citizens or permanent residents legally entitled to work in Canada
- ▶ Must be a resident of Nova Scotia at the time that their completed application for the SD program is received by Employment Nova Scotia (ENS)
- ▶ Must be currently receiving Regular Employment Insurance (EI) Benefits, have had an Employment Insurance Claim that ended within the last 60 months, or been employed with gross insurable earnings of \$2000 or higher annually, in at least 5 of the last 10 years. Participants must meet the definition of LMDA eligibility as defined by Section 58 of the EI Act (<http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/E-5.6/page-1.html>)
- ▶ Must have a minimum of 3 years of Labour Force Attachment (LFA) and has been fully participating in the in the labour market during that period – this means an applicant must have at least 3 years of being either employed full-time or has been actively seeking employment, with no periods of full-time attendance at a secondary or postsecondary institution during the last three years – see note about Labour Force Attachment below
- ▶ Must be working with a Case Manager at a Nova Scotia Works Employment Services Centre and they must complete a Return to Work Action Plan (RTWAP) that identifies a need for new or additional skills to find employment.
- ▶ May be facing a required change in employment or career due to validated medical reasons.

Marketable skills: Unemployed workers who have post-secondary education that resulted in a diploma, degree, or certificate are assessed as having marketable skills when obtained within the past five years. Applicants deemed to have marketable skills are not eligible for the program.

Labour Force Attachment: This means that an individual is either employed full time or actively seeking employment. When an individual is in full-time attendance at a secondary or postsecondary institution, they are considered to have withdrawn from the workforce.

LMDA ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANTS WHO ARE SEASONALLY UNEMPLOYED

Most seasonally unemployed individuals are not eligible. They have employment that they will return to when seasonal layoffs are over. Employers have a responsibility to ensure that their employees have the necessary training to do their jobs and provide them with training.

The Skills Development program may be used to assist seasonally employed workers during a period of unemployment in extenuating circumstances only. The training must serve one of the following purposes:

- ▶ Lengthens the period of seasonal employment, thereby decreasing the layoff period
- ▶ Provides skills that lead to year-round employment
- ▶ Provides skills necessary to find alternate work in the off-season
- ▶ Prevents job loss in situations where the job normally held by the worker changes substantially while the worker is unemployed and they need new skills to secure a return to work

LMDA ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANTS ON A TEMPORARY LAY-OFF OR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Individuals who are on a temporary lay-off or who have taken a leave of absence are not LMDA eligible as they have a return to work date, an attachment to their employer, and employment to return to after their leave period.

About Training Eligibility

Training that is eligible:

- ▶ Must be full time
- ▶ Must lead to a diploma, certificate, or degree —see “Additional Training Eligibility Information”
- ▶ Must link to employment, upon completion
- ▶ Must be linked to an industry with a labour market need in both Nova Scotia and the local area in which it is intended for the employment to take place
- ▶ Must be industry recognized
- ▶ Must be a minimum of five-days duration
- ▶ Must be a maximum of three-years duration
- ▶ Must be from a training institution that is a registered training institution in keeping with Private Career Colleges regulations and standards. Some training programs are not required to be registered or are exempt. Your Case Manager at Nova Scotia Works can assist you to determine whether the training program you are interested in is eligible.

Training that is NOT eligible:

- ▶ Language training for new immigrants to Canada
- ▶ Training programs that have the sole purpose of preparing an individual for an exam/test and do not provide any academic/skills upgrading or new knowledge
- ▶ Training for self-employment
- ▶ Training that does not meet a labour market need in Nova Scotia

ADDITIONAL TRAINING ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

University Training Programs

- ▶ Eligible programs are up to one year long and deliver occupation-specific training that leads to a degree, certificate, or diploma.
- ▶ Eligible applicants are unemployed workers who have previously made the transition from school to the work force, have three years of Labour Force Attachment, and are not currently full-time students.

Training Outside of Nova Scotia

Out-of-province training is approved on an exceptional basis only:

- ▶ A detailed rationale must be submitted — for example, that the training is not offered in Nova Scotia.
- ▶ The training must be recognized in Nova Scotia.
- ▶ The training must meet the needs of the Nova Scotia labour market.
- ▶ Applicants to the Skills Development Program are required to attempt to access training in Nova Scotia when it is available. They must apply for the available training program in Nova Scotia even if there is a waitlist for the training program before out of province training can be considered.

Training Outside of Canada

Out-of-country training is approved on an exceptional basis only:

- ▶ A detailed rationale must be submitted – for example, that the training program is not offered in Canada or the work placement/practicum portion requires participants to be outside the country. An example of training that may be approved is a truck-driving training program where the routes are often north and south of the Canada–U.S. border.
- ▶ The training must be recognized in Canada.
- ▶ The training must meet the needs of the Canadian labour market.

Correspondence Courses, Distance Education, Internet-based Education

Correspondence programs, distance education and internet-based education are only approved on an exceptional basis and applicants for who would have significant difficulty attending in-person training due to barriers such as a disability or where training is not readily available (i.e. out of province). All other eligibility criteria must also apply (e.g. must be a full time studies program). The program must offer on-going assistance to the student and through that assistance they also must monitor the student's progress. The program must also have timelines for completion (i.e. self-directed programs are not eligible). Additional criteria applies and should be discussed with a Case Manager at a Nova Scotia Works Employment Assistance Service Centre and Employment Nova Scotia.

Application Requirements

The applicant must work with a Case Manager at a Nova Scotia Works Employment Services Centre to complete the application process. Find Nova Scotia Works locations:

<https://novascotia.ca/works/>

STEPS FOR THE APPLICANT

- 1** Receive an employment needs assessment from their Nova Scotia Works Employment Services Centre Case Manager
- 2** Develop a Return to Work Action Plan with their Case Manager
- 3** Receive an assessment from their Case Manager that a skills development program is necessary to prepare them for employment and a determination of whether the applicant meets the eligibility criteria for the Skills Development program.
- 4** Complete a comprehensive job search and labour market research activities before applying for Skills Development:
 - ▶ A three-month (minimum) job search that is both comprehensive and documented is mandatory
 - This job search duration allows for a full job search including time to prepare an updated resume, apply to a variety of sources for openings, receive responses and follow-up and attend interviews with employers, while continuously seeking employment opportunities.
 - This job search must use all the transferable and marketable skills that the applicant has to make a diligent effort to find work.
 - The job search must be undertaken with an up to date and accurate resume.
 - As part of the job search the individual must use a variety of methods and sources to look for work for which they are qualified. Sources and methods include but should not be limited to responding to job postings in newspapers or online and approaching employers to discover employment opportunities that may not be posted.
 - The individual should apply for work with a variety of employers for relevant positions for which they would be qualified.
 - Case Managers support the applicant through their job search.
 - ▶ Additional requirements include, but are not limited to:
 - Research the labour market to identify occupations where there is a good prospect of obtaining sustainable employment. Labour Market Interviews must be completed with prospective employers to identify if the proposed training will meet the requirements of the labour market.
 - Family size and financial information.
 - Acceptance letter from the educational institution

- 5 Make sure that their Case Manager has everything they need to complete an application well before the application deadline. Incomplete applications are returned and not assessed for funding.
- 6 Wait until their training is approved before starting the training or buying items that they hope to have reimbursed or hope to use as part of their student contribution
- 7 If approved, enter into a Contribution Agreement with Employment Nova Scotia

Speak with a Case Manager at your local Nova Scotia Works Employment Services Centre for detailed information on application requirements: novascotia.ca/works/

APPLICATION DEADLINE – At least 2 weeks before training start date

Applications for funding:

- ▶ Must be received at least two weeks before the scheduled training program start date, which is the first date indicated by the training institution's acceptance letter or website of the institution to which the student is accepted.
- ▶ Must be submitted by the applicant's Nova Scotia Works Case Manager via the Labour Market Programs Support System (LaMPSS).

Deadlines are firm:

- ▶ The date that the completed application is electronically sent to Employment Nova Scotia by the Case Manager is the date that used to determine whether an application is late.
- ▶ When the deadline date falls on a holiday, then the application should be received by Employment Nova Scotia on the business day prior to the holiday – Business days are Monday to Friday and exclude Saturday and Sunday.
- ▶ Applications received after the deadline are not considered for funding.
- ▶ Denials of funding applications due to the filing of late application cannot be appealed.

Participants Who Start Training Prior to Receiving Employment Nova Scotia Approval

- ▶ The development of a Return to Work Action Plan (RTWAP) is a requirement of the SD Program, therefore, individuals who start training prior to developing a RTWAP and receiving approval from ENS will not be eligible for this program.
- ▶ Multi-year Programs: Multi-year programs must be approved prior to starting the first year to be eligible. The start date for a multi-year program is the start date for year one.

About Eligible Costs and Financial Assistance

All applicants are assessed for financial assistance based on their individual financial situation. As part of the application process, applicants must supply financial information.

Employment Nova Scotia uses a standard tool to determine individual entitlement needs and levels of support for eligible costs, called the Financial Assistance for Individuals Calculator. Financial supports are not negotiable. The Calculator determines the amount of financial assistance the applicant is eligible to receive.

Individuals who participate in Skills Development are normally required to make a financial contribution towards the cost of their training. The contribution amount is determined by the Financial Assistance for Individual Calculator.

ELIGIBLE COSTS

- ▶ Approved applicants may receive financial assistance called a basic living allowance.
- ▶ Approved applicants could be eligible for financial assistance for dependent care, tuition, books, disability needs, transportation, and accommodation.
- ▶ Individual entitlement needs and levels of support for eligible costs are determined by the Financial Assistance for Individuals calculator.

APPLICANT CONTRIBUTIONS

- ▶ Applicants are responsible for a minimum of \$200 contribution to their tuition costs.
- ▶ Computers and other capital cost items including tools of the trade may be considered as part of the applicant's contribution to their training when bought after their approval date only. (see examples of assets considered tools of the trade below.)
- ▶ Applicants are responsible for paying transportation costs to commute daily to training up to 30 km, each way.
- ▶ If applicants are in receipt of regular EI benefits, it is expected that applicants use those benefits to help cover their expenses.
- ▶ Individual levels of contributions for items noted above are determined by the Financial Assistance for Individuals Calculator.

TUITION LIMIT

- ▶ The maximum tuition support available to an applicant is up to \$10,000 within a 52-week
- ▶ Individual entitlement needs and levels of support for tuition are determined by the Financial Assistance for Individuals calculator.

INELIGIBLE COSTS

- ▶ Cost such as licensing fees, registration fees, medical tests and certification, drivers abstract or other costs that are required for acceptance into a training program – or for subsequent

employment – are not eligible.

- ▶ Fees charged by an association or regulatory body to enable an individual to be “registered” or “licensed” are not eligible.
- ▶ Computers and other capital cost items including tools of the trade are not eligible costs but may be considered as part of the applicant’s contribution to their training.

Examples of tools of the trade are:

- Culinary items, such as pots, pans, knives
 - Tools associated with skills/trades training
 - Carpenter tools, such as toolboxes, wrenches, hammers
 - Mechanics tools
 - Hairdressing tools, such as scissors, brushes, hair dryers
- ▶ Expenditures that occur prior to the approval of an agreement are not eligible. These will not be eligible for reimbursement under any circumstance. These will also not be considered as part of the client contribution.

TRANSPORTATION AND ACCOMMODATION COSTS

- ▶ Applicants are responsible for paying transportation costs to commute daily to training up to 30 km, each way. Distances greater than 30 km each way are an eligible cost and paid on a per-km basis.
- ▶ Travel assistance may be available if it is necessary for a participant to relocate to the training. This assistance would be paid for one trip each way at the start and end of the training at a per km rate (less first 30 km each way). In addition, when it is necessary for a participant to maintain both a primary and a secondary residence to attend training, a flat rate accommodation fee may be paid on a weekly basis.
- ▶ Individual entitlement needs and levels of support for eligible transportation and accommodation costs are determined by the Financial Assistance for Individuals Calculator.

DISABILITY SUPPORTS FOR FUNDED STUDENTS

- ▶ Incremental costs such as the cost of a special device, aid or special assistance that are required to support and enable an applicant to take a training program are eligible – Employment Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia Works Case Manager will work with the applicant and educational institution in determining the needs and applicable requirements.
- ▶ Costs specific to medication or dietary needs cannot be covered by the program.

Approval Process

Employment Nova Scotia assesses all complete applications that are received by the application deadline.

Employment Nova Scotia notifies applicants of the decision regarding the application so they may proceed with their action plan to attend school.

- ▶ Notification will be made by telephone, in writing and/or email (if applicable).
- ▶ If approved, funding amounts will also be communicated.

WARNING ABOUT EXPENSES AND INVESTMENTS MADE PRIOR TO APPROVAL

In some cases, the decision from Employment Nova Scotia may not occur before the training program start date.

- ▶ If an applicant chooses to begin their training program before their application for funding is approved, the applicant assumes the risk in doing so. An application for funding does not guarantee approval of the application.
- ▶ If the applicant's request for SD support is denied, any investment made by the applicant is not be reimbursed by Employment Nova Scotia.
- ▶ Any costs incurred prior to an application is approved is not reimbursed by Employment Nova Scotia. Only costs which are paid after Employment Nova Scotia approval can be considered for reimbursement.
- ▶ Applicants are not entitled to Basic Living Allowance (BLA), childcare, or transportation during the period prior to approval. Funding is not provided for expenses already incurred prior to approvals.

ENTERING INTO A CONTRIBUTION AGREEMENT

Upon approval of a Skills Development Application, individuals must enter into a Contribution Agreement with Employment Nova Scotia.

Under this signed agreement,

- ▶ Employment Nova Scotia agrees to provide financial assistance directly to the applicant, based on actual costs, and the results of the Financial Assistance for Individuals Calculator to carry out the agreed upon activity to help the LMDA eligible participant obtain skills for employment to assist in their re-entry to employment as identified in their RTWAP.
- ▶ Employment Nova Scotia may terminate any obligation to contribute to training costs, even those costs owing prior to the date of termination.
- ▶ Skills Development participants are expected to participate in the training program diligently and make their best efforts to complete it successfully.
- ▶ Skills Development participants must advise Employment Nova Scotia of any changes that may affect the agreement and be aware of financial implications that may result from them

- withdrawing from or being expelled from the training outlined contribution agreement.
- ▶ Skills Development participants must inform Employment Nova Scotia if there is a change in their financial circumstance.
 - ▶ Active EI applicants may also fall under Part 1, Section 27.1(1) of the EI Act and may be disqualified from receiving further Part I benefits once the Section 25 referral has been terminated.

Appeal Information

An appeal package is sent with each denial letter in case the applicant wishes to appeal a decision by Employment Nova Scotia.

The following CANNOT be appealed:

- ▶ Administrative issues or decisions made by community-based Employment Nova Scotia funded service providers and their staff (Nova Scotia Works Employment Services Centres). For example, applicants cannot appeal to Employment Nova Scotia if a Case Manager has not supported the applicant for Skills Development. Decisions such as this must be discussed with Nova Scotia Works.
- ▶ Decisions that are made related to eligibility for Employment Insurance (EI). For example, applicants cannot appeal to Employment Nova Scotia to have an EI claim reinstated or started to qualify for an individual client employment benefit. Decisions related to EI must be appealed through Service Canada using the federal government appeal processes.
- ▶ Overpayment calculations.
- ▶ Termination of agreements.
- ▶ Denials due to late applications.
- ▶ The Level of Funding: The Financial Assistance for Individuals (FAI) calculator takes family size, current financial situation, and cost of living into consideration to calculate a level of support aimed at ensuring that participants can cover their basic costs of living.

Contact Us

Employment Nova Scotia
Skills and Learning Branch
Department of Labour and Advanced Education
General enquiries: 1-877-223-0888
<http://www.novascotia.ca/employmentnovascotia/programs/skills-development.asp>