



# Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Program Funding Guidelines

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Nova Scotia Department of Labour  
and Advanced Education  
Skills and Learning Branch  
Adult Education Division

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## Table of Contents

1	Recognition of Prior Learning Funding Program Introduction .....	1
1.1	What is RPL? .....	1
1.2	The RPL Program Goals .....	1
1.3	Our Commitment .....	2
1.4	Roles and Responsibilities .....	2
2	Eligibility Criteria.....	3
2.1	Eligible Applicants.....	4
2.2	Ineligible Applicants .....	4
2.3	Eligible Participants .....	4
2.4	Eligible Project Categories.....	5
2.5	Assessment Criteria Definitions.....	5
3	Application Process .....	10
3.1	Completing and Submitting a Project Proposal .....	11
3.2	Completing your RPL Itemized Budget.....	11
3.3	What Happens Next .....	11
3.4	Proceed to the Final Stage of Application Submission .....	11
4	RPL Funding Program Reporting Requirements.....	12
4.1	Interim Accountability Report .....	13
4.2	Final Accountability Report.....	13
4.3	Activity Reports .....	14
4.4	Financial Reports .....	14
5	RPL Funding Program Terms & Conditions .....	14
5.1	Communications Requirements .....	14
5.2	Funding Announcements .....	15
6	Contact Information .....	15

# **1 Recognition of Prior Learning Funding Program Introduction**

*Please read the entire document. This information will become part of an agreement with the Province of Nova Scotia for the delivery of Recognition of Prior Learning programs.*

The purpose of this guide is to inform applicants about the goals and application process of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Funding Program, along with the terms and conditions of associated funding applications and agreements. The guide will cover all eligibility requirements along with assessment criteria that will be used in assessing applications for RPL Program Funding.

## **1.1 What is RPL?**

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) defines processes that allow individuals to identify, document, have assessed and gain recognition for their prior learning. The learning may be formal, informal, non-formal or experiential. Where the learning took place is of secondary importance as the focus is on the learning<sup>1</sup>.

RPL assessments can take many forms. For example, practical exams or demonstrations of competency, challenge exams, structured interview, portfolio assessment, transfer credit assessment/educational document assessment, etc. The gathering and documentation of evidence of learning is critical and common to all RPL assessment processes.

RPL is used for a variety of purposes: awarding credit, credit transfer, credential/qualification recognition, licensure, hiring and recruitment, performance management, and succession and career planning.

## **1.2 The RPL Program Goals**

1. To enhance and support RPL accessibility, availability, knowledge, awareness and practice through the development of new RPL projects, tools, programs and services delivered by eligible organizations.

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<sup>1</sup> [What is Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition \(PLAR\)/ Recognition of Prior Learning \(RPL\)? | CAPLA](#)

2. To support eligible organizations in creating an avenue for decreasing barriers to skills recognition, streamlining learning pathways, and creating a fast track to employment for eligible adult learners.
3. To promote equity of opportunity for all Nova Scotians in learning and employment in the province. This will be achieved through the engagement of diverse stakeholders in the planning of RPL projects and through the application of a diversity and equity lens in program funding decisions.

All proposals will be considered; however, the Department of Labour and Advanced Education (LAE) is under no obligation to fund every application submitted.

Please note that prior government support does not guarantee funding for the same or similar project. LAE will not provide deficit funding (expenditures exceeding total approved funding allocation) for an organization resulting from projects delivered.

Unless you receive an approval notification from the RPL Coordinator at LAE, or via the Labour Market Programs Support System (LaMPSS), your application is not considered to be approved and any work that may proceed is to be completed at the risk of the applicant.

### **1.3 Our Commitment**

On behalf of the Government of Nova Scotia, the Adult Education Division (AED) of LAE is committed to assessing applications in a fair and transparent manner based on cost, potential contributions and maximum benefit to Nova Scotians' learning and employment pathways. For proposals to be supported, proposals will be required to align with the RPL Program Funding Guidelines and be relevant and responsive to the skills and learning recognition needs of individuals. Applicants will be required to demonstrate suitability for funding by providing evidence of an ability to deliver similar projects. Funding proposal template instructions will be published to provide all eligible organizations with an equal opportunity to access funding.

### **1.4 Roles and Responsibilities**

All partners in the funding process are responsible to share responsibility for outcomes.

Organizations submitting proposals, and if approved, are expected to:

1. Follow the RPL Program Funding Guidelines and RPL Program Project Proposal template instructions in preparing the project proposal;
2. Transfer the information in the proposal document to the online application, and submit this along with other supporting documentation in LaMPSS;
3. Complete all required reporting templates and meet all deadlines;
4. Be accountable for using the funding for its intended purpose by providing required documentation (i.e., Activity & Financial Reports, Itemized Cost Breakdown Workbook, Accountability Reports) and to ensure all expenditures reflect eligible costs;
5. Submit final project deliverables to LAE in an electronic format (**note: these materials are the property of LAE unless otherwise agreed upon by both LAE and the funded organization**); and
6. Where appropriate, collaborate and form partnerships with other appropriate and eligible partners and, where applicable, submit joint proposals that would further develop RPL capacity in Nova Scotia.

LAE will:

7. Establish and communicate criteria for project approval;
8. Provide the necessary templates, supporting documents and other information required to submit an application for funding;
9. Support the applicant throughout the application process;
10. Lead a fair and an open assessment process of funding proposals;
11. Finalize and communicate decisions in a timely manner;
12. Distribute funding;
13. Monitor and evaluate projects; and
14. Ensure accountability in relation to the contractual obligations of the RPL Funding Program.

## **2 Eligibility Criteria**

Eligibility criteria are requirements that are mandatory. Applications that do not conform to the mandatory requirements will not be considered for funding.

## 2.1 Eligible Applicants

- Nova Scotia regulatory bodies<sup>2</sup>;
- Established non-profit community organizations, charities (registered under the Societies Act) or other public or non-governmental organizations, including immigrant-serving agencies;
- Unions;
- Employer Associations;
- Sector Councils;
- Professional Associations;
- Post-secondary Institutions; and
- Career Development Centres.

## 2.2 Ineligible Applicants

- Individuals, including sole proprietorships;
- For-profit corporations; and
- Funding bodies whose sole mandate is to award grants or funding.

## 2.3 Eligible Participants

- Canadian citizens;
- Permanent residents; and
- Protected persons within the meaning of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (Canada), S.C. 2001, c. 27 entitled to work in Canada.

**Note:** Individuals who are temporary residents with a 900 series Social Insurance Number are not eligible participants.

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<sup>2</sup> A body with authority delegated by law (i.e. provincial or federal legislation) to set or implement measures related to: the establishment of occupational standards or certification requirements, the assessment of the qualifications of workers against established occupational standards or certification requirements and the official recognition that an individual meets established occupational standards or certification requirements.

## 2.4 Eligible Project Categories

There are three RPL project categories, determined by LAE, that will be considered as eligible criteria for program funding. These categories support the RPL Program goals and align with RPL best practices.

The following is an overview of the eligible project categories. All applications must align with one or more of the categories listed in the following section:

1. **Assessment** - This project category focuses on improving the development, availability and quality of RPL assessments. A RPL assessment is the process of verifying the competency, knowledge, skills, and education that an individual has compared to established standards.
2. **RPL Practice** - This project category focuses on developing, revising or expanding RPL program components and tools to assist workers/learners in having the competencies, skills, knowledge and abilities recognized.
3. **Research and Planning** - This project category focuses on conducting research, planning and evaluation activities to create new knowledge, findings and recommendations related to RPL processes in Nova Scotia.

## 2.5 Assessment Criteria Definitions

The following section defines the criteria for which project proposals will be assessed. Defining the criteria supports the commitment of LAE to have a fair and transparent assessment process. Criteria definitions and levels of compliance are detailed in the criteria tables below. The tables also include additional information and examples to provide guidance on how to provide supporting evidence for each criterion.

**2.5.1. Identify clear project objectives that are defined and measurable. (20%)**

The following are recommendations meant to assist applicants in including supporting information within the project proposal:

1. Provide objective statements for all project objectives. Objective statements must show correlation with project deliverables. Objective statements must be clearly defined, measurable and timebound.
2. Provide a timeline that will outline project activities and objectives.
3. Describe the deliverable(s) that will be provided at project completion.

<b>Score</b>	<b>Levels</b>	<b>Descriptions of expectation levels</b>
0	Does not meet expectations	Objectives are not clear and defined. Objectives do not describe how they are connected to project deliverables. Objectives are not measurable and timebound in such a way that progress towards deliverables and project completion cannot be validated.
10	Partially meets expectations	Objectives are clearly defined but are deficient in one or more of the required components.
20	Meets expectations	Objectives are clearly defined and linked to project deliverables. Deliverables are defined and tangible. Objectives are timebound and provide an ability to measure progress of deliverables and overall project completion.

**2.5.2. Define activities that clearly align with objectives, expected outcomes and timelines. (10%)**

The following are recommendations meant to assist applicants in including supporting information within the project proposal:

1. Provide a description of all activities that support project objectives and deliverables. Activities must be measurable and timebound.
2. Include activities with timelines for the duration of the project.
3. Activity descriptions should define the steps or actions that support accomplishing objectives.

<b>Score</b>	<b>Levels</b>	<b>Descriptions of expectation levels</b>
0	Does not meet expectations	Activities are not clearly defined and do not have a timebound description. Not all activities are listed that support the project objectives and deliverables.
10	Meets expectations	Activities define specific steps or actions that support accomplishing objectives. Activities are timebound and are described in a project timeline. All activities are listed that support all objectives and project deliverables.



**2.5.3. Describe how your organization is able to manage the project by providing information related to experience successfully leading similar projects i.e. sufficient resources, capacity, knowledge, innovation, leadership etc. (10%)**

The following are recommendations meant to assist applicants in including supporting information within the project proposal:

1. Provide examples of successful projects. Outline any previous projects with the Province of Nova Scotia and/or other funding organizations.
2. Outline all resources required for the project including staffing, expertise, financial, equipment, technology, meeting spaces, etc. Identify any risks to the project resources and how to mitigate or eliminate the risks.
3. Demonstrate applicant’s understanding of RPL.
4. Demonstrate applicant’s capacity for leadership, innovation, ability to respond to current challenges and opportunities.

Score	Levels	Descriptions of expectation levels
0	Does not meet expectations	Applicant has not provided adequate evidence of delivering similar projects successfully and/or provided evidence that appropriate resources have been secured for the project (staff, expertise, financial, contractors, partnerships etc.).
5	Partially meets expectations	Applicant provides adequate evidence of delivering similar projects successfully and required resources have been secured. Risks and/or risk mitigation measures not identified.
10	Meets expectations	Applicant provides evidence of delivering similar projects in the past which have resulted in successful outcomes. Evidence of adequate resources has been demonstrated and outlined how the resources will contribute to the project. Risks identified, and mitigation measures are planned. Low risk to project completion.

**2.5.4. Provide a clear rationale for the project (what is the problem to be addressed-what is the labour market or skills/learning learning recognition need?) and outline how the project will leverage RPL practice to address this. (20%)**

The following are recommendations meant to assist applicants in including supporting information within the project proposal:

Briefly describe the problem that the project will address, i.e., what labour market or skills/learning recognition need? How will the project leverage RPL practice to address this? If possible, provide evidence of the need. Evidence could include:

1. Letters supporting labour or skills shortage (Industry, Sector councils, employers).
2. Published data provincially or federally (case studies, Nova Scotia Labour Market Bulletin, StatsCan etc.).

<b>Score</b>	<b>Levels</b>	<b>Description of expectation levels</b>
0	Does not meet expectations	The applicant has not provided a clear rationale for the project or described the problem to be addressed. The applicant has not outlined how the project will leverage RPL practice.
10	Partially meets expectations	The applicant provided a rationale for the project and described the problem to be addressed but only partially indicated how the project will leverage RPL practice to address needs.
20	Meets expectations	The applicant has provided a clear rationale for the project, described the problem to be addressed, and has clearly outlined how the project will leverage RPL practices to address needs.

**2.5.5. Describe how project deliverables can be adapted, shared, and used by others to maximize benefit and impact to RPL knowledge, practice and assessment. (20%)**

The following are recommendations meant to assist applicants in including supporting information within the project proposal:

1. Outline how the project deliverables would be adaptable and utilized by others.
2. Explain the benefits, impacts and outcomes of how deliverables can be utilized.

<b>Score</b>	<b>Levels</b>	<b>Descriptions of expectation levels</b>
0	Does not meet expectations	Project deliverables are not easily adaptable or usable in other situations and/or other organizations.
10	Meets expectations	Project deliverables are adaptable and can be leveraged by others with some effort to update the deliverables prior to sharing or use by other organizations.
20	Exceeds expectations	Project deliverables are easy to adapt or do not require any adaptation. Deliverables can be used in a universal way, maximizing the impact and benefit of the RPL project deliverables.

**2.5.6. Demonstrate collaboration and partnerships with industry, organizations and/or government to bring value to the project (i.e., leverage resources and/or expertise, strengthen collaboration or partnerships, promote equity, diversity and inclusion). (10%)**

The following are recommendations meant to assist applicants in including supporting information within the project proposal:

Letters of support or documentation from all partners outlining intent, roles and responsibilities and commitments i.e. provide resources such as staff, expertise, funding etc.

Score	Levels	Descriptions of expectation levels
0	Does not meet expectations	Does not clearly define partnerships or collaboration.
5	Meets expectations	Clearly defines partnerships or collaboration. Outlines partners involved and contributions.
10	Exceeds expectations	Clearly defines partnerships outlining partners involved, responsibilities of each partners and shared resources (funding and / or project team members etc.).

**2.5.7. Describe how the project promotes and contributes to skills recognition, advancement in learning pathways and a faster track to employment for individuals from diverse and underrepresented groups. (10%)**

The following are recommendations meant to assist applicants in including supporting information within the project proposal:

Demonstrate the need, benefit and impact that project deliverables will have for diverse and underrepresented individuals and groups.

Score	Levels	Descriptions of expectation levels
0	Does not meet expectations	Project has a generalized focus that could benefit diverse and under represented groups but has no specific design or focus towards these groups.
5	Meets expectations	Project includes defined and measurable objectives and expected results are designed and focused for diverse and underrepresented groups.
10	Exceeds expectations	Project primary focus is diverse and under represented groups with defined and measurable objectives and expected results designed accordingly. Project includes specific activities that involve participants from diverse and underrepresented groups.

## Added Value

The following criteria for self-sustainability provide added value. While not mandatory, applications that incorporate a self-sustainability plan will be given extra weight and additional consideration.

2.5.8. Provide a self-sustainability plan to maintain the project beyond funding period. (10%)		
<p>The following are recommendations meant to assist applicants in including supporting information within the project proposal:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide a sustainability plan – resources (expertise, staff, funds, partnerships etc.), timeline, promotion and product/service delivery etc.</li> <li>2. Letters of support or partnership acknowledging commitments post project/funding.</li> <li>3. Include timelines – short, medium and long-term of product(s) and/or service(s) delivery.</li> <li>4. Provide an assessment of the required resources post project completion/funding.</li> <li>5. Product(s) and/or service(s) evaluation and assessment plan and objectives. How can the program remain effective and be maintained and sustained beyond the funding project?</li> </ol>		
Score	Levels	Descriptions of expectation levels
0	Does not meet expectations	No clear plan to allocate ongoing resources (expertise, staff, funds, partnerships etc.) after project completion to promote and/or continue to offer the product(s) or service(s) produced/developed from the project. Uncertainty on how the product(s) or service(s) will be maintained and sustained beyond the funding project.
10	Meets expectations	Applicant submits a plan to assume responsibility of maintaining and sustaining products and/or services after project completion. The plan describes how the product(s) and service(s) will be promoted and used. Applicant’s plan includes sufficient resources to maintain sustainability and how this will be accomplished in the interim and long-term.

## 3 Application Process

The first step in submitting a project for approval is to complete a [RPL Program Project Proposal template](#). The purpose of the project proposal is to help applicants clearly articulate the project objectives and outcomes before submitting the application online, as well as to indicate how the project will align with the guidelines and reporting requirements of the funding program.

### 3.1 Completing and Submitting a Project Proposal

Program applicants will be required to complete a project proposal, using the RPL Project Proposal template and instructions available on the RPL and Labour Mobility website, <https://novascotia.ca/lae/rpllabourmobility/>.

Additional details on what is required in the application can be found on the RPL Project Proposal template. All requirements for submission will be identified within the RPL Project Proposal template; however, it is important to have an understanding of the RPL guidelines, eligible project categories and eligibility criteria when completing the proposal. Once complete, submit the RPL Project Proposal template with all required documents (including the RPL Itemized Budget Breakdown Workbook) by email to the RPL Coordinator ([RPLcoordinator@novascotia.ca](mailto:RPLcoordinator@novascotia.ca)).

**Note:** All applications and required documents must be submitted in English.

### 3.2 Completing your RPL Itemized Budget

When completing the project proposal there is a requirement to include a “RPL Itemized Budget Breakdown Workbook” which includes a complete description of all associated costs. Refer to the Project Budget Details on the first tab of the workbook for a description of eligible costs and instructions on how to complete the RPL Itemized Budget Breakdown Workbook. The workbook can be found on the website: <https://novascotia.ca/lae/rpllabourmobility/>.

**Note:** Ensure all associated costs are included in the workbook as no new costs are to be added after the proposal has been reviewed by the RPL Labour and Mobility Unit.

### 3.3 What Happens Next

Once the RPL Program Project Proposal has been received, it will be assessed by the RPL Coordinator. The project proposal will be reviewed against eligibility and assessment criteria and a decision will be made whether to proceed to the final stage of application submission.

### 3.4 Proceed to the Final Stage of Application Submission

Once the RPL Project Proposal has been fully reviewed, an online application will need to be completed and uploaded, with the required supporting documentation, to LaMPSS. LaMPSS is a

common system and set of business processes developed for administering labour market programs in Nova Scotia and is focused on providing consistency in processes and improving services to labour market agreement holders. When reaching this stage in the application process, the RPL Coordinator will send a link for the LaMPSS application process and advise on the next steps. The LaMPSS application will then be reviewed by the RPL Coordinator and the AED Grant Coordinator and a decision will be made on approval of the application. Additionally, the LaMPSS application is an important step to create a contract with LAE for the funding agreement, if approved.

In summary, the follow steps are required for a complete assessment of the project proposal.

- Complete and submit a project proposal and provide all required documentation;
- Receive an acknowledgement from RPL Coordinator that your project proposal has been reviewed; and
- The RPL Coordinator will send a link to the LaMPSS application process for final approval.

**Note:** An application can only be submitted in LaMPSS after the project has been reviewed by the RPL Coordinator. Submissions made before receiving authorization will not be assessed or reviewed.

#### **4 RPL Funding Program Reporting Requirements**

After receiving a funding agreement it is important to remain in contact with the RPL Coordinator throughout the lifecycle of the agreement. LaMPSS Activity, Accountability, and Financial Reports are required throughout the funding agreement to ensure compliance with the funding agreement.

During the course of the project, the agreement holder will be notified through the LaMPSS self-serve system when the (Interim and Final) Activity, Accountability, and Financial Reports are required. Due date(s) for reports are also indicated in the service agreement for the project. The number of reporting periods for projects, supported by the RPL Funding Program, is set by the RPL Coordinator at the beginning of each agreement.

Organizations supported via the RPL Funding Program will be required to submit reports on at least two occasions during the life of the project.

It is important to note that failure to submit any of the required completed reports within the allotted timeframe, will result in delays to continued funding support.

Please contact the RPL Coordinator if there are any questions or concerns.

#### **4.1 Interim Accountability Report**

The Interim Accountability Report will be submitted during the project as an attachment to the scheduled Interim Activity Report in LaMPSS. The Interim Accountability Report has been designed to streamline reporting and improve accountability and must be submitted during each project. The objective of the Interim Accountability Report is to provide an understanding of the project's overall performance by analyzing what has been accomplished during this period.

**Note:** Completion of the Interim Accountability, Activity, and Financial Reports are a condition of the funding agreement, and these reports must be attached (as Supplementary Documentation) and submitted in LaMPSS.

Templates for the Interim Accountability Reports are available at the RPL and Labour Mobility website, <https://novascotia.ca/lae/rpllabourmobility/>.

#### **4.2 Final Accountability Report**

The Final Accountability Report is intended to concisely summarize the outcomes of a project. The Final Accountability Report is used to document project successes, lessons learned and performance in order to provide evidence-based information on the impact of the project and any improvement in project delivery for the future.

**Note:** Completion of the Final Accountability, Activity and Financial Reports are a condition of the funding agreement, and these reports must be attached (as Supplementary Documentation) and submitted in LaMPSS.

Templates for the Final Accountability Reports are available at the RPL and Labour Mobility website, <https://novascotia.ca/lae/rpllabourmobility/>.

### **4.3 Activity Reports**

Throughout the lifecycle of the funding agreement, there is a requirement to submit Activity Reports. All Activity Reports require submission of outputs related to each activity. In addition, the final Activity Report must also include outcomes of the project. Details on these required reports will be provided by the RPL Coordinator during the course of the funding agreement.

### **4.4 Financial Reports**

It is also a requirement of the funding agreement to provide Financial Reports within the reporting period outlined in the funding agreement. Organizations will be asked to submit actual costs/expenditures for each eligible budget category that was defined in the Itemized Budget Workbook during the RPL Project Proposal.

## **5 RPL Funding Program Terms & Conditions**

The following terms and conditions form part of RPL Funding Program agreement in addition to the “General Terms and Conditions” outlined in the agreement.

### **5.1 Communications Requirements**

The Province of Nova Scotia must be acknowledged in all communications related to the project. Any public communication of the project via news release or any other event must be coordinated with LAE. Organizations shall notify the LAE’s RPL Coordinator (see [section 6](#) for contact information) at least 15 working days in advance.

Communications activities can be generally defined as, but not limited to, the following:

- News releases;
- Public events such as funding announcements, official openings, press conferences;
- Written or electronic communications material;
- Project products such as brochures, program descriptions, forms for the use of clients, annual plans and reports; and
- Advertising in all forms.



At offices or kiosks where information is provided to the public, or transactions are conducted with the public pertaining to this project, signage is required indicating that the products/services provided are funded in whole or in part by the Province of Nova Scotia. Bilingual notices are required in designated bilingual offices. Please note that the project will be made public on the Department's website.

Logos can be obtained from LAE. Organizations are responsible for creating their own materials i.e. watermarks, wordmarks, signage etc.

## 5.2 Funding Announcements

Contact the RPL Coordinator (see [section 6](#)) if you are contacted by the media about a project or as soon as your organization starts to discuss:

- A funding announcement or event;
- A news release or feature;
- A radio or television spot;
- An advertisement; and
- A poster or brochure.

## 6 Contact Information

Information about the RPL Funding Program can be obtained through LAE by contacting the RPL Coordinator, via e-mail [RPLcoordinator@novascotia.ca](mailto:RPLcoordinator@novascotia.ca) , phone (902) 424-2536, fax (902) 424-1171 or mail:

### **Mailing Address**

RPL Coordinator  
Department of Labour and Advanced Education  
PO Box 697  
Halifax, NS B3J 2T8

### **Civic Address**

RPL Coordinator  
Department of Labour and Advanced Education  
Maritime Centre, 4N  
1505 Barrington Street  
Halifax, NS B3J 3K5