



# Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive Program

## Application Guidelines

Department of Labour and Advanced Education

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If you have any questions in relation to eligibility, you are encouraged to contact the WIPSI team prior to application.

## 1 About the WIPSI Program

The Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive (WIPSI) program supports the mandate that having a well-trained workforce is key to building a province and economy that foster:

- Productive, innovative, globally competitive Nova Scotia businesses
- A skilled, diverse, adaptable, and future-facing Nova Scotia workforce
- Attachment to the labour market over the long-term for more Nova Scotians.

The Workplace Initiatives Division of the Department of Labour and Advance Education (LAE) administers the WIPSI Program.

The WIPSI program supplements employer contributions to train full-time staff\* who are permanently located in Nova Scotia to:

- Improve productivity and profitability
- Increase innovation
- Adapt to new technology, machinery and equipment, or work processes
- Increase inter-provincial and international competitiveness; and
- Foster workplace diversity and create more inclusive, welcoming workplaces.

\* Employees must be receiving full-time compensation while in training to be eligible for WIPSI funding. This may include employees who are full-time seasonal.

Generally, WIPSI provides up to 50% of direct training costs (before HST). Small businesses with 50 employees or less may be eligible for coverage of up to 100% of direct training costs (up to \$10,000- over \$10,000 is cost shared at 50%).

For employees with disabilities, WIPSI covers expenses related to any accommodations that are required for them to fully participate in training.

Organizations or associations applying for WIPSI funding on behalf of their members may also be eligible for WIPSI to cover some administration costs to host training (up to 15% of direct training costs). This is considered on a case-by-case basis.

## 2 Scope of the Guidelines

These guidelines include the following information:

- Funding eligibility (who is eligible)
- Types of eligible training
- How to apply
- What to expect after your application is accepted
- Reporting requirements; and
- How to appeal the decision if your application is not accepted.

Read the guidelines before applying and refer to them during the application process. If you have questions before or during the application process, contact the WIPSI team toll-free at 1-844-850-2030.

### 3 Funding Eligibility

The following organization types are eligible for WIPSI funding:

- Businesses, (including social enterprises or revenue-generating not-for-profit organizations), that meet the criteria below; and
- Associations, sector councils, and private sector unions that meet the criteria below.

#### 3.1 Criteria for Businesses

If your business meets each of the following criteria, you are eligible to apply:

- Located in Nova Scotia
- Registered and active in the NS Registry of Joint Stock Companies or incorporated by an Act of the Nova Scotia Legislature
- Over one calendar year into operations; and
- Generating at least 30% of revenue from commercial activity\*– if your business is not yet generating revenue from commercial activity, you may be eligible for funding if you are in a LAE identified priority sector (Section 4.2).

\* Commercial activity means any business activity (occupied with commerce or trade) that has an expectation of profit.

It is important to note that WIPSI funding is meant to promote inter-provincial and international competitiveness of NS businesses. Any application where LAE determines that the training could result in an unfair competitive advantage for your business (over another NS business) cannot be funded through WIPSI.

In order to be considered for WIPSI funding, you will have to provide a clear rationale as to how the proposed training would not result in your business having a competitive advantage over other NS businesses providing similar goods and/or services.

For example, NS businesses that are generating profit solely from wholesale, retail, accommodation and/or food service would not be considered. This also generally applies to professional services, such as: veterinarians, dentists, lawyers, advertising professionals and consultants, among others.

#### 3.2 Criteria for Associations, Sector Councils, and Private Sector Unions

Your organization is eligible to apply if it meets each of the following criteria:

- Your organization represents businesses that meet the above listed criteria; and
- Your organization has enough interest from your membership (i.e. more than one business) to submit an application with a minimum of \$10,000 in direct training costs.

If you are an organization or association applying for WIPSI funding for your business members, you may also be eligible for WIPSI funding to cover administration costs to host the training. This is negotiated with WIPSI in the training agreement and is considered on a case-by-case basis.

### 3.3 Eligible Staff

Employees of participating businesses are eligible for WIPSI funding if they meet the following criteria; they:

1. Are currently employed permanent/full-time — and will continue to be paid while participating in training (full-time seasonal employees may be considered if being paid full-time wages during training)
2. Are of legal working age in the province; and
3. Live permanently in Nova Scotia.

### 3.4 Eligible Types of Training

Training that is new and/or incremental to your employees and/or your business which will:

- Result in a new direction and/or expansion to your core operations
- Foster skills in your workforce that will support business and/or sector growth, exportability, productivity and/or innovation; and/or
- Create more inclusive, welcoming workplaces.

Categories of training typically funded through WIPSI:

- Information technology
- Technical training
- Workflow systems and processes; and
- Other training that will benefit your business or organization and that are not typically eligible for funding through other Government programs.

### 3.5 Types of Training Not Eligible

The following types of training are not eligible:

- Legislated or regulated mandatory training
- Training outside of the province which has comparable learning outcomes to training available in NS
- Training that could be supported under another Government program
- Training that has already been supported by WIPSI
- Orientation training or onboarding
- Informal training, and/or training by internal staff or trainers
- Training included with the purchase of equipment or new business processes
- Apprenticeship training
- Conference participation fees; or costs related to your business or organization hosting a conference
- Professional development intended to build an employee's skills that are considered typically necessary to operate in their current job (e.g. qualifications or credentials); and

- Consulting or coaching services intended to assist businesses or organizations with operations; this would include assessments to determine the need for training.

### 3.6 Eligible Additional Costs

In addition to training, the following costs may be eligible for WIPSI funding:

- Registration, tuition, course fees, or examination fees
- Manuals, books, and support materials
- Costs for accommodations for persons with disabilities (100%); and
- Employee travel costs (up to 50%). In order to be eligible for travel costs, the training must take place at least 100 km (each way) from the employee's regular work site. Provincial mileage and travel rates will apply). For reimbursement rates and travel allowances visit:  
<https://beta.novascotia.ca/documents/reimbursement-rates-and-transportation-allowances-employees-government-and-public-sector-bodies>

### 3.7 Eligible Trainers

Eligible trainers must

- Be third-party trainers — not internal to your business or organization
- Have the appropriate qualifications to provide the training — this information must be included as part of the WIPSI application; and
- Not be an immediate family member of the principal of your business or organization.

## 4 Building Your Business Case

### 4.1 Expected Results

To qualify for WIPSI funding, you must demonstrate how your proposed training project meets the following expected results:

- Improves the productivity and profitability of your business
- Increases innovation in your business
- Increases your employees' capacity to work with new technology, machinery and equipment, and/or new work processes
- Increases your inter-provincial and international competitiveness; and
- Fosters workplace diversity and creates a more inclusive, welcoming workplace.

### 4.2 Merit Criteria

The more merit criteria that you have in your business case for training, the more competitive your application for WIPSI funding will be. We assess your application against the following criteria.

**Merit criterion 1:** The extent to which your training project is linked to LAE identified priority sectors.

Demonstrate this by telling us how your project aligns with the following sectors<sup>1</sup>:

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<sup>1</sup> These sectors were identified in the One NS Now or Never Report 2014 <https://onens.ca/img/now-or-never.pdf>

- Information and communications technology
- Aerospace and defense
- Oceans technology
- Forestry
- Research and development
- Agriculture
- Clean technology
- Mining and manufacturing
- Medical technology
- Fisheries and aquaculture life sciences
- Financial services
- Energy

**Merit criterion 2:** The level of benefit your training project delivers during and beyond the project.

Demonstrate this by identifying each of the following:

- How many people will benefit directly from the training
- How the training will increase the capability and technical expertise of your workforce
- How the project will enable your workforce to better meet economic opportunities; and
- How the project will increase opportunities for employees from diverse backgrounds and/or create more welcoming, inclusive workplaces.

**Merit criterion 3:** The value for money offered by your training.

Demonstrate this by identifying each of the following:

- Likelihood of the project going ahead without WIPSI funding
- Expected return on investment from the training; and
- The extent to which the training leverages additional partnerships or in-kind contributions.

**Merit criterion 4:** Your capacity, capability, and resources to carry out the training.

Demonstrate this by identifying each of the following:

- Your track record with similar WIPSI funded training; and
- Your readiness to start the training.

## 5 WIPSI Funding Amounts

To ensure that there is fairness of distribution of funds among NS businesses, there is a cap (maximum) on total WIPSI funding for individual businesses of \$100,000 per fiscal year (April-March).

### 5.1 Businesses with 50 Employees or Less

Minimum WIPSI application amount: \$5,000 in direct training costs.

WIPSI funding:

- up to 100% of eligible direct training costs up to \$10,000 per fiscal year
- up to 50% of eligible direct training costs for amounts that exceed \$10,000



## 5.2 Businesses with 50 Employees or More

Minimum WIPSI application amount: \$10,000 in direct training costs. WIPSI funds up to 50% of eligible direct training costs.

## 5.3 Organizations, Business Associations, and Private Sector Unions

Training for member businesses (more than one) where a common need for training is identified.

Associations representing retail, wholesale, food service, accommodations, and professional services *may* be eligible. This is considered on a case-by-case basis.

Minimum WIPSI application amount: \$10,000 in direct training costs.

Member businesses with more than 50 employees are eligible for a 50% WIPSI reimbursement of direct training costs; member businesses with 50 employees or less may be eligible for 100% of their direct training costs up to \$10,000 (beyond this amount, 50% of direct training costs are covered).

Funding may be available for administration costs as determined on a case-by-case basis. Additionally, you may be able to access an advancement of your approved WIPSI funding to assist with direct training costs on a case-by-case basis. This may only be requested and granted in the agreement negotiation process.

## 6 Timelines and Payment(s)

### 6.1 Timelines

You must complete the training within 12 months of the agreed upon date of the first day of training (as stipulated in the agreement).

You may submit multiple training projects in one application; however, you must complete all training in the application within this 12-month period.

Training may start as soon as you submit your completed application, however; this is with the understanding that funding may or may not be ultimately approved.

### 6.2 Payment

You may choose a one or two payment schedule during the application process:

- **One payment:** the agreed upon reimbursement for your eligible training costs is sent to your business or organization once all training is complete and you have submitted the required documents.
- **Two payments:** your business or organization may request up to 50% of already dispersed eligible training costs to be reimbursed to you once you send proof of payment (receipts, cancelled cheques, or credit card statements). For organizations, business associations, and private sector unions, some approved administrative costs may be included in the first payment.

## 7 Reporting Requirements

WIPSI is funded through the NS government. To be accountable to this funding commitment and NS taxpayers, certain business and personal information is collected when you apply for WIPSI, before you receive your first payment (if you choose that option), at the end of your training program, and one year after training ends.

This information is kept confidential and only used for reporting purposes.

The following financial and operational information will be requested at the time of application:

- Annual sales/revenues
- Annual training investments; and
- Number of employees and total annual salaries paid.

One-year follow up: this same information is required one year after the project is finished to help WIPSI to understand the impact of the training.

### 7.1 Participant Information Forms

Each employee who participates in the training must complete a training participant information form that contains personal information such as their name, contact information, age, and gender. While filling out these forms are mandatory, some fields are optional; these are clearly marked on the forms. These forms must be submitted to WIPSI at the end of the training to verify that all the participants took part in the program.

### 7.2 Business Information Forms

Business members who receive WIPSI-funded training through associations, unions or other organizations are required to fill out business information forms that contain information including: contact information; Registry of Joint Stocks number; Business ID number; description of the business; breakdown of employees; and amount of money invested in training in recent years. Additional financial information may be required of the businesses on a case-by-case basis.

### 7.3 Surveys

To evaluate the effectiveness of WIPSI, you are expected to complete the following:

- Your business/organization completes a survey after training is delivered; and
- Your business/organization completes a follow-up survey one year later.

## 8 Applying for WIPSI Funding

WIPSI is administered through the Labour Market Programs Support System (LaMPSS).

You must register in LaMPSS online to apply for WIPSI funding. For more information on how to do this refer to: <https://novascotia.ca/lae/LaMPSS/documents/OFA-GettingStartedGuide-E.pdf>

WIPSI staff will contact you if your application is incomplete or if additional information is required. You will have 10 business days to provide requested information, or your application will be closed; and you will need to reapply.

Each application is reviewed on its own merit.

Each application is assessed for eligibility requirements, strength in supporting WIPSI program objectives, and return on investment for both the business/organization and the province.

Your application may be approved in full, approved in part, or declined.

## 9 Appealing WIPSI Funding Decisions

### 9.1 Your Right to Appeal

If your WIPSI application has been declined, you have the right to appeal the decision if one of the following is true:

- New information is obtained which may impact the original decision  
*and/or*
- Procedures, as outlined in this document, were not followed.

You are expected to be able to demonstrate that your appeal meets one of these above conditions.

Denials due to late applications cannot be appealed.

### 9.2 The Appeal Process

#### Step 1 – Managerial Review

The first step in the appeal process is a Managerial Review.

You must request a review of the original decision in writing, within 10 business days of the date of written notification from LAE that your application was declined. If you do not respond within this time period, the original decision is final.

The Managerial Review is conducted by the Manager, Workplace Education & Training. Within 5 business days of receipt of your written request, you will be informed if the original decision will be maintained or will be overturned along with a rationale for the decision.

Every attempt will be made to contact you by phone to notify you of the decision. You will also be notified of the decision in writing. The date of the written notification will be considered the date of the decision.

#### Step 2 – Directorial Review

If you obtain further new information after the Managerial Review that may impact the decision, you may request a Directorial Review. You must request this in writing within 10 business days of the written decision of the Managerial Review. If you do not respond within this time period, the decision of the Managerial Review is final.

The Directorial Review is carried out by the Director of Workplace Initiatives. The Director reviews the original application, the result of the Managerial Review, and the additional new information provided.

You will be notified of the decision, by email and telephone, within 5 business days of receipt of your written request for the Directorial Review. The date of the written notification will be considered the date of the decision. The Directorial Review is the final step in the WIPSI appeal process.

### How to Request an Appeal

The following information must be included in your request:

- WIPSI file number
- Organization Name
- Name, title, email address and telephone number(s) of the person requesting the appeal
- A summary of the new information that was not included in the original application or in the Managerial Review; and
- Details or documents to support the new information.

## 10 After Your Project is Approved

### 10.1 Amending Your Agreement

Notify the WIPSI office immediately if there are any delays or changes in training by emailing [wipsi@novascotia.ca](mailto:wipsi@novascotia.ca). Should the contact person change during the lifecycle of the agreement, you must contact WIPSI immediately. An amendment to the agreement may be possible; however, significant changes to your training plan may result in the need for a new application.

### 10.2 Qualifying for Payments

Successful applicants will receive funding according to the approved payment schedule outlined in the Agreement. Applicants may choose whether they prefer one or two payments.

**If you are a business** and you choose to have two payments, WIPSI must be in receipt of the following documents to provide you with the first payment:

1. Training Confirmation Form
2. Copy of invoice & proof of payment of what you have already paid for training — for example, copies of cleared cheques (front and back), bank statements, credit card statements (this may vary if you are applying as an association on behalf of member businesses)

To receive your final payment, WIPSI must be in receipt of the following documents:

1. A complete Final Summary Report
2. Copies of all training invoices
3. Copies of all travel-related receipts unless covered by provincial per diem rates (if approved)
4. Proof of payment — for example, copies of cleared cheques (front and back), bank statements, credit card statements
5. Trainer and Trainee Declaration Forms
6. Completion of the online employer survey (member businesses must fill out individual surveys)

**If you are an organization, business association or private member union** and you choose to have two payments, WIPSI must be in receipt of the following documents to provide you with the first payment:

- a) Training Confirmation Form
- b) Business Information Forms— an authorized person from each business must complete this form
- c) Invoice(s) from the trainer. Please note that a receipt does not count as an invoice.

Once these documents are received and reviewed, the first payment of 50% of the approved amount will be issued.

To receive your final payment, WIPSI must be in receipt of the following documents:

1. Completed surveys: <https://surveys.gov.ns.ca/TakeSurvey.aspx?SurveyID=72K28o9K>  
(member businesses must fill out individual surveys, not the association)
2. Trainer and Trainee Declaration Forms
3. WIPSI Final Report Summary
4. Invoice(s) from the trainer— please note that a receipt does not count as an invoice
5. Business Information Forms (if this has not been previously submitted)
6. Proof of payment — for example, copies of cleared cheques (front and back), bank statements, credit card statements.
7. Once these documents are received and reviewed, the final payment will be issued.

## 10.3 Questions

Use the contact details below to connect with the WIPSI Program staff:

<http://novascotia.ca/programs/workplace-innovation-productivity-skills-incentive/>

Toll-free: 1-844-850-2030

[WIPSI@novascotia.ca](mailto:WIPSI@novascotia.ca)

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