AspireAtlantic

Technical Report: Evaluation Findings

March 2024
(Report 1 of 2)

PIER LABS

Future Skills Centre | Centre des Compétences futures

This report was produced as part of a project funded by the Future Skills Centre (FSC), with financial support from the Government of Canada's Future Skills Program.

FSC is a forward-thinking centre for research and collaboration dedicated to preparing Canadians for employment success. We believe Canadians should feel confident about the skills they have to succeed in a changing workforce. As a pan-Canadian community, we are collaborating to rigorously identify, test, measure, and share innovative approaches to assessing and developing the skills Canadians need to thrive in the days and years ahead. The Future Skills Centre was founded by a consortium whose members are Toronto Metropolitan University, Blueprint ADE, and The Conference Board of Canada

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Acknowledgements

We would first like to acknowledge the participants who saw the opportunity and chose to invest and commit time to embrace what the program could offer.

It is with tremendous gratitude that we thank our sector and Service Provider Organizations (SPOs) who leaned in and committed to learning how this type of model could better support job seekers and employers. The program staff were exceptional and showed their dedication by going the extra mile to ensure program participants had the necessary supports available when they needed them.

Pier Labs would like to thank Future Skills Centre and Nova Scotia Labour Skills and Immigration for funding this innovative program. The team at Future Skills Centre has been tremendous collaborator and support over the past 3.5 years.

Special thanks to our provincial partners at the Government of Nova Scotia (Department of Labour and Advanced Education and Department of Community Services), and Government of PEI (Department of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture), Centre for Employment Innovation, Valley Regional Economic Network, and Blueprint who provided knowledge, guidance, and encouragement along the way. Each one of you has contributed to the co-creation of AspireAtlantic and advanced the skills development ecosystem of Canada, thereby creating meaningful opportunities for all Canadians.

As the originator of the WorkAdvance model, we would like to acknowledge the valuable time and contributions made by MDRC to support the design and implementation of the AspireAtlantic program. Through MDRC, we connected with WorkAdvance sites to seek advice and learn from practitioners about operational challenges and strategies they deployed. We would also like to thank the staff of Madison Strategies Group and Towards Employment for their insight and guidance as we worked to learn more about the operations of the WorkAdvance model and adapt it to the Canadian context. Having insights from the originator of the model and WorkAdvance practitioners along the way has been instrumental to the success of the AspireAtlantic program.

About Pier Labs

Pier Labs is a federally-incorporated, non-profit organization that leverages social research to create impactful programs, supports the development of evidence-informed policy, and provides innovative solutions to complex government and social challenges. Pier Labs strives to leverage its work as tools to influence equitable systemic change that empowers and improves the wellbeing of people and communities.

Pier Labs is uniquely designed to approach societal challenges with diverse and deep expertise that:

- **generates high-quality and robust forms of evidence to design, test, scale, and evaluate the impact of new or improved interventions.**
- **fosters collaboration by connecting and co-creating with people and communities that are most affected by policies, programs, and interventions.**
- **shares findings in ways that influence policy development and decision-making to positively impacts people's lives.**

Realizing our purpose includes working with partners in government, healthcare, academia, private sector, and the non-profit sector to provide evidence-informed solutions that drive meaningful social impact. Beyond research and recommendations, our ability to collaborate with clients to implement these solutions is what sets us apart. From poverty and healthcare, to education, employment, and public safety—our research projects are delivered by expert research professionals from varied backgrounds including psychology, behavioural science, neuroscience, economics, criminology, and healthcare. Our diverse team coupled with our unique approach leverages evidence-based science, action-oriented research, and experience to develop meaningful interventions that can be rigorously tested and evaluated to find solutions that work. Everything we do relies on the scientific method to find what works.

Foreword

Pier Labs is extremely proud to share this technical report for AspireAtlantic—a demonstration and celebration of how collaboration across an ecosystem of partners can make a positive impact for people seeking career opportunities in high-growth sectors.

This report and its companion toolkit summarize over three years of applied research made possible by the unique and diverse partners whose unwavering commitment to this work brought together skills and perspectives that cultivated meaningful and enduring relationships along the way.

In a time of significant economic disruption and opportunity, innovative approaches in employment programming are an imperative for the growth of the Atlantic region and the Canadian economy. AspireAtlantic convened 8 cohorts in 3 industries over 15 months. 93% completed the program and training and ~70% of program graduates are employed, starting a business, or pursuing studies. This work and its findings provide a case example of how a sector-based employment model can be a game changer in addressing today's workforce challenges– connecting high-growth sectors to skilled people who desire meaningful work and careers.

I invite you to read and view these reports, videos, and webinars to more fully absorb the findings from this demonstration study and consider the impact AspireAtlantic could have on people, systems, and society at a broader sectoral and geographic scale.

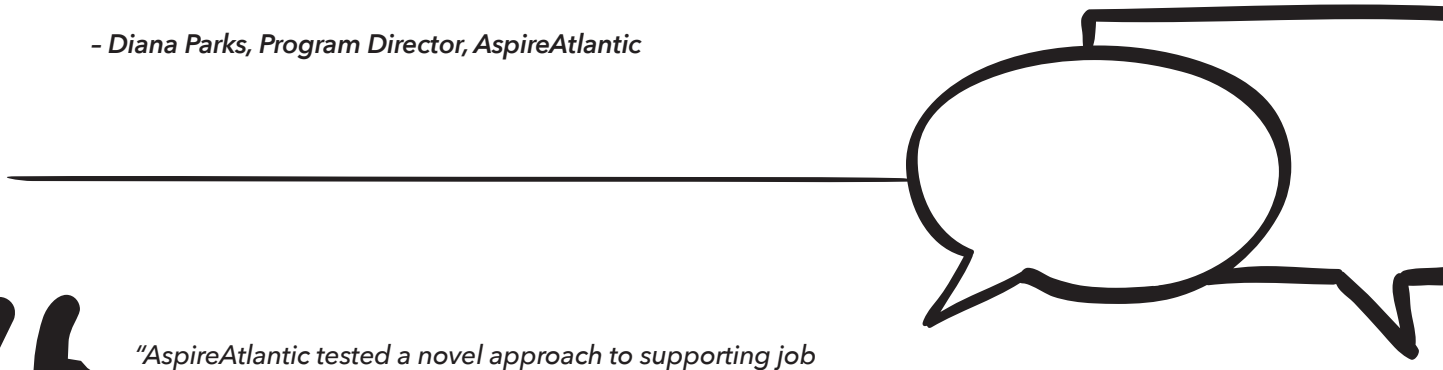
This work brought together key components of the region's employment ecosystem, built connections through a relationship-centered approach, and will continue to contribute to economic growth and prosperity of the region.

Jennifer McGill
Executive Director, Pier Labs

From the Team

"AspireAtlantic's innovative approach has not only fostered a culture of exploration and creativity but has also empowered individuals to reach their personal and professional goals. Through collaboration, dedication, and a shared commitment to excellence, I am confident that the ripple effects of our efforts will continue to inspire and shape the future for years to come."

– Diana Parks, Program Director, AspireAtlantic



"AspireAtlantic tested a novel approach to supporting job seekers and employers. It goes beyond traditional employment programming by considering the complexity of what job seekers need to prepare for the workforce. It places employees and employers at the center of a dual-client model by focusing not just on skills training, but also integrated wraparound supports and relationships development.

AspireAtlantic stands as an early example of how working together and thinking outside of the box can help people not just find jobs but find themselves in meaningful careers and supportive communities. I admire and appreciate the willingness of the participants, collaborators, and the Pier Labs team to try something new and I look forward to seeing the impact AspireAtlantic has on employment services in Nova Scotia."

- Jocelyn Brown, Research Lead

Executive Summary

AspireAtlantic is not just another study—it's a mission-driven initiative that implemented and tested an evidence-based employment services model in Nova Scotia.

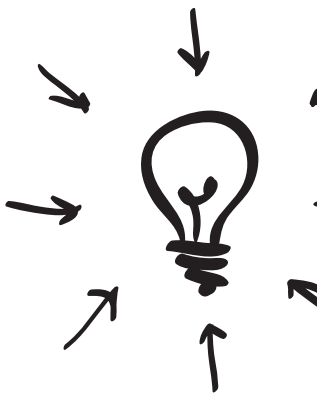
Atlantic Canada has long experienced differences in the labour market compared to the rest of the country. Canadian employers are increasingly reporting a shortage of skilled workers. AspireAtlantic is a sectoral workforce development program that has been adapted from the existing WorkAdvance model to build on the strengths of the Atlantic region. The AspireAtlantic model combines the strengths of sector-based initiatives alongside retention and advancement initiatives to create a program that uses a career pathways approach.

Funded by the Future Skills Centre (FSC) and Nova Scotia Labour Skills and Immigration, Pier Labs received initial funding to conduct the Design Phase (Phase One) in 2020. The goal of the Design Phase was to deepen our understanding of the issues facing the employment landscape and design an adapted version of the WorkAdvance model to facilitate upward mobility for job seekers. Building on the findings of Phase One, the adapted model—dubbed AspireAtlantic— was implemented through a demonstration program in Nova Scotia that ran from 2021 through 2024. AspireAtlantic brought together sector and SPOs to build on the strengths of the employment system and test the value of this innovative model. An implementation science approach was utilized throughout the design, implementation, and evaluation of AspireAtlantic.

The findings of the AspireAtlantic model have yielded compelling evidence and promise—job seekers benefited from training and reskilling; employers attracted and retained a skilled and diverse workforce to support sector-specific labour market needs; job seekers were able to build essential connections with peers, service providers, and industry professionals to facilitate their career journey. To put it simply, everyone involved benefits—and so does the labour market and economy.

The testing of the AspireAtlantic model was not without limitations. It is critical to acknowledge that, while the barriers faced by underrepresented job seekers were minimized by AspireAltantic, they were not eliminated. Obstacles such as financial constraints continued to influence job seekers' ability to participate in training and biased perceptions were experienced in some cases. For example, graduates of the program were primarily men prepared for workplaces where men are the majority.

This report and our companion Implementation Toolkit is to share an overview of the AspireAtlantic model, our evaluation, and findings. It is our hope that other sectors and jurisdictions will use these materials as a case example and resource to inform how to apply sectoral workforce model in the Canadian employment ecosystem.



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Glossary of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AC	Advancement Coaches
BIPOC	Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour
CM	Case Managers
CRT	Career Readiness Training
DALA	Digby Area Learning Association
DE	Developmental Evaluation
FSC	Future Skills Canada
HC	Home building and Renovations Construction
HR	Human Resource
ICI	Industrial/Commercial/Institutional construction
IS	Implementation Science
ISANS	Immigration Services Association of Nova Scotia
NOW	New Opportunities for Work
NS	Nova Scotia
NVivo	Software for organizing, analyzing, and gaining insights from qualitative data, including interviews, surveys, and multimedia sources.
OHS	Occupational Health and Safety
OST	Occupational Skills Training
PEI	Prince Edward Island
SPOs	Service Provider Organizations
SO	Sector Organizations
TA	Technical Assistance

Note on Language: Program vs. Project - AspireAtlantic was funded as a project but designed and implemented as a program. We use both terms interchangeably.

1 Introduction

Atlantic Canada has long experienced differences in the labour market compared to the rest of the country. The rate of economic growth in Atlantic Canada is half the projected federal rate.[1] It is common that the unemployment rate in Nova Scotia exceeds the expected average outlined by the federal government. Around the time AspireAtlantic began in 2019, the Nova Scotian labour force was on a four-year upward employment trend which continued after the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.[2] This increase was not evident in all industries. For example, Nova Scotian employers in manufacturing and construction continued to record vacancy rates higher than the national average.[3] There is an unexpected discrepancy between these unemployment and vacancies rates in Atlantic Canada.[1] Sectors are seeing increases in job vacancies, particularly in sales and service, construction trades, or transportation sectors despite population growth and significant unemployment rates. Canadians are also concerned about their job security, as about 10% of Canadians are in a role with an end date.[4] This is also evidenced through the rising number of Canadian "gig workers" who are taking on contracts or tasks.[5]

Introduction

Canadian employers are increasingly reporting a shortage of skilled workers.[6] Through their struggles with high vacancies, they are becoming more aware of the importance of selecting for both technical and soft skills. Technical skills include specialized job knowledge, while the term soft skills is used to describe general traits useful in workplaces. Soft skills include communication, teamwork, and adaptability. In addition, many acknowledge retention of good workers relies on internal career development pathways. There are a variety of programs offered by government and non-government agencies throughout Canada and across Nova Scotia that provide training opportunities to help individuals secure employment. Despite the success of these programs, there is a lack of an emphasis on post-employment services addressing contemporary issues such as retention and advancement. In recent years, other countries including the U.S.[7] and the U.K.[8] have implemented and studied more substantial efforts focusing on internal advancement in labour market interventions. This work has implied that longer-term individualized services are needed to help some people advance in their careers.

The idea of AspireAtlantic came in response to this need for advancement focused supports. AspireAtlantic is a sectoral workforce development program based on the WorkAdvance model, that has been adapted to build on the strengths of Canada's Atlantic region. The WorkAdvance model uses sector-based initiatives and job retention and advancement initiatives to serve low-income individuals find employment.[9] It aims to help job seekers prepare for and enter high-quality jobs in selected sectors. The overarching goal of AspireAtlantic is to move job seekers into middle skill jobs with advancement opportunities.

This report provides background on the WorkAdvance Model, how it was adapted for the Atlantic Canadian context, leading to the implementation of the AspireAtlantic program. It then describes the detailed findings of the initial developmental evaluation focused on implementation and outcomes of the program in the Nova Scotian employment ecosystem. The following graphic depicts a high-level timeline of key events associated with the development and implementation of AspireAtlantic in order to provide some overarching context.

The implementation toolkit is a companion document that provides additional information is about the program experience and promising practices that can support further program scalability – as depicted in #3 above. The toolkit is shared as a case example and resource for knowledge dissemination purposes, with the intent that it may inform the further applications of the core components of the WorkAdvance for success in other sectors and jurisdictions.

Additionally, other resources, such as insight reports, webinars, and experience videos have been developed to provide a variety of vantage points into AspireAtlantic. All these materials should also be considered in conjunction with those available from the implementation of WorkAdvance.[10]

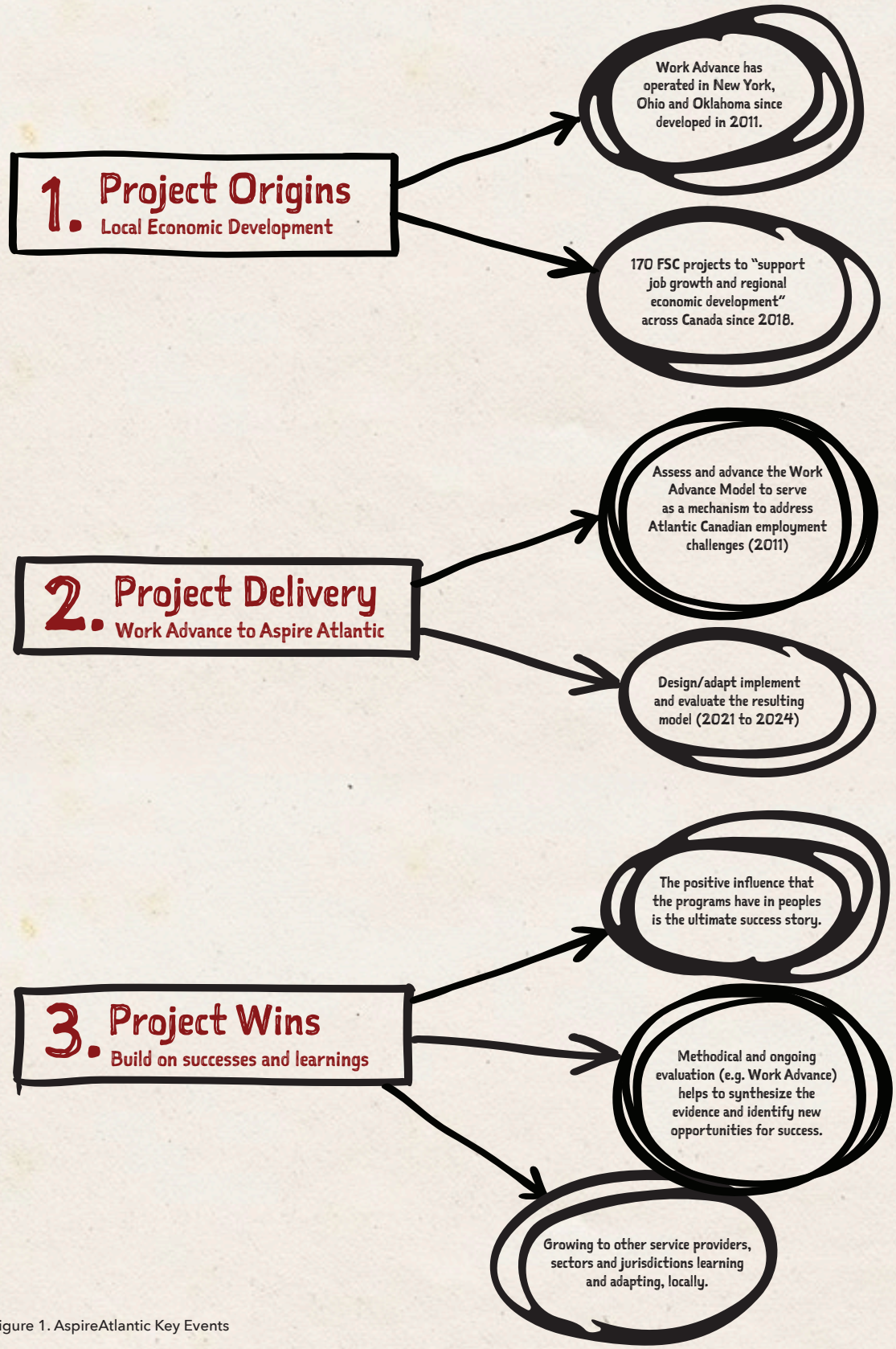
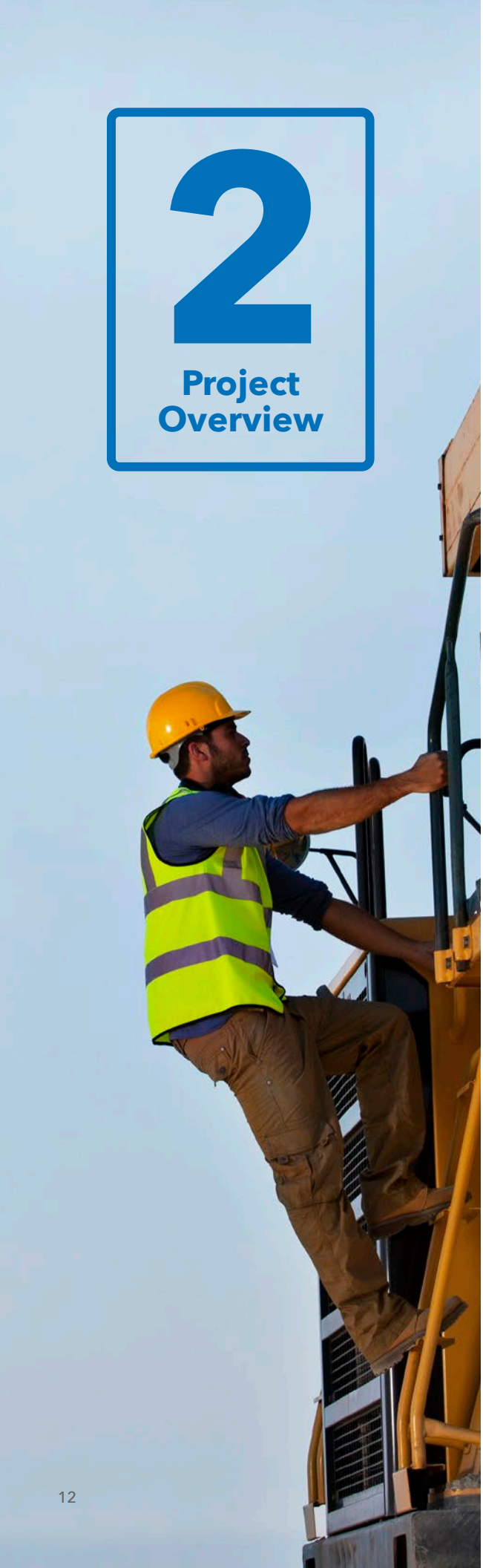


Figure 1. AspireAtlantic Key Events

2 Project Overview



2.1 Project Description

AspireAtlantic was funded by the Future Skills Centre in 2020 to adapt the successful and rigorously tested sector-based workforce development model, called WorkAdvance, to the Atlantic Canadian context and meet the needs of Atlantic Canadian businesses and job candidates. The WorkAdvance[11] model has a strong emphasis on post-employment services and is focused on moving unemployed and low-wage working individuals into "middle-skill" jobs. These jobs are described as good quality jobs that have better pay, benefits, and advancement opportunities.

FSC supported over 170 innovation projects across Canada aiming to support job growth and regional economic development.[12] Through their work, FSC follows the principles of agility, collaboration, inclusion, excellence, and impact. In 2021, FSC invested $25.9 million CAD into ten projects focused on supporting workers and employers. AspireAtlantic was one of those projects, specifically looking at navigating career pathways as well as innovation and scaling. Additional funding was provided by the Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education to support full time program staffing.

This section of the technical report provides a program overview by describing the program approach as well as the activities for each of the program phases. Section 2.2 describes the implementation science approach that provided an underpinning throughout all program phases. This is followed by Section 2.3 which provides an overview of the Design Phase, during which the fit of the WorkAdvance model for the Nova Scotia's labour market was explored. The section provides a summary of the WorkAdvance Model as well as insights from the in-depth needs analyses conducted by Pier Labs. Next the adaptations to the model and the resulting AspireAtlantic model is presented. In Section 2.4 the Pre-Launch and Implementation are discussed, this includes a description of all program partners as well as the stages of implementation and their corresponding activities.

2.2 Program Approach

An implementation science approach was utilized throughout the design, implementation, and evaluation of AspireAtlantic. Implementation Science is a relatively new discipline focused on bridging research evidence into practice. Acknowledging that many interventions and best practices in the research literature fail to translate to the employment assistance services ecosystem, there is value in using a systemic and comprehensive approach to implementation.

Figure 1 shows the testing approach taken by the Pier Labs team, which is based on the implementation model known as the Quality Implementation Framework (QIF).[13] The QIF distinguishes the following 4 phases:

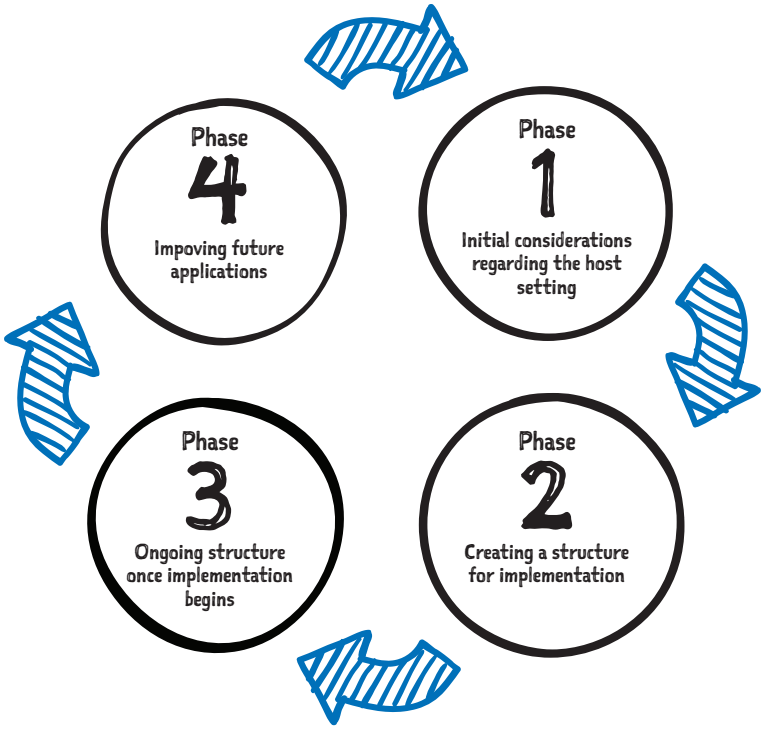


Figure 2. Adapted Quality Implementation Framework

- Phase 1 'Initial Considerations Regarding the Host Setting 'corresponds with the Design Phase of AspireAtlantic in which a needs assessment, a fit assessment and a readiness assessment was conducted. These analyses informed the decision about the adaptation made to the WorkAdvance model to fit Nova Scotians context.

- Phase 2 'Creating a Structure for Implementation' corresponds with the pre-launch stage of AspireAtlantic and includes the development of an implementation plan.

- Phase 3 'Ongoing Structure Once Implementation Begins' corresponds with the upfront staff training activities supplemented by learning framework activities, and ongoing support was provided by the AspireAtlantic Program Director. Rather than taking an intensive approach to technical assistance this approach can be described as a targeted approach to technical assistance, with an emphasize on upfront staff training and continuous developmental evaluation activities to support ongoing learning.

- Phase 4 'Improving Future Applications' is all about learning from experience so that the lessons can be inform any future applications of the AspireAtlantic model.

Project Overview

This program was also designed considering the Innovation Cycle developed by Blueprint,[14] an evaluator who collaborated FSC. This innovation cycle, shown in Figure 2, helps move from problems to impactful solutions.

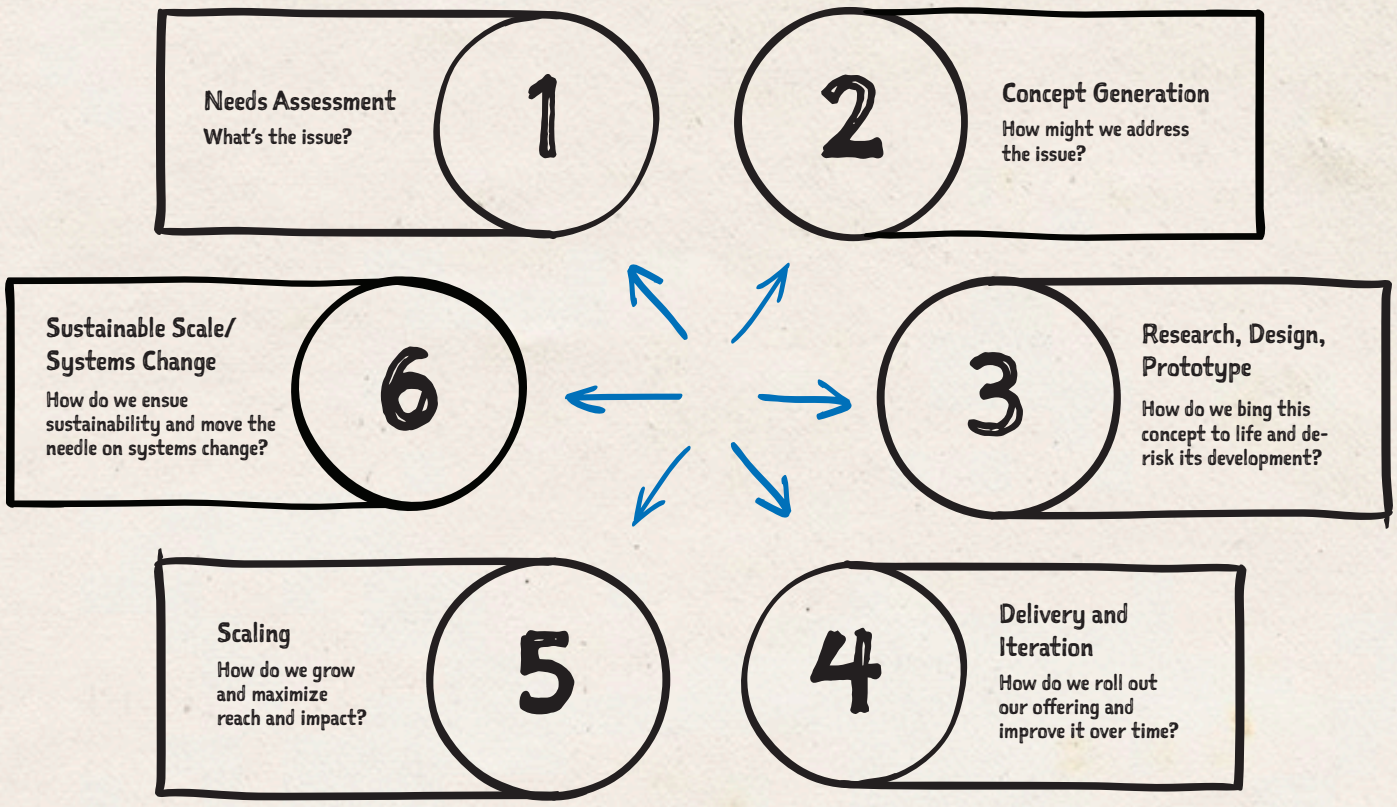
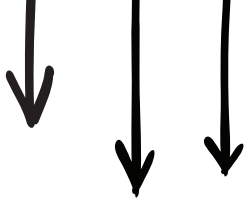


Figure 3. Innovation Model from Blueprint (n.d.)



2.3 AspireAtlantic Design Phase

Program design requires careful consideration of the existing employment conditions, challenges, and existing services. During the initial Design phase (Phase 1) the goal was to deepen our understanding of the issues facing the employment landscape and designed an adapted version of the WorkAdvance model to facilitate upward mobility for job seekers in Nova Scotia. More information on this model will be provided in section 2.3.1. The overarching research question was: Does the WorkAdvance model fit the Atlantic context? To answer this question the need, fit and readiness on Prince Edward Island (PEI) and in Nova Scotia (NS) were assessed by exploring the following sub questions:Does the WorkAdvance model address a need, challenge, or gap in Atlantic Canada?

1. **Does the WorkAdvance model address a need, challenge, or gap in Atlantic Canada?**
2. **How well does the WorkAdvance model fit in Atlantic Canada?**
3. **How ready is the service provider ecosystem to implement the WorkAdvance model?**

To better understand the Atlantic Canadian employment landscape the Pier Labs research team reviewed Statistics Canada Labour Market reports, provincial government reports and interviewed 21 representatives from 11 sectors in NS and PEI. To gain input from potential future participants, 15 job seekers were interviewed. Furthermore, the research team consulted with key stakeholders such as SPOs and facilitated discussions with government departments. Additionally, all available WorkAdvance reports were reviewed and MDRC and two of the SPOs were interviewed to understand the implementation of WorkAdvance in the U.S. The next sections will summarize the insights gathered during this phase.

2.3.1 WorkAdvance

AspireAtlantic was inspired by the successful WorkAdvance Model.[15] WorkAdvance is a workforce development model focused on sector needs. WorkAdvance was developed and tested using an experimental design in different sectors (e.g., technology, environmental remediation, transportation, manufacturing, and health care) in three U.S. cities. The primary aim of WorkAdvance is to improve employment and earning opportunities for people in populations that are more commonly unemployed or working in low-wage positions. The goal was to build their skills to find positions that would typically be middle-skill and offer better pay, benefits, and advancement opportunities. The model (Figure 4) differs from other programs by intentionally focusing on post-employment services and advancement assistance following job placement.[16]

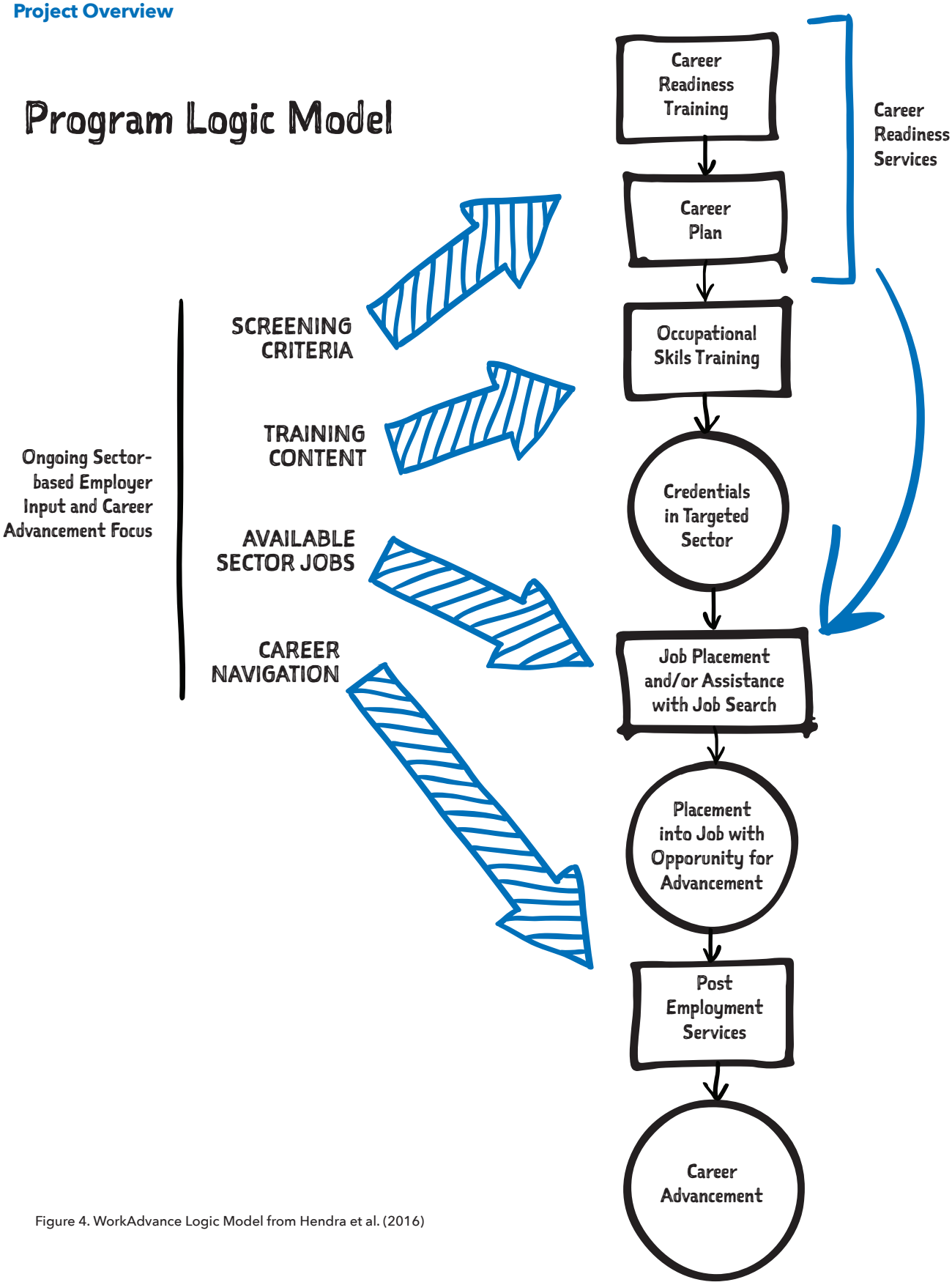


Figure 4. WorkAdvance Logic Model from Hendra et al. (2016)

Project Overview

Since completion, the U.S. implementation of the WorkAdvance model undergone continuous evaluation at various timepoints.[17, 18, 19, 20] Using randomized controlled trials, MDRC studied the impact of the WorkAdvance model in the U.S. 2,564 participants took part in the program. MDRC determined that the WorkAdvance model was connected to increased credential attainment, securing long-term employment, and increased earnings for some providers and subgroups.[21, 22, 23, 24]

The success of this model identified through these assessments inspired Pier Labs to adapt the model. These key implementation findings highlight the potential benefits of the program, while providing guidance for implementation and recommendations for improvement pulled from the WorkAdvance reports cited above:

Implementation Finding 1 - Figuring out how to implement the model took service providers over a year.[25]

This model is demanding and requires strong relationships between participants, employers, and other sector or training representatives. The model is more difficult to implement if staff are not dedicated to it full-time. It is crucial for staff to gain expertise needed to support the model The extent to which the ecosystem has the required strengths and capacity to implement the model will influence the results.

Implementation Finding 2 - Only 20% of interested applicants were qualified.[26]

Objective and subjective eligibility requirements were used for this program, including literacy or numeracy tests, interest and commitment to a sector, ability to work in the sector, and motivation to complete the training. The selection process resulted in 1 out of 5 interested individuals being qualified for the program. Barriers still occurred for eligible participants, however. This low rate of acceptance meant that service providers needed to invest resources into recruiting many individuals.

Implementation Finding 3 - Career readiness content was similar across service providers.[27]

The activities in the program gave participants an introduction to the sector. This included how to get a job in the sector, norms, and employer expectations. In addition, some providers focused on general workplace skills like punctuality, working in teams, and problem-solving. Pre-employment advancement coaching was integrating into the program from the beginning and addressed technical, emotional, and behavioural issues. Employer partners gave their ideas to the service providers to help build this component.

Implementation Finding 4 - Some providers relied on people at local industry associations to facilitate job placements.[28]

Optimizing existing relationships with employers shows a promising approach for matching participants with vacancies in the sector. While the sector-based training approach aimed to prepare job seekers for employment, it was a dual-customer model. Having relationships with employers helped to serve employers' need to fill vacancies. Service providers with long existing relationships had an advantage leveraging these relationships.

Implementation Finding 5 - Integrating post-employment services into an organizational ecosystem that has historical focused on pre-employment services requires a significant change in mindset.

In their reports, WorkAdvance noted post-employment services were the least developed component of the model for service providers, even following implementation.[29] This impacted the dedication and ability that the staff had to this aspect of the program. WorkAdvance aimed to help these service providers from a placement-first strategy to help individuals retain and advance in jobs.

2.3.2 Need

Does the WorkAdvance model address a need, challenge, or gap in Atlantic Canada?

The insights derived from our research affirm that the WorkAdvance model indeed addresses the identified needs and challenges within the Atlantic Canadian context. This is evident through the following reasons:

Insight 1 - Small to medium size enterprises have little to no HR capacity.

Many businesses in Atlantic Canada are smaller in scale and operate in rural areas. Noted barriers include mismatch in wages, negative perceptions of the industry, limited human resource capacity, and outdated attitudes or practices. These align with a report funded by Future Skills Centre on small to medium enterprises in Canada.[30] Sector representatives felt capacity hindered efforts to diversify the workforce in terms of recruitment and retention of underrepresented groups. A roundtable hosted by our team also indicated interest in building human resources capacities and increasing workforce participation of underrepresented groups.

Insight 2 - Atlantic Canada has suitable sectors based on criteria from the WorkAdvance study.

A variety of sectors across Atlantic Canada were assessed for suitability in this program. These included fishing, community, agriculture, manufacturing, boatbuilding, clean tech, home building and renovations construction (HC), industrial/commercial/institutional construction (ICI), aerospace, trucking, and bioscience. The following criteria were considered while selecting sectors:

1. **Jobs that pay trained workers more than those without training.**
2. **Large number of job vacancies in middle-skill jobs that require credentials.**
3. **Entry-level jobs with clear advancement pathways.**
4. **Skills can be gained from short-term training.**
5. **Sector growth in the local economy.**

Based on this research, manufacturing, HC, and ICI were selected.

Insight 3 - There are some gaps in existing short-term occupational skills trainings.

During the environmental scan, we assessed workforce development programs to understand existing gaps. Nova Scotia has some workforce development programming that focuses on specific sectors or underrepresented groups such as women, Indigenous people, new immigrants, and African Nova Scotians. Despite the apparent oversaturation of occupational skills training programs, there are neither programs that comprise the components of WorkAdvance by focusing on training, support, job attainment, and advancement. Additional gaps noted that all the credential programs focused on trades rather than in-demand positions such as estimators or project managers.

Insight 4 - There were limited evaluations on the effectiveness of past programs.

Key parties that we spoke to seemed pleased with past and existing training programs. That said, formal evaluations were often not completed to provide insight on their effectiveness. There is one recent example, a program called New Opportunities for Work (NOW),[31] which focused on long-term labour force attachment. After support 186 Nova Scotians through their employment journey, as well as offering over 100 employers with supports and diversity training, this program concluded in February 2020. This program had an evaluation, though it differed from AspireAtlantic as it had wage subsidies and was not sector-based. Due to the unique focuses of our program, it is unlikely that other programs have measured the same outcomes.

Insight 5 - The perceived value of this model in the existing ecosystem was the focus on advancement and post-employment services.

WorkAdvance aimed to bring together best practices shown in the research based on the expectation that a combination of these would provide better outcomes than a single element. It also was believed to have social impact as the focus on upward mobility is an intentional mechanism to break the poverty cycle. These two aspects bring immense value to the employment ecosystem in Nova Scotia.

2.3.3. Fit

How well does the WorkAdvance model fit in Atlantic Canada?

Considering our findings, it is evident that the WorkAdvance model could fit effectively within the Atlantic context. Subsequently, the following insights elucidate the reasons for this alignment:

Unemployment conditions

Statistics Canada showed that the Atlantic region consistently has unemployment rates greater than federal rates (5-year average of 8.92 vs 6.74, respectively).[32] The trend of heightened unemployment in the area has been consistent for over 15 years. Most jobs in Nova Scotia are concentrated in the Halifax Regional Municipality. However, the Southern region has also seen an increase in the number of jobs. The Cape Breton, North Shore, and Annapolis Valley regions experienced employment declines over the last decade. Cape Breton has the highest unemployment rate in the province. Across Nova Scotia, the unemployment rate is higher amongst visible minorities and Indigenous people.[33, 34]

Two segments of job seekers

Through qualitative analysis with 17 job seekers identified through Nova Scotia Works, we found that most job seekers had skill gaps to address (39%). Interestingly, a meaningful segment (25%) of these clients did not have skill gaps but were unable to find employment. This indicated that there was a possibility for tailored pre- and post-employment supports depending on the participants' familiarity with the sectors or skill gaps.

Utility of generic employment supports

Job seekers also discussed perceived issues with existing employment programs. Participants indicated they would like programs to match their capabilities but felt that programs served a narrow audience. Furthermore, a few participants spoke to the lack of applicability of generic job search and application information for sectors. Employers in some sectors may not be advertising jobs in traditional ways (e.g., online job banks) and may not have conventional application requirements. The participants also noted they found templates and tips available online to be unhelpful.

Benefits of improved screening.

Some job seekers noted they use training programs as a constructive way to "fill their day" rather than having specific intentions for its use. Better screening processes and/or coaching could simplify this process for all parties. Job seekers and employers feel that sector-specific requirements make the screening process more thorough. This finding suggests that more rigorous screening would be an important program component. AspireAtlantic's screening process could act as a pre-screening in a way to benefit organizations as it showcased the candidate's dedication to the industry. Employers were more likely to be invested in workers who were interested in their sector rather than any job.[35]

Potential participants want to know more about jobs in these sectors before committing.

Many participants stated that understanding what a typical workday entailed helped them commit to the often-required intensive training programs. This is an important insight that recruiters may integrate into their strategies. Furthermore, this approach might help disassemble negative perceptions that people have which hinder them from considering these areas. Some job seekers lack the confidence to sign up for specific programs or pursue certain career pathways.

Job seekers continue to face systemic discrimination and financial barriers.

Discrimination in the form of sexism, racism, ageism, etc. creates barriers for job seekers. These issues impact the AspireAtlantic model as the selected sectors tend to be white male-dominated.[36, 37, 38] Job seekers expressed their experiences as minority candidates in these areas, while employers shared that this stigma is evident. Both parties reiterated the difficulties that people with low-incomes face when attempting to complete expensive training opportunities that might pay off in the long-term. For example, many newcomers work "survival jobs" as the immediate payoff is necessary to sustain their households. These roles often hinder their opportunities to attend training sessions to advance in other areas, however.

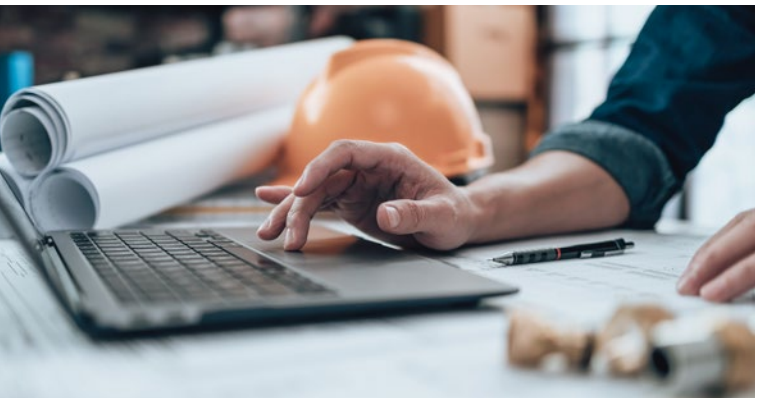
2.3.4 Readiness

How ready is the service provider ecosystem to implement the WorkAdvance model?

During the design phase of the program, the goal was to identify if the WorkAdvance model showed promise of adding to employment services in the region. It was found that service providers were supportive of this model but that there were also gaps in the way that the local employment ecosystem operates, therefore the delivery model needed to be adapted to allow for increased collaboration in the ecosystem. It was also identified that there was a need for implementations supports as the WorkAdvance model requires the service providers to work differently.

Existing SPO Ecosystem

Both Nova Scotia and PEI had a variety of employment programs and services available. Unlike AspireAtlantic, the existing programs are almost exclusively focused on pre-employment services and job entry services. The funding model and performance incentive structures reemphasize this. This disincentivizes programs providing post-employment services such as job retention and advancement.[39]



Experience with evidence-based interventions

Most SPOs in the province have little to no experience with implementing evidence-based programs. The system also lacks the capacity to implement programs with the rigour and scale required for a randomized control trial. We concluded that we needed to adapt this program to evaluate the feasibility in the province before undertaking a full impact evaluation.

Common assumptions about workforce development programs

There were some assumptions commonly held amongst the key parties about the model prior to our knowledge dissemination. The first misconception was that wages were subsidized for employers participating in AspireAtlantic. This assumption might be based on the commonality of this approach in other employment programs in Nova Scotia. A second misconception was that employers would need to commit to job placements to participate in the program. This is not the case as the WorkAdvance model is based on expected vacancies in the sectors that will need to be filled. The goal is to have graduates who are strong competitors in the job market, though they may benefit from the relationships built between employers and service providers.

SPO Readiness

Three SPO completed the Readiness Assessment, all of which are in Nova Scotia, other organisations opted out. The three organizations are:

- Digby Area Learning Association (DALA) promotes lifelong learning through training in a rural area of the province.
- Immigration Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) is the largest immigrant-serving agency in Atlantic Canada. One of their services is employment programming and services for newcomers. The organization is based in Halifax.
- MetroWorks is an innovative learning centre providing employment programs, many of which address the needs of individuals experiencing barriers. They operate multiple social enterprises within Halifax.

The SPOs demonstrated a strong culture and innovative climate within their organization. Overall, the SPOs were well positioned to deliver a sector-based employment program. All three SPOs had experience delivering sector specific training, including in the construction sector. Through these programs the SPOs have existing relationships with employers, which could be leveraged. SPOs had an explicit desire to expand and diversify their programming to include a focus on middle-skill jobs and advancement.

The SPOs had no or limited experience with intensive screening and advancement coaching. The intensive screening in the WorkAdvance model ensured that candidates were set up for success, selecting the clients that meets the criteria agreed upon by program staff, service providers, and the targeted sector. This was a deviation from the existing approaches as the SPOs typically delivered programs that are tailored to the individual needs. Due to its highly selective and prescriptive nature the WA model will not be a good fit for clients who experience substantial barriers.

2.3.5 AspireAtlantic Model

Based on the conclusions of the design phase, it was determined that AspireAtlantic could help Nova Scotians acquire and advance within middle skill jobs in these sectors. Based on the needs assessment conducted, the AspireAtlantic model (Figure 5) was adapted from WorkAdvance. Like WorkAdvance, the goal was to provide training and resources to aid job seekers who disproportionately face unemployment or underemployment in attaining middle skill jobs with advancement opportunities.

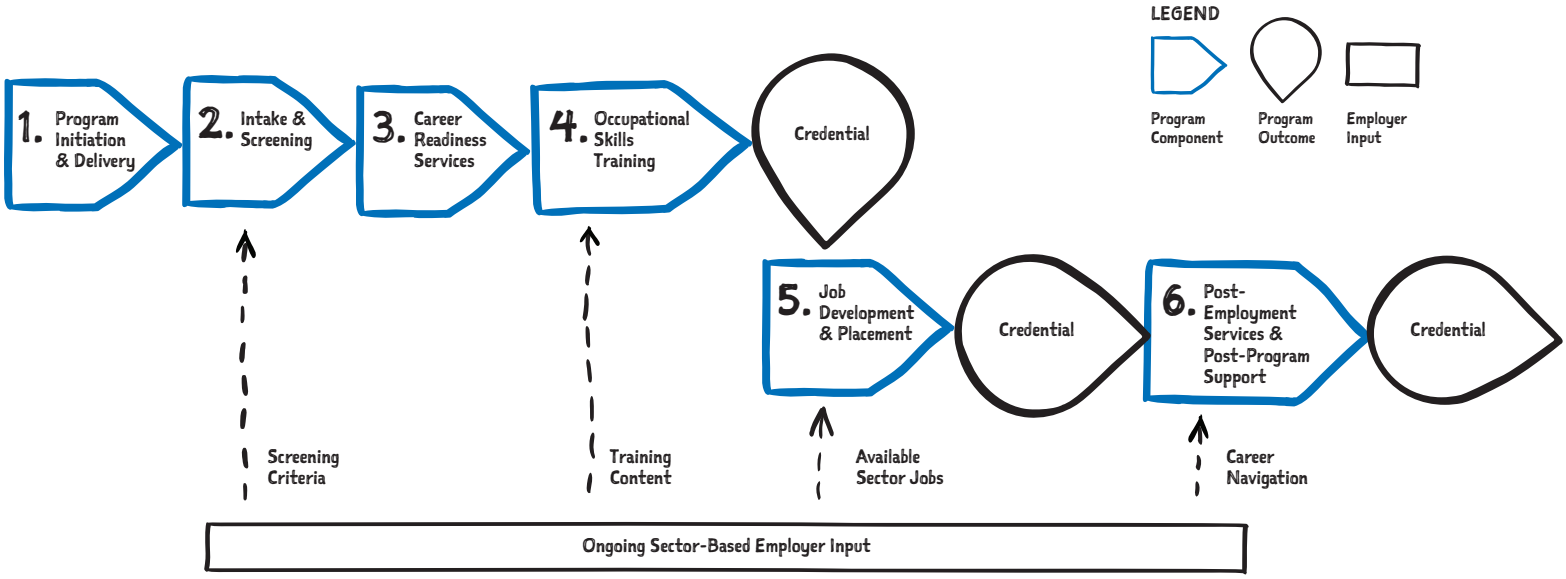


Figure 5. The AspireAtlantic Model

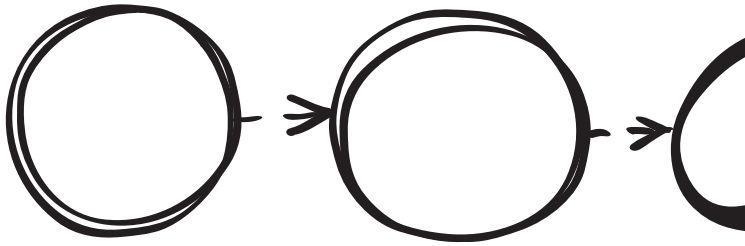
Based on the needs assessment conducted, the AspireAtlantic model (Figure 5) was adapted from WorkAdvance. The full logic model is available in Appendix F.

Based on the Phase 1 findings, it was determined that two 'streams' of program participants could potentially benefit from AspireAtlantic. The first stream would consist of job seekers who needed both sector-specific skills and training, as well as 'soft' skills to support career advancement. The second stream would consist of job seekers who had existing sector-specific credentials but struggled to maintain employment or advance and may benefit mostly from building soft skills. The goal of having two streams was to tailor education for groups with and without previous experience in the industry. In addition to the two streams, the identified sectors have expressed a desire to increase diversity of underrepresented groups within their sector including women, new immigrants, and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) individuals. Findings from the job seeker interviews have also highlighted barriers such as sexism and having limited "Canadian experience" in securing stable employment. Our model will also intentionally market AspireAtlantic to these underrepresented groups to help diversify the recruitment pipeline for these sectors.

Project Overview

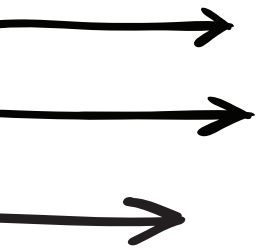
Career Readiness Training

As part of the two-streams adaptation, the career readiness workshops was planned to be tailored for each stream. The career readiness workshops for Stream 1 were to include an orientation to the sector because these participants will be less familiar with the sector, whereas the workshops for Stream 2 would focus on overcoming past challenges individuals may have faced gaining entry or working in the sector. The program was ultimately offered with one stream. More information about this decision is available in Section 2.4.



Occupational Skills Training

While the original WorkAdvance model had SPOs organize the skills training, AspireAtlantic relied on the sectors to provide the skills training. The value of having sector-validated training is to ensure the credential is in demand and recognized by local employers. In addition, this was beneficial as it ensured relevant curricula. This was based on the existing workforce development strengths of the identified sectors. Based on the needs and fit assessment it was determined that AspireAtlantic would test the model with the following sectors: HC, ICI and Manufacturing. This decision was supported by the respective sector councils, who saw the partnership as an opportunity to learn and innovate together in the delivery of AspireAtlantic.



Retention and Advancement

While the WorkAdvance model focused primarily on providing retention and advancement support to the individual program participant, AspireAtlantic will take a two-prong approach by also providing sector-based customized Human Resource (HR) support to employers who hire AspireAtlantic candidates. Because the economy in both Nova Scotia is characterized by small to medium-size enterprises (SMEs), sector representatives highlighted the lack of Human Resource (HR) capacity. This limitation negatively impacts employer efforts to diversify the workforce and cultivate a work culture that satisfies the demands of today's workforce. This two-prong effort is anticipated to contribute to employee retention and advancement. The original length of the post-employment component was up to 2 years and has been shortened to 18 months in order fit at 2 training cohorts within the time frame of FSC's existing mandate.

2.4 AspireAtlantic Implementation

The Implementation Phase of the program occurred over a series of stages. The overarching timeline for the implementation phase was 2 years and 9 months (shown in Appendix A). Building on the findings of phase one, adaptation and implementation of the model proceeded over four stages. The goal of **stage one** was to establish the technical assistance (TA) team and develop training materials. The technical assistance team aimed to increase the efficacy of the program by providing resources and supports needed to implement an evidence-based model such as this. The goal of this team was to help improve the outcome of this innovative program. The TA team brought together service delivery partners to finalize the logistics and details of program delivery. Once the details were finalized, the TA team hired program staff and collaborated with the service delivery partners to develop program materials for recruitment and training. Multiple blocks of training were offered to the program staff. This covered the WorkAdvance Model, the AspireAtlantic Model, recruitment/screening, CRT, OST, developmental evaluation, and other important implementation practices. During the pre-launch phase, the TA team also worked to co-develop an evaluation framework (Appendix B) in alignment with the FSC common outcomes framework and with key parties.

Program Partners and Staffing

To utilize the strengths of the existing employment services and training ecosystem, the AspireAtlantic program was delivered through a collaboration between SPOs and Sector Councils or Industry Associations supported by Pier Lab's TA Team and Program Director. The Program Partners were DALA, ISANS, MetroWorks, the ICI Sector Council, the Homebuilding and Renovations Sector Council, and the Excellence in Manufacturing Consortium. Outside of the Program Director and TA team, both based at Pier Labs, the staff involved in AspireAtlantic were Case Managers (CMs) (employed by SPOs) or ACs (employed by sector councils). CMs and ACs worked with the Program Director and SPOs to ensure the program ran effectively. They worked to connect job seekers with the program and collaborated with the ACs. The ACs provided mentorship to the participants regarding occupational skills and their job development. The selection and onboarding of program staff included the promotion of the position through partner organizations and external recruitment channels. More detailed information about staff roles is available in Appendix C.

Program Delivery Activities

The program was delivered in three parts to eight cohorts. Most of these cohorts were focused on manufacturing (4), with the remaining focusing on ICI (2) and HC (2). Recruitment for the initial cohorts began in January of 2022, and the final cohort graduated in May 2023. The programs ran for 8 to 12 weeks with varying structure depending on the sector and group needs.

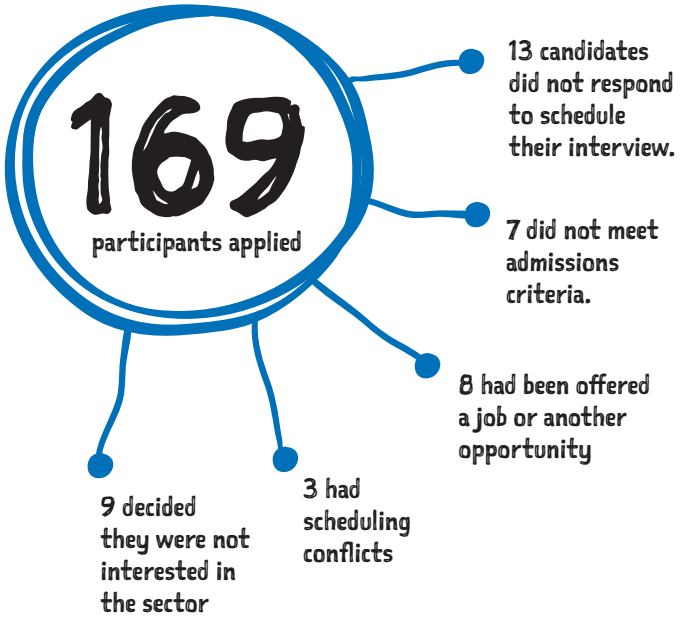
Project Overview

Stage two included the recruitment and screening of participants. The phase 1 research showed that there were people who have necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities but were still facing barriers to entry in these jobs. As a result, our recruitment criteria did not include the expectation of a skills gap. This differed from the WorkAdvance model which primarily served people who were unemployed or working in low-wage positions that lacked the necessary credentials due to the experimental design of their program.

Job seekers were recruited through SPOs. The following criteria were used to prioritize potential participants:

- Former/current participants who have successfully completed an intensive program (i.e., requires high level of commitment motivation, 3+ days a week)
- Individuals with limited (less than 2 years) Canadian work experience.
- Lower level of post-secondary education.
- People who have lower socioeconomic status (under $32,000CAD or approximately $15.50/hour). It is worth noting that minimum wage in Nova Scotia ranged from $13.35 to $14.50 throughout this program. This increase could have influenced the wage of selected participants.
- People in underrepresented groups including women, new immigrants, and Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC).

The initial goal was to recruit 150 participants. In planning this program, the initial intention was to have two streams. 130 participants were set to be in stream one, with complete training. The other 20 participants would be in stream two, focusing just on CRT. In total, 169 participants applied. All participants who completed the application were contacted for interviews. 13 candidates did not respond to schedule their interview. Of those interviewed, 7 were rejected as they did not meet admissions criteria. Others chose not to participate as they had been offered a job or another opportunity (8), scheduling conflicts arose (3), or they decided they were not interested in the sector (9). Other documented reasons included financial concerns, lost contact, or personal reasons. Ultimately, 97 participants began AspireAtlantic training and 88 graduated. The program was adjusted to offer only one stream of that included comprehensive training. Those who did not complete the program found jobs (3), had personal reasons (2), decided they were not interested in the sector (2) or lost contact (2).



Project Overview

Stage three focused on the two training components: Career Readiness Training (CRT) and Occupational Skills Training (OST).

It is important to note that it was decided to do a single stream model despite a needs analysis indicating benefits to implementing a two-stream model. This is primarily because we did not have enough program applicants in our early recruitment phase to warrant a two-stream approach; furthermore, we received few applications from individuals who would be a good fit for the program, and who also had the relevant sector-specific skills or training that the program would provide. As such, all participants received training in both sector-specific skills and soft skills through Occupational Skills Training and Career Readiness Training, respectively.

Participants were offered a stipend of $175 per week of training up to a maximum of $2000 to cover related expenses that may have presented barriers, such as transportation, childcare, or safety gear costs. The CMs facilitated CRT. These sessions focused on providing general information about skills and behaviours that the individuals might need to leverage in the workplace. Though they varied based on the sector, common learning outcomes included interpersonal skills, self-care and resiliency, digital skills, soft skills and self-reflection, essential skills, workplace expectations, job searching and job applications. CRT involved providing the participants with relevant information and allowing the opportunity for guided practice. This allowed participants to practice these new skills and receive feedback to improve in a safe space.

The focus of the OST component differed depending on their sector of interest and was facilitated by sector councils. While the original WorkAdvance model had some SPOs provide skills training, AspireAtlantic relied solely on sectors to provide skills training. This allowed us to create a credential that fit local employers' requirements and demands. ICI Construction Sector Council discussed the fundamentals of construction such as occupational health and safety (OHS) training, estimating, and program management. HC focused on the fundamentals like OHS, construction fundamentals, and industry specific skills. Manufacturing covered topics including blueprint reading, OHS, and quality management systems. The goal was to integrate the soft skills discussed in CRT with these technical skills.

Stage four occurred after program graduation and focused on assisting participants through their career progression. It is important to note that AspireAtlantic was not a guaranteed placement program so participants needed to complete a more traditional job search following completion. They did receive assistance from the AspireAtlantic team throughout their job search. Participants then receive ongoing 18-month advancement coaching, however. This included assistance with application documents and interview preparation. The support continued after they gained employment. In addition, employers who hired a participant were offered support through AspireAtlantic. This commitment is based on the findings of some WorkAdvance providers that participants require time to grow and advance through their career.

3 Learning Framework

3.1 Objective

The learning framework took a developmental evaluation approach to support the implementation of AspireAtlantic. The framework focused on the implementation processes and short to intermediate outcomes as the purpose is to generate and make sense of data in a timely manner to optimize opportunities for response and adaptation during implementation.

Leads from the partner organizations co-designed the learning framework and were invited to participate in the learning circles. The developmental evaluation was guided by Pier Labs, while a full program evaluation was conducted by BluePrint. Program staff were be supported by their host organizations to collect data, participate in sensemaking activities, and engage in learning circles.

3.2 Evaluation Questions

The developmental evaluation activities were guided by an evaluation framework that sought to answer evaluation questions on the program operations, participant outcomes, and employer outcomes.

Below are the questions that have been prioritized by the program partners.

I. Program Operations

1. In what ways does the existing organizational structure, processes, and capacity support or hinder AspireAtlantic?
2. Are the core program components being implemented as intended?
3. Is the model effectively reaching the prioritized population for whom it was designed? Is the program reaching a diverse population of job seekers?
4. Are any resources/supports needed to improve model design and/or enable high-quality implementation?
5. How much does the program cost per unit of output (e.g., cost per participant, cost per module of training delivered)?

II. Participant Outcomes

6. Which outreach strategies are the most effective?
7. Is the training meeting the needs of job seekers? In what ways is AspireAtlantic supporting participants' job attainment, retention, and/or advancement?
8. Do participants in the model achieve the intended short- and long-term employment and advancement outcomes?
9. What contextual factors or intermediate outcomes are most important in generating the desired long-term participant employment and advancement outcomes?

III. Employer Outcomes

10. Is the training meeting the needs of employers? In what ways is AspireAtlantic supporting employee recruitment, retention, and advancement for employers?
11. Is the screening process effective for sectors?

3.3 Methodology

A variety of data collection methods were used to answer our evaluation questions. Data was collected using participant surveys, participant interviews, staff journals, staff focus groups (learning circles), Following the dual-customer approach, these focused on different roles within AspireAtlantic. Participants remained the primary focus. The table below provides an overview of all data collection tools used to inform the evaluation of the program.

METHOD	PARTICIPANT GROUP	TIMING AND FREQUENCY	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
INTERVIEWS	Participants	Mid-program	45
	2 months post-graduation		28
	6 months post-graduation		16
	1 year post graduation		5
SURVEYS	Participants	During intake	72
	Post-graduation		54
	3 months post-graduation		27
	9 months post-graduation		25
INTERVIEWS	Employers	Semi-structured interviews conducted as needed	5
LEARNING CIRCLES	Program staff (i.e. Program Director, CMs and ACs)	Throughout program implementation	7
STAFF JOURNALING	Program staff (i.e. Program Director, CMs and ACs)	Weekly - throughout program implementation	6

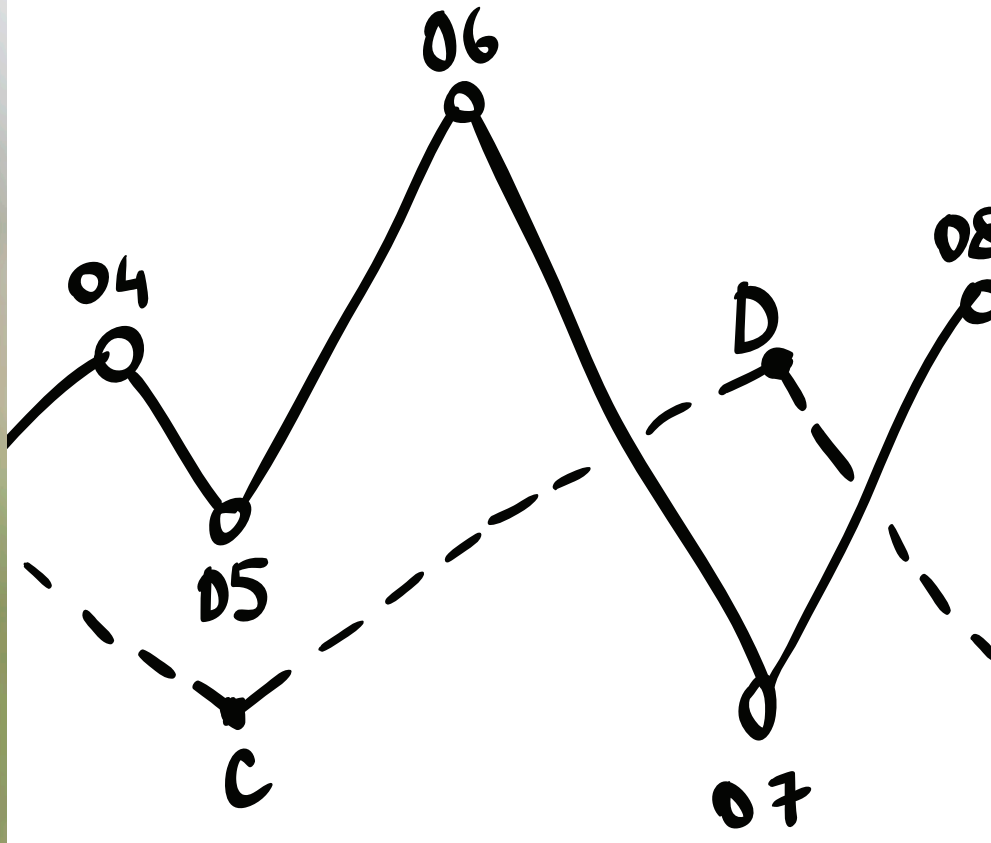
Table 1. Data collection information.

Additional information on the kinds of data collected, and our approach to analysis can be found in Appendix D. Data collection tools are available in Appendix E.

4

Findings

This section will outline program operations, participant and employer outcomes based on the evaluation findings. Using the data sources and evaluation outlined above, this section will provide insights into the testing of AspireAtlantic.



4.1 Program Operations

The table below provides a summary of the responses to the five evaluation questions regarding the program operations. In the section that follows the table a more detailed response to each of the evaluation questions is provided.

1.	In what ways does the existing organizational structure, processes, and capacity support or hinder AspireAtlantic?	GOOD	• Organizational buy-in from employers and sector councils, and personal networks were vital • Support provided was beneficial regardless of the size of the organization
2.	Are the core program components being implemented as intended?	CHALLENGE	• Conflicting responsibilities and timing challenges hindered smooth implementation • Clarity and adherence to selection criteria are crucial for consistency, fairness, and effectiveness • Effective recruitment and screening practices are essential for program inclusivity • Positive perception of screening process among participants • Flexibility and adaptation to external factors are crucial in program implementation • The job attainment, retention, and advancement services provided invaluable support to participants
3.	Are any resources/ supports needed to improve model design and/or enable high-quality implementation?	OPPORTUNITY	• Strong relationship between key parties contributed to implementation success. • Cost of the program requires more financial resources • Timing is important for the selected sectors

Table 2. Program operations evaluation summary based on the research findings.

4.	Is the model effectively reaching the prioritized population for whom it was designed? Is the program reaching a diverse population of job seekers?	GOOD	• The program effectively reached its target audience and attracted diverse job seekers
5.	How much does the program cost per unit of output (e.g., cost per participant, cost per module of training delivered)?	GOOD	• Program costs per Participant ($2,789,588 total program budget / 97 #participants started program) = **$28,760** - Breakdown of participant costs by Sector is ICI 32%, HC 32%, and Manufacturing 36% • Training (includes CRT/OST and weekly participant stipend of $175) costs per Participant ($904,589 total training budget / 97 # participants starting program) = **$9,325** • Delivery (program staff) costs per Participant ($808,236 total delivery budget / 97 # participants starting program) = **$8,332** • Research (Pier Labs team) costs per Participant ($922,354 total research budget / 97 # participants starting program) = **$9,509** • Other (includes Staff Training, Staff Travel, Legal, Audit) = **$1,594**

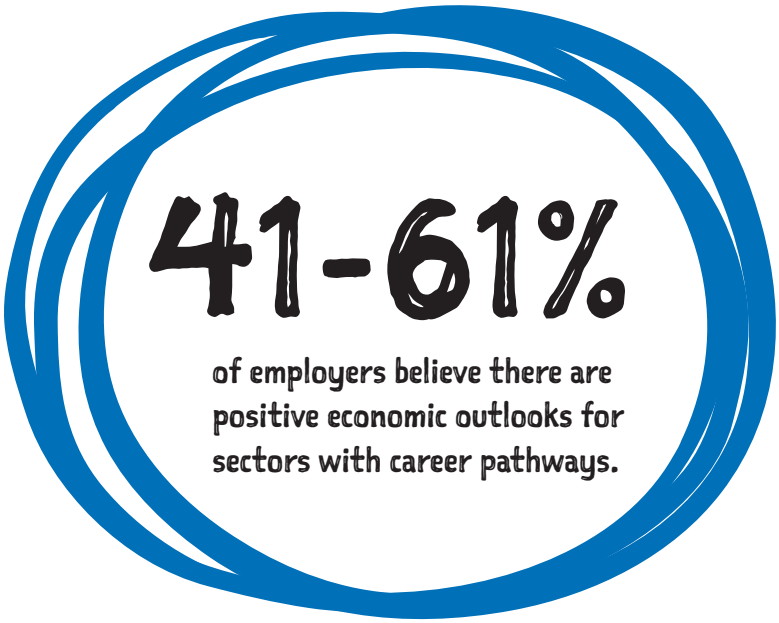
Table 2. Program operations evaluation summary based on the research findings.

4.1.1 Organizational structure, processes, and capacity

Evaluation Question 1: In what ways does the existing organizational structure, processes, and capacity support or hinder AspireAtlantic?

Organizational operations influenced the efficacy of AspireAtlantic in a variety of ways. In each stage of our program, we noted that buy-in from organizations was crucial for success. AspireAtlantic staff noted that the use of their personal networks to promote the program was essential in finding employers. This was true both for finding instructors for training sessions and as the job seekers began looking for careers. This aligns with the heavy reliance of networks for hiring in these three sectors. In the program design phase, as we were preparing for AspireAtlantic, we relied on organizations to shape the program's processes to create a useful program. The involvement of employers in the sector from the beginning helped to build the program. Employers helped inform what CRT materials would be worthwhile teaching. Instructors for the OST sessions were also industry professionals. This buy-in was again seen as essential once participants were job seeking. It is common for the selected sectors to rely heavily on word of mouth and networks in hiring. To break into this cycle, we relied on the expertise and relationships of our ACs. The trust that employers had with the ACs and sector councils facilitated entry for our graduates.

The Association of Industry Sector Councils[40] collects and analyzes data to assist with workforce planning. As previously mentioned, the sectors selected to demonstrate the AspireAtlantic model were growth sectors with career pathways. Employers generally (41-61%) believe there are positive economic outlooks for these sectors. Businesses in these sectors are most commonly small businesses (Median employee counts for HC = 5, Median for ICI = 15, Median for Manufacturing = 48). Canadian small businesses often do not have dedicated human resource teams.[41] ADP found that 70% of small businesses have informal or ad-hoc approaches to HR.[42] This puts the company at risk as HR tasks are seen as secondary to the owner or managers primary responsibilities. That said, AspireAtlantic participants had success attaining jobs in large corporations in addition to small businesses. Interviews occurred with managers with 10 employees as well as large nationwide groups with thousands of employees. The benefits of this support were noted regardless of the size of the organization.



4.1.2 Implementation fidelity

Evaluation Question 2: Are the core program components being implemented as intended?

Overall, this was a high-fidelity program where SPOs and sectors were providing services in line with the AspireAtlantic model. The goal of AspireAtlantic was to adapt and test the WorkAdvance model, which has proved successful in the Nova Scotia context. The five core components of AspireAtlantic were (1) intensive screening, (2) pre-employment and career readiness services, (3) occupational skills training, (4) job development and placement services, and (5) retention and advancement services. AspireAtlantic was designed to take an implementation science approach. This means that evidence-based practices were to be applied whenever possible. Staff were monitoring and continuously evaluating the program to adjust whenever necessary. From the findings presented, AspireAtlantic was implemented as intended.

CMs outlined the challenges they faced implementing the model as intended. The most commonly recurring theme was that they had conflicting responsibilities that made it difficult to finish all job duties. Responsibilities such as recruitment, case management, and conducting training sessions can be time consuming. When duties would overlap, the CMs would report feeling challenged keeping up with their tasks. Early in the program, CMs struggled as the ACs had yet to be hired. Their involvement was crucial in getting the program started. This was also reported in the next most common theme which was timing. Timing involved struggles with holidays shortening work weeks thus decreasing time available for training. It also involved discussions surrounding the timing of sessions; for example, if the graduation did not align with hiring for the sector. Timing was also a challenge when CMs faced issues out of their control like storms or illnesses.

A notable challenge for AspireAtlantic was the selection process and, specifically, clarity and adherence to criteria was seen as essential. In terms of selection, clarity and adherence to criteria was seen as essential. When program staff deviated from the originally outlined approaches, we saw concerns from participants regarding interest and fairness. For example, one cohort collaborated with an education institution to provide OST training, which meant their criteria needed to change to align with the institution. This caused issues later as it became less consistent and clear across groups. Finally, staff and participants both commented that they felt flexibility with criteria allowed for enrollment of people who were not an appropriate match for the program. This increased staff workload as they were challenged by the individuals' needs and behaviours. It also impacted other participants as the staff had less time and these individuals could be distracting the class. Our findings align with other research, which proposes that candidates' see selection as fairer when the opportunity is an appropriate fit, processes are consistent, they receive feedback, and interpersonal interactions are positive.[43]

Findings

Effective recruitment and screening practices are crucial as the intention was to offer a person-centered program. Criteria intended to involve participants who were motivated to enter these fields but have faced limitations in the past. As a result, the criteria were carefully constructed through the involvement of the technical assistance team, CMs, ACs, and employers. WorkAdvance partners commented that the screening process could put programs at risk of curating successful participants. It is true that AspireAtlantic and similar programs do not operate on a first-come, first-served process like many other programs in the Nova Scotian employment services system. That said, the criteria for success in candidates did not limit them based on things like previous experience, skills, or education. The factors considered in selection were intended to allow for participation of various groups, and our enrollment seemed to reflect this. The AspireAtlantic rejection rate was less than that of many WorkAdvance partners who had about a 20% acceptance.[44] Though we understand these concerns, the issues with selection noted by participants and staff do not seem to reinforce this concern.

Participants had positive perceptions about the screening process. When asked in interviews, they felt that it was clear and fair. It is worth noting that the perceptions of applicants who were not accepted to the program were not collected. Our perspective is limited as it is possible that the opinions of unsuccessful candidates differed. It is also worth noting that only 4.1% of those who applied were rejected, while the remainder who did not enroll self-selected out. Consent for evaluation was not collected from those who screened out of the program so further analysis of their characteristics cannot be shared.

CRT and OST were designed with the involvement of key parties as well. The curriculum was developed based on their needs. Once developed, however, the staff still worked to be flexible. A common example of this was meeting the needs of participants who had no sector experience and those who had previously worked in these sectors. Our CMs provided a variety of examples of their ability to adjust in these cases. For example, one CM spent time focusing on online job search platforms by helping more experienced participants develop their LinkedIn profiles. Flexibility was also necessary as this program was offered during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, Nova Scotia saw multiple periods that required citizens to limit in-person interaction. As a result, our team and participants needed to be receptive to offering programs virtually. Though in person was often stated to be the participants' and staff's preference, they adjusted when needed to online learning which allowed for training to be offered in challenging times.

The job attainment, retention, and advancement services offered by our staff also aligned with the expectations set out in the beginning of the program. Participants often noted that staff went above and beyond to ensure that their needs were met. For example, one participant discussed that their CM helped them to find a unique education opportunity for their child. Without this support, the participant would have been forced to relocate and stop focusing on their own career to homeschool their child. These services were invaluable for key parties in the program as it allowed for graduates to enter the labour market and succeed in new roles.

4.1.3 Required resources to ensure success

Evaluation Question 3: Are any resources/supports needed to improve model design and/or enable high-quality implementation?

As a comprehensive employment program, AspireAtlantic requires many financial, temporal, and interpersonal resources for success. At their core, employment programs must be serving the key parties to be successful. Through our interviews, we discovered that the services in Nova Scotia might be underutilized by employers. Many reported having negative experiences in the past relating to the quality of hires and services provided that impacted their interest in utilizing employment programs. Though it was a small sample, this knowledge could indicate a systemic barrier for job seekers and employers who could benefit from access to services. Their perceptions of advancement programs like AspireAtlantic are likely even lower, as there is a noted lack of awareness of programs integrating career development.[45] Through discussions with staff, we learned that participant success in their job search was influenced by their relationships in the sector. Their connections with AspireAtlantic staff helped to reduce these barriers and to develop their interest in our program.

The success of the program relied on strong relationships between key parties – job seekers, program staff, service delivery partners, and employers. From the beginning, relationships with sectors and SPOs allowed for the development of a thoughtful program. In recruitment, these relationships were again utilized to reach out to candidates and as a selling point of the program. When training, the ACs used their strong relationships to involve guest speakers in classes. This was one of the most favourable aspects of the program according to many participants. The ACs and CMs also required strong relationships with graduates to promote utilization of the supports and resources provided by the program. Finally, we saw increased reception to the program from employers who had developed a relationship with the program.

The need for financial resources is evidenced through the overall cost of the program, detailed in Section 4.1.5. In addition to the typical costs associated with training design and implementation, this program involved investing into supports. These included hiring CMs and ACs, as well as paying stipends to encourage participation. AspireAtlantic staff noted that wraparound supports were an appealing aspect of the training. Potential candidates saw it as an opportunity to attach to training when they might not be able to otherwise. Though this stipend was helpful, many staff noted that it may not have been sufficient based on the cost of living. They discussed that lessening the financial burden was crucial for inclusion of the priority groups. This could be accomplished using a higher weekly stipend or through offering flexibility in programming to give more time to work.

Timing is important for the selected sectors. For example, construction often picks up in the warmer months. For our program, we saw that this consideration could change the participants' job search process. Our second cohort was graduating in November or December. If they are concluding the program as work is slowing down, they could be left in a position where they must wait until the next season to attain a position. Some cohorts were at a disadvantage because of this timing. Timing was also a common topic for participants, though the adjustment needed in unclear. Some felt the program was too long, though others thought more time was needed to address the necessary topics.

4.1.4 Reaching target populations

Evaluation Question 4: Is the model effectively reaching the prioritized population for whom it was designed? Is the program reaching a diverse population of job seekers?

There were 72 participants who responded to survey one. The majority (61%) of our sample identified as men, 24% as women, and the remaining 12% identified as transgender, non-binary/gender diverse or chose not to identify. The gender breakdown of the respondents is shown in Figure 3. Most individuals had a high school education (34%), followed by having a bachelor's degree (24%) or post-graduate degree (20%). Figure 5 shows that 11% had finished College/ CEGEP/Other secondary education and 11% had not received their high school diploma (Figure 4). Just over half (51%) of the group had completed education in Canada while the remaining participants were educated internationally.

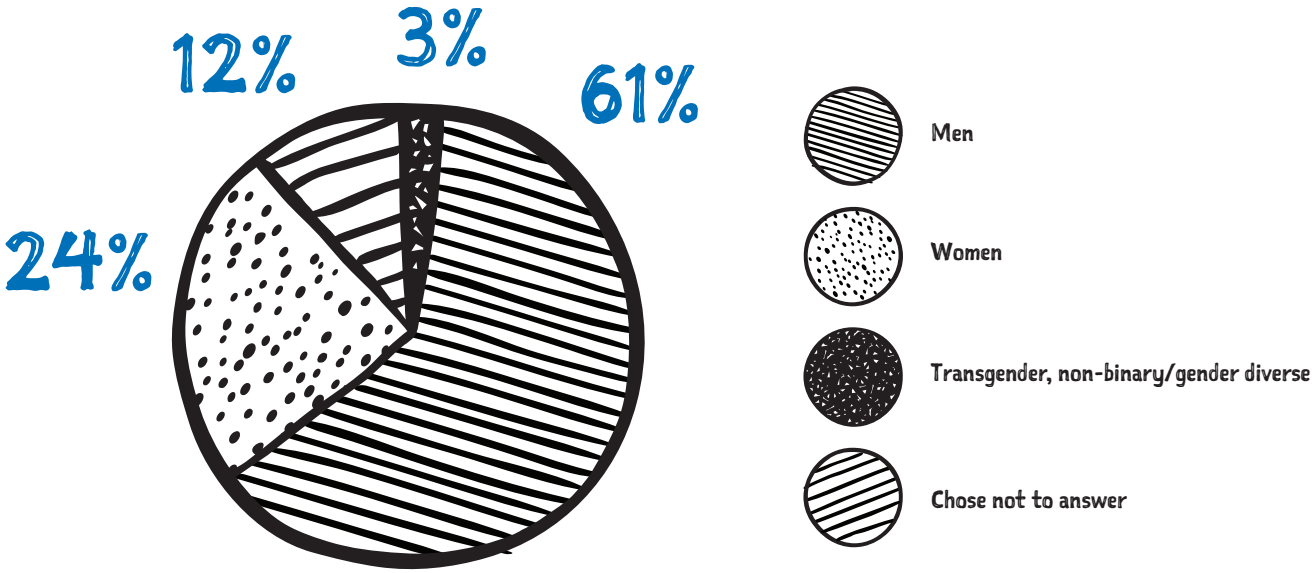


Figure 6 Gender breakdown of AspireAtlantic participants who responded to survey one.

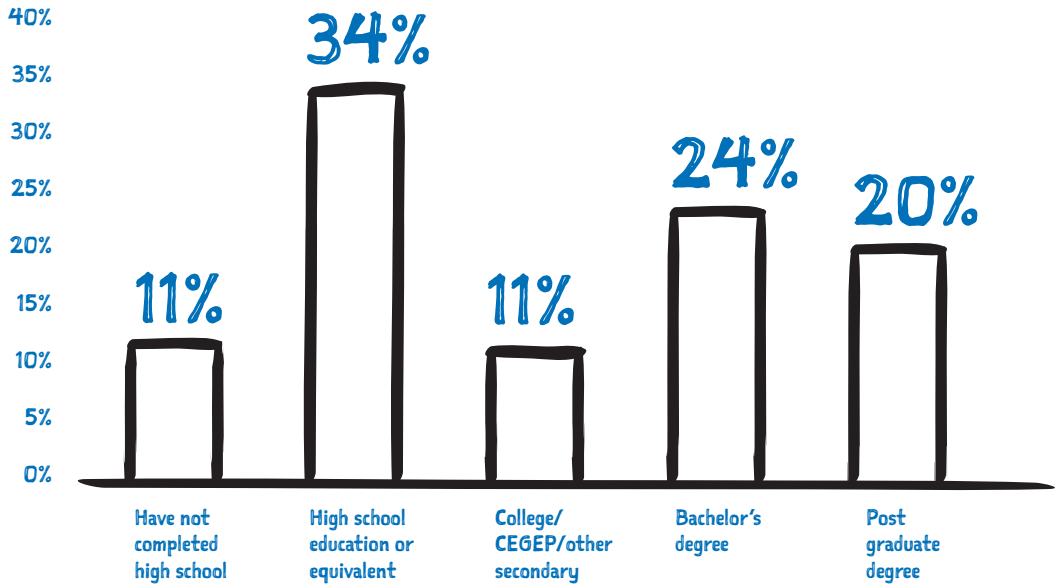


Figure 7 Education level of AspireAtlantic participants who responded to survey one.

Many job seekers enrolled in AspireAtlantic were Canadian citizens by birth (48%) or through naturalization (14%), 23% were landed immigrants, 4% had open work permits, 3% were refugee claimants, and the remaining 7% identified in another way. This data breakdown is shown in Figure. The average age of participants was 34 years old, but the range was from 17 to 64, and 61% of participants were racialized people, and 42% of participants had children while 43% did not. The remaining 15% did not respond to this question. 68% of the AspireAtlantic participants were unemployed while those employed had an average hourly wage of $16CAD as they began the program. Those who were employed were asked to respond to questions regarding their job satisfaction on a scale from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree).

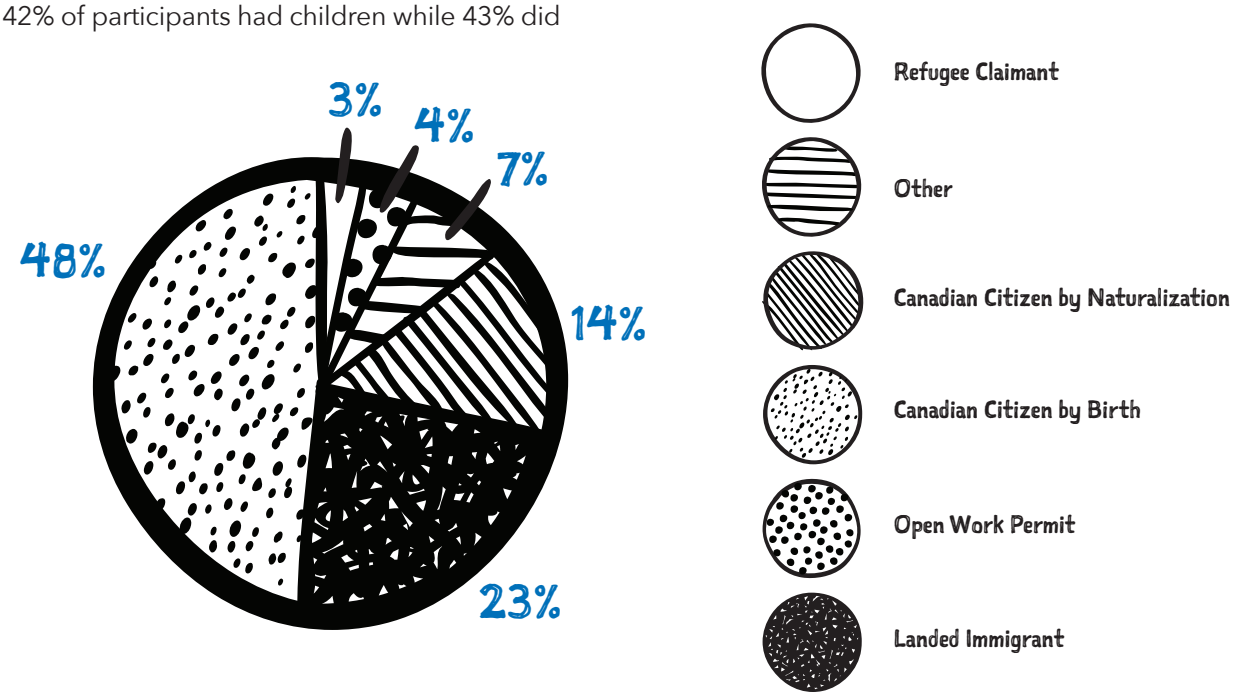


Figure 8 Immigrant status of AspireAtlantic participants who responded to survey one.

4.1.5 Cost

Evaluation Question 5: How much does the program cost per unit of output (e.g., cost per participant, cost per module of training delivered)?

The total program cost of AspireAtlantic was $2.8M. While 169 individuals applied to the program, 97 participants were enrolled in the AspireAtlantic (31 or 32% in ICI, 31 or 32% in HC, and 35 or 36% in Manufacturing). The full cost per participant was $28,760 to test and implement the high-fidelity model. Further examining the cost per participant, it is instructive to breakdown the key cost categories by:

- **Training costs per participant (including CRT/OST and participant stipend)** → **$9,325**
- **Delivery costs per participant (including program staff)** → **$8,332**
- **Research costs per participant (including Pier Labs team)** → **$9,509**
- **Other (including staff training, staff travel, legal, audit)** → **$1,594**

As expected, the implementation phase to test the efficacy of the model was relatively costly, however scaling and integrating the findings and promising practices into the existing employment system will result in operational efficiency of the program.

4.2 Participant Outcomes

The table below provides a summary of the responses to the four evaluation questions regarding the program operations. In the section that follows the table a more detailed response to each of the evaluation questions is provided.

6.	Which outreach strategies are the most effective?	GOOD	• Referrals from Formal Networks, particularly SPOs proved to be the most effective outreach strategy • Social media, personal networks, print media, Nova Scotia Works, and event or agency outreach were crucial in generating initial program awareness
7.	Is the training meeting the needs of job seekers? In what ways is AspireAtlantic supporting participants' job attainment, retention, and/or advancement?	GOOD	• Training was beneficial for job seekers seeking sector-specific skills or needing Canadian work experience • Career Readiness Training (CRT) and On-Site Training (OST) components were beneficial for job searches and careers. • Wrap around support contributed to overall program satisfaction • Empowerment and confidence building • Greater financial support is required to ensure accessibility for all potential job seekers. • Role clarity and clear communication of program goals is essential for effective support delivery
8.	Do participants in the model achieve the intended short- and long-term employment and advancement outcomes?	GOOD	• Program effectively facilitates job attainment, with graduates employed within few months • Strategic job search guidance enhances confidence in pursuing new opportunities • Program potentially aids career advancement via job previews and staff support, though data is limited • Staff relationships help participants navigate challenges and stay focused • Over time, participants report increased satisfaction and decreased job security concerns • Goals transition from job seeking to prioritizing advancement and professional development • Some face employment challenges due to factors like job fit and personal circumstances
9.	What contextual factors or intermediate outcomes are most important in generating the desired long-term participant employment and advancement outcomes?	OPPORTUNITY	• Addressing barriers to participation, fznancial support, flexibility, and government support are crucial • Including employer input, program expectations, participant relationships, stakeholder input, occupational skills, and participant engagement

Table 3. Participant outcomes summary based on the research findings.

4.2.1 Reaching job seekers

Evaluation Question 6: Which outreach strategies are the most effective?

Common outreach strategies for hiring in these sectors include online job boards, social media, and informal networks.[46] Though similar strategies were used in AspireAtlantic promotion, most of our success came from formal networks. The SPOs proved to be an essential resource in the recruitment process. SPOs were our most successful referral source having recruited 73.2% of participants. ISANS recruited 47.4%, DALA recruited 19.6% and MetroWorks recruited 6.2%. The Nova Scotia Department of Community Services helped to recruit 6.2% of participants. Social media was listed by 7.2% of participants as the initial source of awareness about the program. The remainder heard about our program through family/friends, from print media, through Nova Scotia Works, or through another event or agency.

Our team noted that without an established connection to an organization or community, outreach was more difficult. It was evident that participants benefitted from having a relationship with or an amount of trust in the referee. These organizations have strong understandings of community need and have built the relationships required to encourage involvement for these groups. This assisted with outreach as SPOs had an idea of who to reach out to as well as how to sell the program to them. For example, ISANS was able to discuss how AspireAtlantic provides an opportunity for experience within the Canadian context when talking to immigrant job seekers who may be interested in the program.

We learned that the most appealing aspects of AspireAtlantic were the parts that made it unique in our ecosystem, such as the wraparound supports and the focus on advancement. Participants were interested in receiving the wraparound support in conjunction with the training provided with sector involvement. In addition, they felt having an AC and a CM to support them with their job search made participating in the training worthwhile. In our outreach, we were reminded of the importance of providing clear program goals and expectations. Feedback from staff and participants highlighted the importance of providing all information necessary to make the decision to participate in AspireAtlantic. Finally, outreach must occur with ample time to allow for a larger pool of potential candidates. In addition, to benefit from participation in the program, job seekers need time to prepare childcare, leaves from work, and their finances, etc.).

4.2.2 Meeting job seekers needs

Evaluation Question 7: Is the training meeting the needs of job seekers? In what ways is AspireAtlantic supporting participants' job attainment, retention, and/or advancement?

Participants most reported applying to AspireAtlantic because they were trying to gain a job, had interest in that sector, or because they were seeking work experience in the Canadian context. This aligned with the goals and criteria of AspireAtlantic. People were recruited who had been struggling to find what they felt to be meaningful employment and had an interest in entering one of the three sectors. It also makes sense that we saw such an interest in participating for Canadian experience due to our partnership with ISANS. This was evident as many participants discussed what they gained from the program as a newcomer. AspireAtlantic was developed with

the idea of service newcomers and BIPOC, which it seems to have done. This is unsurprising given the fact that skilled immigrants are more likely to be unemployed than Canadian-born workers.[47, 48]

Participants were largely satisfied with AspireAtlantic. Virtually all respondents felt that CRT would be helpful in their job searches and careers. Job seekers believed that OST was also helpful. The instructors as well as the relevant content in the course helped them to become more knowledgeable about the work they were hoping to do. This helped them with job applications, in interviews, and when they were employed. One ICI participant said:

> *"Everything has been a blessing, every part of the program. This program helped me get to the job and helped me with my work in the job. I learned what the Nova Scotian industry is like, and how to prepare for interviews. It was a lot of relearning, but I learned a better way to do it."*

Though some participants reported having training like CRT in the past, they still gave positive reviews and saw the benefit of AspireAtlantic including CRT. This indicates that the program offers unique benefits compared to other programs. They saw that the program provided them an opportunity to become familiar with possibilities in these sectors through training and industry connections. Participants felt AspireAtlantic was useful before and after the training by providing them with the tools to help them find a career. Their satisfaction was also indicated by their likelihood to recommend others to enroll in AspireAtlantic to help them find employment.

One of the more unique aspects of AspireAtlantic was the availability of supports that were directly and indirectly related to their job search. The ACs were there to help with job-related needs as experts in the sector, while CMs gave wraparound supports. The participants were satisfied with this system and felt supported by AspireAtlantic staff. This is beneficial as it is a need that many job seekers are less aware of than the need for relevant training. For example, it was often discussed that ACs were there to support participants who felt frustrated at the number of applications required to get a job. Sources like Indeed recommend applying to 10-15 jobs each week during a job search.[49] Participants who are less familiar with the process were able to get reassurance from their AC which lessened their concerns about not receiving interview offers after a few applications. Participants were also satisfied that their relationships with AspireAtlantic staff continued as they progressed through this process.

As mentioned, it was noted that newcomers may need assistance to break into the Canadian labour market and AspireAtlantic demonstrated strong results for this population. In one interview, a participant said:

> *"It was one of the perfect parts of the readiness course, that defined the Canadian and Nova Scotian work environment".*

Some participants had spent extensive amounts of time prior to enrolling trying to get into these sectors unsuccessfully, but AspireAtlantic helped. One said:

> *"It got me the exact result that I need. I have been trying to get a job in the construction field for over a year. I have been preaching it to colleagues, it gives you a foot in the door".*

Findings

Another stated:

> *"It was worth it, to attend this program. Before this program, I applied for many jobs online, and job fairs, but because I am a newcomer, and I had no local work experience, there were very few opportunities to get a full-time job. Through this program, a local company can take on newcomers. This program is helpful to us".*

Most (97%) of the respondents felt that CRT would be useful for their future career. Specifically, participants mentioned the benefits of having knowledgeable and supportive staff conducting the training. They also talked about how the program overall helped them to prepare. When asked what the most useful aspects of CRT were, the most common response was the resume and cover letter assistance. This was mentioned by 39% of all people interviewed. 24% of respondents stated the most useful piece was mock interviews and additional interview assistance received. 17% felt that the general workplace knowledge relating to culture, rules, and rights was the most useful. A few participants additionally mentioned things like guest speakers, networking opportunities, and certifications. One of the people interviewed stated:

> *"Topics about culture and rules in working environments, really great for newcomers because the working culture is very different in countries. In my country, everything is different from Canada, including how you should say something to your management, how your management should ask you to do something, all of those are different in his country."*

Interviewed participants had generally positive experiences with OST and 100% felt it would be useful for their career. In addition, 100% felt it was worth their time. Respondents were pleased with the content and instructors. A few participants discussed plans to recommend it to others. They mentioned learning about the Canadian context (25%), enjoying the certifications (17%), the information received (15%). OST provided participants with technical skills, important tools and resources, and staff support that facilitated their learning. For the participants interviewed most useful part of the program was the connection with industry professionals (30%). An example of this is that one participant discussed they benefitted from the network that their AC had in the sector. Another way they connected with industry professionals was through their role as course instructors. As one manufacturing participant said:

> *"All of the instructors were helpful. The instructors were willing to do 1 on 1 with me. There is no program I ever look in my whole entire life where they did that. I appreciate everything that they did. Everything is useful."*

In addition to helping them find employment with advancement opportunities, there were other benefits noted by participants and staff that resulted from enrollment. A unique feature of AspireAtlantic was the availability of CMs and ACs (AC) to support the participants through their job attainment and advancement. CMs assisted with finding job postings, job applications, check-ins, logistics of the program, and supporting in other ways when needed. 80% reported having received help and/or having regular communication with their CM. ACs helped the participants find jobs, prepared them for interviews, and provided support relating to finding jobs. 73% felt their AC was helpful and important to their success. Though many participants felt supported by AspireAtlantic staff, it was evident that there was a lack of role clarity when asking these questions.

Findings

One aspect noted by AspireAtlantic staff was an increase in participants' confidence. Many of those enrolled in the program had been out of the labour force for a long period. The applied training provided through AspireAtlantic gave them an opportunity to develop their skills in comfortable situations. In addition, the program was beneficial to the well-being of participants for a variety of reasons including excitement at the prospect of a meaningful job, the improvements to their confidence, and building a support network among staff and their classmates.

The ability to participate in AspireAtlantic required financial security that some do not have. It was mentioned that prospective job seekers were missed because of this. When asked if they would recommend the program, one participant mentioned it might not be an option for their friends who are working. That participant was taking days off from his work for class. One participant said:

> *"I remember in the beginning [program staff said] that you may not be able to work, because the program is long, and there is a lot of exercises, but I would say that it is possible to work part-time. If I quit my job, I would have been in trouble for money."*

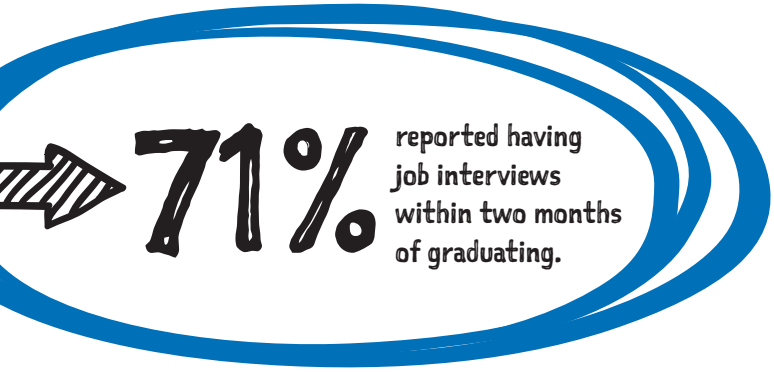
Though a stipend was provided to participants, the value did not reflect the living wage in Nova Scotia (ranging from $22.85 to $26.50CAD/hour[50]).

While this model seems beneficial for job seekers, it is important to remember that it is not a replacement for typical employment programs as it has specific goals. The findings do reinforce the fact that this model is intended for job seekers with specific characteristics. The WorkAdvance model was selective with admissions as specific criteria were required for the research design. AspireAtlantic followed similar criteria, shaped from the WorkAdvance model, as our team, sector organizations, and service providers completed selection. The screening criteria, such as coachability and drive to find employment in the industry, are in place to promote success for participants. When seats remained, there would be leniency regarding these criteria. For example, this could mean a participant would be admitted who did not quite meet the outlined criteria. WorkAdvance noted a similar trend. It did seem that these those admitted who did not meet criteria struggled to complete the program or to find employment upon graduation. AspireAtlantic is intended to operate as a career development program. As a result, it works best when used as a complement to more common career services focused on finding employment.

4.2.3 Employment & advancement outcomes

Evaluation Question 8: Do participants in the model achieve the intended short- and long-term employment and advancement outcomes?

Job attainment was a goal of many who began the program. It is apparent that the program is beneficial for job attainment as graduates are typically employed within a few months of completing the program despite many having a history of unemployment. AspireAtlantic staff helped during job attainment as they were trusted individuals with expertise of their sector. Graduates would often discuss their applications and interviews with ACs who could then reach out to these employers. 71% of people we spoke to reported having job interviews within two months of graduating. The remainder were not applying for jobs or have been unsuccessful getting an interview. At this stage, AspireAtlantic participants we spoke to were most commonly hoping that advancement would be the next step in their employment journey (42%). A few remained focused on finding employment or finding further development opportunities. When asked how they felt about the supports they were receiving, participants largely felt supported by program staff (58%). A few did mention needing further assistance with job matching (17%).



The decision to provide participants with job search guidance rather than securing a job placement for them upon graduation was strategic. While AspireAtlantic graduates benefitted from the network of the AspireAtlantic team, they were required to complete the traditional job application process. AspireAtlantic set out to prepare people for their future careers, which involves switching jobs for many people. The participants new skills relating to job applications and interviews helped with entering the industry. Most commonly, they discussed the benefit of having help preparing job application materials like resumes and cover letters. During AspireAtlantic, they also had mock interviews and received support from staff during the interview process. This hopefully means that graduates are now more capable and confident if they choose to pursue new opportunities in the future.

Information about retention and advancement is harder to analyze due the inability to collect longitudinal data at the time of writing. That said, there is early evidence that AspireAtlantic is helpful for retention and advancement. To our knowledge, 5 job seekers have advanced in their careers as of August 2023. One way that AspireAtlantic might assist with this is by providing realistic job previews to job seekers. They are given opportunities to learn about tasks often performed in these roles. In addition, they are provided with information about culture, rules, and rights in the workplace. This is especially helpful in preparing those who might be unfamiliar with the Canadian workplace, like newcomers or long-term unemployed persons, with information that prepares them to enter these

sectors. Job attainment and retention are also naturally supportive of advancement. For many AspireAtlantic participants, the supports gave them an opportunity to focus on progression that they might not have had previously. When participants found themselves succeeding in their jobs, they were motivated to work towards advancing.

Retention and advancement are also promoted by the support they received from staff. This support is seen as essential by participants in the program. Many people developed strong relationships with ACs and CMs. This allowed them to turn to them throughout the process for employment help. Beyond that, people in the populations served often struggle with employment due to external factors. AspireAtlantic was designed to address other life circumstances to help promote job retention by allowing them to remain focused on work.

Moreover, the information about perceived job satisfaction, advancement opportunities, and job precarity indicates that AspireAtlantic is a promising opportunity. Participants who were employed reported that their overall job satisfaction increased over time. At baseline, the average rating of satisfaction was slightly below neutral. As time progressed, however, participants were more likely to agree that they were satisfied. The same can be said for their satisfaction with advancement opportunities. We also saw concerns about job precarity decreasing overtime. These findings indicate that participants were finding themselves in jobs that they were happy with, felt secure in, and could see a career in.

Our findings indicate that AspireAtlantic benefitted job seekers throughout their employment journey. For example, graduates had different hopes for their next steps as they progressed in their employment journey. When interviewed mid-program the focus of many participants was to find employment. In discussions with graduates two months after finishing AspireAtlantic, they were primarily focused on advancement opportunities. They talked about how next steps for them would hopefully involve progressing in their organization and building their careers further. Some were still searching for a job at this point, while others were focusing on professional development opportunities like continuing their education to advance. Finally, six months after graduation the participants remained focus on advancement. We did see that similar numbers were also interested in professional development opportunities and achieving personal goals.

AspireAtlantic did not have guaranteed job placement upon completion. This was something participants were interested in having implemented into the program, though there were various reasons it was not used. Despite the benefit of building these skills and abilities, it did mean that there were some job seekers who had not found employment in their sector. From our knowledge, there were unclear or inconsistent reasons for this. Many chose jobs outside of their sector. Some of these jobs carried over from before the program, though others made the choice after graduation that the sector was not an appropriate fit for them. For those that struggled to get jobs despite looking, some struggled in interviews due to perceived discrimination. Others were not able to find a job in their geographic location or based on specific life circumstances. A small number of people also did not retain their new roles. This was believed to be due to fit or concerns outside of the person's control.

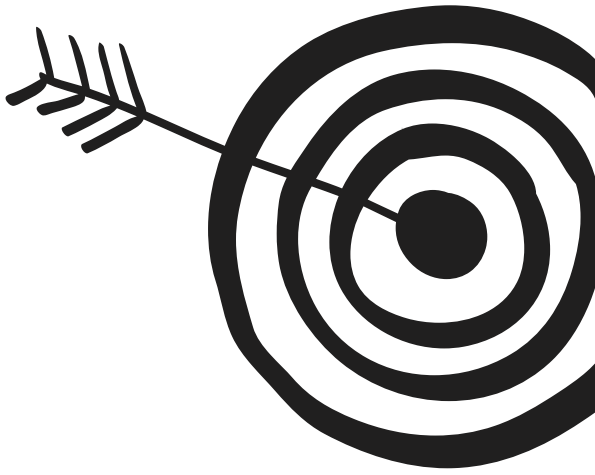
4.2.4 Contextual factors impacting outcomes

Evaluation Question 9: What contextual factors or intermediate outcomes are most important in generating the desired long-term participant employment and advancement outcomes?

Participants and staff discussed that there were barriers to participating, as the focus was job attainment and advancement, recruitment prioritized unemployed or low-income individuals. As a career readiness program, it did also require a commitment from participants to complete training days in person. Though a small stipend was provided, it was noted that many potential candidates needed living wages to be able to participate in this program. Options such as a higher stipend, agreements to allow for better government support, or flexibility to allow for continued work were all mentioned.

Job seekers discussed facing barriers, for example discrimination along the way. AspireAtlantic aimed to help equity deserving group members enter industries where the workforce might not represent them. These are also industries that are less likely to have inclusion, equity, diversity, and accessibility polices (ranging from 14% to 40%[51]). With societal shifts, organizations are becoming more aware of the need to support diverse groups, however, and programs like AspireAtlantic can support them through this change.

The ACs also did not journal about selection and recruitment often, but they did mention using employer input and using employer sales pitches as tools in the process. They also discussed program expectations with interested candidates and leaned on the sectoral focus when promoting the program. While coordinating CRT, having strong rapport with participants stood out as a meaningful tool for teaching. Even with these strong relationships, the ACs mentioned that they would frequently initiate coaching to assist the participants. They also frequently discussed the benefit of gathering training input from others to improve CRT. This did include occasionally utilizing their own knowledge of the sector. As they moved onto OST, they continued to engage others to ensure they were providing the best training for participants. Their own familiarity with the occupational skills helped with providing this training, though they also frequently engaged with employers and CMs. As ACs found in CRT, it was important to initiate meetings with participants to serve them best.



4.3 Employer Outcomes

The table below provides a summary of the responses to the two evaluation questions regarding the program operations. In the section that follows the table a more detailed response to each of the evaluation questions is provided.

10.	Is the screening process effective for sectors?	GOOD	• Supports employer HR processes in talent acquisition • Systematic screening process and strict training requirements offers strong applicant pool • Pre-screening streamline recruitment process
11.	Is the training meeting the needs of employers? In what ways is AspireAtlantic supporting employee recruitment, retention, and advancement for employers?	GOOD	• Employer-involved design, offer tailored training that benefits both participants and employers alike • Employers across sectors increasingly prioritize soft skills alongside technical • Providing a strong support network for new employees promotes retention of valuable workforce • Employers value tailored support and training for newcomers to integrate effectively into the workforce

Table 3. Employer outcomes summary based on the research findings.

4.3.1 Screening process

Evaluation Question 10: Is the screening process effective for sectors?

It is often said that human resources are among the most important for an organization. The people who work in an organization then help to shape the operations, goals, and values.[52] This is a part of what makes thoughtful recruitment strategies so essential for employers. Training is an ongoing process that employees take part in before and during their employment. It helps to improve the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to have high performing employees.[53] Training prior to hiring also gives candidates an opportunity to test out the field and test their fit. This is important as people are attracted to careers based on their skills and interests.[54] Therefore, opportunities for training can improve hiring outcomes. In hiring, it is also important to consider selection and attrition. A strong pool of candidates helps employers select the right people for the role. From the applicants, the employer can then use formal and informal selection tools to decide fit and hopefully prevent attrition. Attrition means that those who do not fit leave, either based on self-selection or because of performance.

AspireAtlantic met the needs of employers as it complements their own HR processes relating to talent acquisition and their people. From our own engagements and in general labour market data, it is evident that employers need skilled workers. In our selected sectors, this demand has increased over the past few years and is expected to continue growing.[55, 56] Rapid growth has resulted in employers feeling challenged to fill vacancies. There is an apparent disconnect, however, as unemployment levels in Nova Scotia remain high.[57] AspireAtlantic presented a promising avenue for offering employers a pool of strong candidates to fill their vacancies. From interviews with employers and discussions with AspireAtlantic staff, it was evident that they viewed the program as beneficial to their recruitment strategies. To help keep their employees happy, AspireAtlantic staff could be utilized to address issues that may arise.

AspireAtlantic helped with employer recruitment by pre-screening potential employees. The systematic screening process for the program, in addition to the decision to have strict requirements during training, appealed to employers. Once they became familiar with the program, they recognized that AspireAtlantic provided them with a strong applicant pool. Graduates received positive reviews from employers. We heard from employers through the interviews that many felt the participants they interviewed or chose to hire were good fits for their organizations. In addition, they discussed that their new employees had the possibility of progressing through their organizations. Staff heard similar feedback. AspireAtlantic participants were often successful in interviews. Even when those interviewed were not selected for roles, however, employers often felt positive about the quality of the candidate and interview.

4.3.2 Recruitment, retention, and advancement

Evaluation Question 11: Is the training meeting the needs of employers? In what ways is AspireAtlantic supporting employee recruitment, retention, and advancement for employers?

In addition, AspireAtlantic was helpful for employers as it was designed with their involvement. They were able to provide insights as screening materials and the curriculums were developed. This allowed AspireAtlantic to be relevant to their sectors. Participants received occupational skills training that addressed what employers were looking for in recruitment. Employers often discussed the benefit of our training covering specific skills and certifications that are needed in their organizations. This gave graduates an advantage when applying as it lessened the employers' training responsibilities. In addition, the strong connection to employers mean that staff were aware of what to include in CRT to allow for participants to build strong application packages.

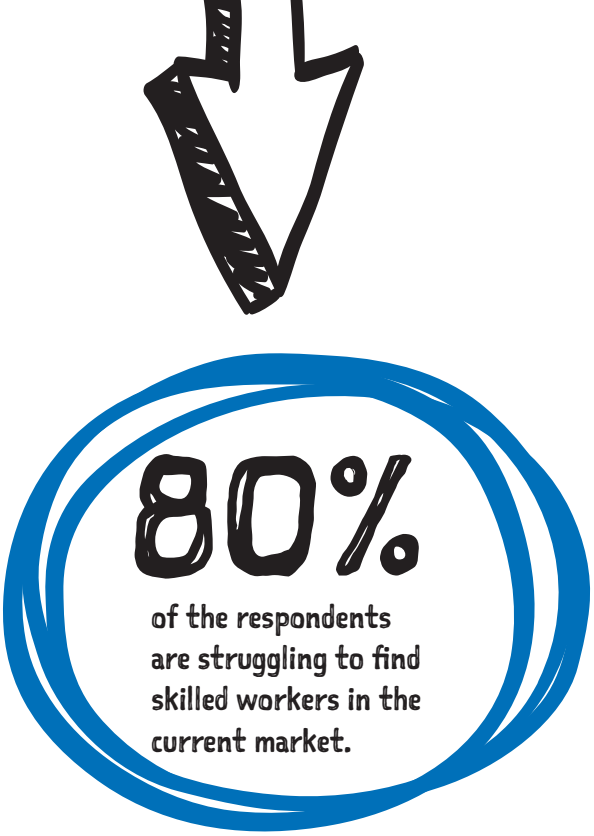
AspireAtlantic was also beneficial as many employers in these sectors are becoming increasingly interested in soft skills that complement the technical skills necessary for their work.[58] When asked about the most important soft skills and personal characteristics, employers in all three sectors noted that teamwork was key (11.3-24.3%). Employers in ICI said they want employees who are responsible (9.9%), have a positive attitude (8.9%), and have a good work ethic (8.5%). Employers in HC also search for good work ethic and positive attitude (6.1%). They also noted communication (6.1%), kindness (5.2%), and integrity (5.2%) as important. In manufacturing, communication skills (10.2%), attention to detail (6.3%), and being ethical (6.3%) were important.

It did seem that employers were not using AspireAtlantic to its full potential, however. Many took time to become aware of the program. This meant the earlier cohorts did not have the same uptake of job offers. In addition, many employers did not take advantage of the additional supports available through the program. Though some did not use them as they felt it was their responsibility, as mentioned, this model acknowledges that employees may not be willing to reach out to their workplaces for the supports they need. There can be many reasons for this, but the model is intended to address many of them. For example, a WorkAdvance partner discussed how there may be situations where the staff hear that job seekers had a personal issue overnight. They can then advocate for them to the employer and help support them through the situation.

In addition, AspireAtlantic supported recruitment, retention, and advancement for employers because of the supports provided. Their new employees had a stronger support network as they could turn to the AC or CM that they trusted, in addition to their new boss, for support when necessary. Employers were better supported as they trusted the AspireAtlantic staff, thus making them more likely to seek support early in their employment. If they were facing a challenge with their new employee, they knew that there were people to rely on as they attempted to reach a resolution. Through these supports, employers were given an opportunity to keep people in their workforce that might not have otherwise been given a chance.

There are shared concerns across these sectors relating to recruitment and retention.[59] When surveyed about recruitment, ICI noted they are concerned by a shortage of experienced labour in local area (60.3%), difficulty finding qualified labour in the local area (58.8%), and high competition for labour within sector (39.7%). HC experienced a shortage of experienced labour (64.8%), difficulty finding qualified labour in their area (57.4%), and high competition (42.6%). Manufacturing noted concerns of the shortage of labour (65.4%), finding qualified labour (46.2%), and high competition (42.3%).

In terms of retention challenges, high expectations for employees were present in ICI (41.2%) and manufacturing (51.9%) according to regional statistics. Home constructed noted that competition for labour in the sector was detrimental for retention (41.7%). All three sectors struggled with retaining qualified labour in the area (36.8-39.8%) and employees who were not a good fit for their organization (31.5-35.3%). Common approaches to improve retention included increasing competition in all three sectors (50-71.3%), providing growth opportunities in ICI (37.0%) and HC (25%), and increasing job safety in HC (26.5%) and manufacturing (42.3%). Other approaches included increasing flexibility in ICI (28.7%) and improving onboarding in manufacturing (44.2%).



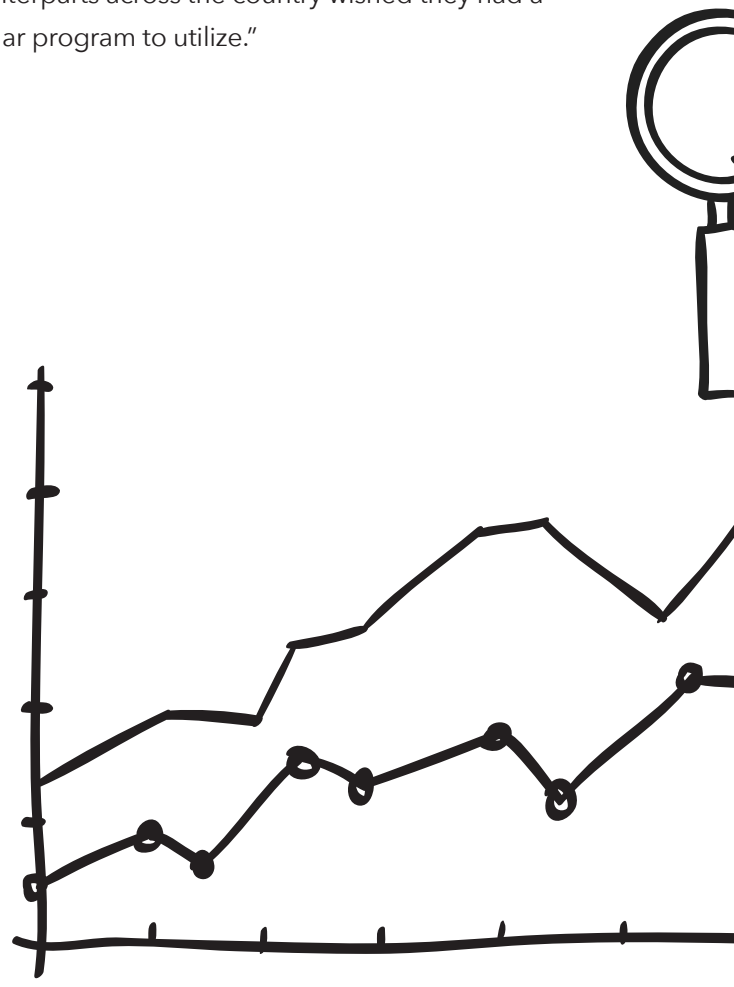
We spoke with 5 employers across different industries who had all hired AspireAtlantic graduates. 80% of the respondents mentioned that they were struggling to find skilled workers when asked about their experiences recruiting in the current market. They were feeling pressured to recruit, however, as 40% mentioned that rapid growth was increasing the need. Despite the abundance of programs in Nova Scotia, not all the employers we spoke with have used them. 40% said they had previously used programs but felt the programs did not provide appropriate supports. They also noted that they struggled to develop meaningful relationships with program providers which impacted their ability to get the full benefit.

Findings

Four employers had heard about AspireAtlantic from our program staff. Their reasons for working with AspireAtlantic included the focus on professionalism, the additional supports provided, and the pre-screening of applicants. They expected that AspireAtlantic would be a program that they could have a good relationship with. It was also expected that both the employees and employers would have benefitted from having the ability to have "tested" the job in the program. The employers we spoke with seemed to align with AspireAtlantic's goals and values. For example, one stated "(their workplace) was interested in hiring folks with barriers, but (their workplace) wanted people who were enthusiastic, ready to learn, and coachable".

Employers reported having positive experiences with AspireAtlantic. Two said that the AspireAtlantic team was supportive though one was unaware of the supports available to them. Beyond their perceptions of the program and staff, they also provided positive feedback about the graduate which they had hired. Three of those with advancement opportunities mentioned that they could see the employee advancing in their organization. Two employers noted they had positive interview experiences. One employer stated that the graduates of AspireAtlantic were skilled in selling themselves. They shared that many of the applications they receive typically do not have resumes with enough information or correct formatting. Employers experience indicated that the program helped graduates prepare stronger application materials. Employers also discussed that the people they chose to employ were good fits because they were quick learners who had strong understandings of the sector.

When asked about future directions, employers mentioned a perceived benefit in providing specific supports for newcomers. Those mentioned include English for professionals or cultural competencies training to help them understand the Canadian workplace. As we had previously heard from participants, specific skills or certifications were beneficial from the employers' perspectives. For example, one employer mentioned believing that the occupational health and safety training helped their new employee to safety-focused at work. One employer said "Employers see the benefit of a program like AspireAtlantic. One manager, who is a part of a nationwide team, stated that their counterparts across the country wished they had a similar program to utilize."



5 Lessons learned

AspireAtlantic was designed and implemented to act as an innovative demonstration program as a case study of the Nova Scotia employment landscape. At the time of implementation, this program was the first to incorporate the WorkAdvance model components in the province. It additionally complemented the existing employment services ecosystem in Nova Scotia by focusing not just on job attainment, but also retention and advancement. Grounded in a Learning Framework designed for continuous data collection to inform the efficacy of the program, so much was learned along the way. To learn more about the implementation of AspireAtlantic, more detailed information can be found in the companion document Implementation Toolkit. This section focuses on the key takeaways from implementation:

Designing for job seekers, employers, and the developing job market can improve program impact

The goal of the program was to serve job seekers as well as employers. AspireAtlantic was designed after careful investigation of the needs of Nova Scotian employment sectors. AspireAtlantic was adapted based on the assumption that the graduates would be prepared to enter sectors with skilled labour shortages. It was believed that employers in these sectors had vacancies to fill and that job seekers would be interested in filling them. It was also developed to be a program that met future needs, as growth is predicted in these sectors. Many employers in this sector reported already experiencing substantial growth since the beginning of the program. In future years, it is anticipated that this growth will continue.[60]

For job seekers, the holistic program can guide people towards meaningful careers by building their job search and employment skills and competencies. AspireAtlantic helped to train and support them as they transitioned into careers where they could grow. The program was designed to assist employers by providing them with a strong pool of potential candidates that were more likely to succeed in their workplace.

> *"The purpose of the program is to minimize the skill gap. There is always that dynamic, a career readiness program, that is a fixed module, if the employers change, it is possible that other things, could be dynamic, they could change according to the demands of employers."*

Forming the right team improves program quality

AspireAtlantic thoughtfully selected partners who embraced a growth mindset and innovation. Pier Labs collaborated with the three SPOs and Sector Organizations to design and implement this innovative program. The success of AspireAtlantic is thanks in part to the team. Sectors were selected using strict criteria, which helped ensure these partners were the right fit. Additionally, the established group was motivated by our shared goals to prepare graduates to join growing sectors. The AspireAtlantic team worked together to support the human journey through employment. This required people who had the knowledge and skills to promote and engage job seekers and underrepresented people while considering employers' needs for skilled labour.

Employment program success is improved with service connectivity

AspireAtlantic is a relationship-based dual-customer model. The program puts the job seeker at the centre must focus on addressing the inequities that exist in the employment ecosystem and in the identified industries. Through our discussions, we learned that participants, staff, and employers are aware of these barriers that prevent candidates from reaching their employment goals.

Our program shows that increasing service connectivity can be a helpful way to help systemically disadvantaged job seekers. In addition to the training, which helped them build a strong resume, they were given unique supports to help find and stick to a job. The AC was able to act as a mentor for the job seeker, using their connections to and knowledge of the sector to find the right job for them. They were also able to guide them when they had work-related questions. The CM was someone who was familiar with their circumstances that they could turn to for other life problems. Without programming like AspireAtlantic, job seekers are left to navigate a vast collection of employment and social services alone. The success of AspireAtlantic graduates was supported through access to sector-based supports, immigrations services, financial supports, and more.

> *"It got me the exact result that I need. I have been trying to get a job in the construction field for over a year. I have been preaching it to colleagues, it gives you a foot in the door."*

Effective outreach helps to find the right candidates

AspireAtlantic was structured to find the right candidates for training. Job seekers were screened for a variety of things including interest in the sector and motivation to advance. As a result, not all candidates are accepted in the program. This means that AspireAtlantic required extensive outreach. Successful promotion relies on strong connections to both the target sector(s) and the employment services industry. Early involvement of these groups helped to reach more interested job seekers. Proactive and systematic outreach and well-established networks increases the volume of applicants.

Success of this aspect of the program requires effective recruitment and selective methods. Adequate time is essential for recruitment to give staff the opportunity to adequately promote the program. This is especially important for the implementation of a novel program such as AspireAtlantic. Recruitment materials should also be clear about program goals and be easily accessible by the target audiences. The value of the program must be clear to community partners who send prospective candidates to apply to the program and to the participants themselves. Staff found that participants were more likely to engage in the selections process when they understood the program commitment (start times, number of classroom hours, learning schedule, total program length, etc.) and the kinds of jobs that they could apply for/be considered for.

Strong relationships with SPOs who have diverse outreach and networking tactics is important. Recruiting underrepresented groups proved challenging to enroll women and gender diverse people in the program.

Adaptive supports for the employers and job seekers influence outcomes

The success of AspireAtlantic relied on providing supports and resources in ways that were flexible and responsive to participant and employer needs. The program team strived to be proactive in supporting job seekers. They also worked to accommodate their specific needs, rather than offering identical supports to everyone. One participant said:

> *"The support that we have because when you do not have this kind of program you feel you are alone, and you do not know what to expect. For example for the situation that I got laid off and it was [my] first time … it was awkward situation, but I heard other people got laid off, and it made me not feel so alone, knowing other people faced this challenge."*

The supports also went beyond providing resources to participants but extended into the way AspireAtlantic was delivered. One example of staff adapting to the groups needs comes from DALA. They learned that the planned class start time did not align with the bus schedule in the area, and transit is limited. Upon learning this, they shifted the start time to ensure participants would not arrive late or need to arrive excessively early for the sessions. We also saw a need to adapt material at times to better serve the cohorts. For example, ISANS hosted a session on LinkedIn practices to help people improve more modern.

Job preparedness is more nuanced – sector norms, soft skills, and personal preparedness

The goal of the program was to serve job seekers as well as employers. The discovery phase showed that there was an opportunity to provide holistic programming that reconsidered what job preparedness was. AspireAtlantic took a sector-based approach that focused on employer needs in manufacturing, ICI, and HC. Sector-based training has become more popular recently based on the promise it shows in preparing disadvantaged or displaced workers to enter specific industries.[61] Through AspireAtlantic, we found the same benefit but recognize that the impact was heightened by complementary soft skills training and supports. The graduates of AspireAtlantic were given an opportunity to become more well-rounded, thus more prepared to attach to work. This is especially important considering the population served was largely excluded from their desired professions.

> *"It is hard to say, there were different parts of it, they were all important. From the resume writing to the cover letters, to the interviews, to the actual courses. If I only had one piece over the other, it would not be enough. They all come together to get good results." - ICI Candidate*

Industry recognition improves the credibility of the program

Building on the WorkAdvance theory of change, it was expected that recognized credentials were necessary to enter middle-skill jobs with advancement opportunities in these sectors. Through our discovery phase, we did determine this was not always the case in Nova Scotia. Instead, AspireAtlantic was built assuming that industry buy-in of the materials and resources provided, as well as trust in the implementation team, would provide the credibility that graduates needed. The buy-in of the industry was supported by their involvement in the development and delivery of occupational skills training. In addition, Career Readiness Training was strengthened as industry insights were used to tailor the material. It was frequently noted by employers and job seekers that the CMs and ACs used their reputations and networks in the sectors to sell the program to potential employers. The candidates were then able to sell themselves during interviews using what they learned through AspireAtlantic.

> *"[My CM] told me about a networking meeting for engineers. So people who are interested in belonging to engineers of Nova Scotia. [My CM] told me about that event. In the case for my current job, [they] helped me with the networking and connected me to someone else at [SPO]."*

Alumni relationships

Relationships-building has shown to be an important part of supporting the job seeker. The foundations of these relationships were built on partnering with trusted SPOs. Throughout the program, the AspireAtlantic team had to prove to candidates that they were knowledgeable and supportive to further develop the relationships. This facilitates the participants receiving support from program staff, as they job search and begin their new job. Support from employers, program staff and even peers can help when issues arise at work or even at home. With ACs and CMs managing graduates and issues as a team, the alumni have more all-encompassing support for both personal and professional issues. These relationships also benefitted AspireAtlantic and the employers as it helped with developmental evaluation. Strong relationships assured them that the goal of the program was to provide the best possible services, which encouraged them to share meaningful feedback.

6

Limitations & Future Directions

Through the implementation of the Learning Framework concerns and insights about the recruitment and selection process emerged, including: successful promotion, confusion with eligibility, and leniency with criteria. As mentioned, recruitment was most effective when SPOs utilized their networks. This means there is a risk of missing groups of people who have not connected with these organizations. The intention in recruitment was for SPOs to be one of many recruitment strategies, but staff found other methods to be less effective. These strict screening processes are used in WorkAdvance, with some of their partners reporting between 8% and 35% of applicants receiving offers.[62] For the most part, when this process was followed, it was tied to success in the program. As a program that serves populations with unique challenges, however, there are times when flexibility is required. The technical assistance team's, ACs', and CMs' expertise was utilized to make judgements regarding the person's unique situations. In addition, this flexibility was often present when seats remained open. When these judgements were incorrect or decisions were made despite them, however, AspireAtlantic saw decreased success for those participants. It was also noted that those who were not an appropriate fit for the program influenced the experiences of their classmates and staff.

Limitations & Future Directions

As we initiated the program, we hired ACs and CMs to assist with program delivery. Initially, the program was proposed to have HR Support Staff hired through the sectors. This role would be responsible for supporting the job seekers in collaboration with the AspireAtlantic team. They would also work to connect employees to participants and support managers through their HR efforts. The goal would be that this role could help develop leadership and management skills with employers relating to equity, diversity, and inclusion, conflict resolution, and performance reviews. The decision to not hire for this position was made to expand the hours of the AC from part-time to full-time.

The WorkAdvance model has a strong emphasis on post-employment services and is focused on moving unemployed and low-wage working individuals into "middle-skill" jobs. As a result, AspireAtlantic sought out sectors that had in-demand middle-skill vacancies. For our research, middle-skill was defined as jobs that pay above $15 CAD per hour ($2.45 more than minimum wage at the time), provide benefits, and have advancement opportunities. During the discovery phase, there was an overwhelming lack of information or consensus in Nova Scotia on the number of job vacancies in middle-skill roles requiring credentials. As job seekers began to graduate, we determined that it is common for these sectors to hire for entry-level positions with the possibility of advancing rather than hiring external candidates for middle-skill directly.

Our AspireAtlantic discovery found, contrary to the WorkAdvance model, people in Nova Scotia who were experiencing unemployment or underemployment did not always lack the skills and credentials needed to enter these sectors. As a result, AspireAtlantic was initially designed with two streams. Stream 1 was intended for interested job seekers who did not have a recognized credential while Stream 2 would serve those who had credentials but were unable to secure long-term positions. Despite this finding, AspireAtlantic was offered with one stream of training. As mentioned, the number of applicants did not warrant a two-stream approach; furthermore, we received few applications from individuals who would be a good fit Stream 2.

A limitation of candidate outreach was that populations or people not served by participating SPOs could be less likely to hear about the opportunity. As noted above, the three SPOs referred most job seekers who completed AspireAtlantic to the program. Most of those who listed other referral sources were White men who were Canadian citizens. This group was not exclusive to the equity-deserving groups mentioned, but this does indicate that outreach to minority groups is best done through established organizations. Another evident diversity gap was that AspireAtlantic participants were more likely to be men than women. 24% of our cohorts identified as women. Women make up 29% of the manufacturing workforce[63] and only 17% of construction workforces.[64] While this is reflective of the sectors chosen, this program intended to create opportunities for women.

The majority of the participants did not have recommendations for improvements when interviewed. Potential program improvements included participants wanting more hands-on experience, more in-person activities, improved online delivery, increased details of training materials, and more flexibility. One interviewee who said: "Have more opportunities to practice. It's important that you can perfect the specific exercise. In real time, you need to understand, it's important. Have more practical exercises

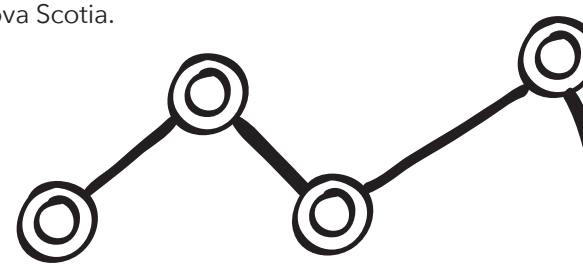
before they try to get a job. More hands-on work – with blueprints especially." Other participants mentioned the program could improve through stronger administrative processes, better work-life balance, and opportunities for online training. An important note is that some of the improvements had disagreement among respondents as the improvements often addressed the individual needs of each participant. For example, 15% of participants had an issue with the program length though they were reporting conflicting concerns. Some participants felt the training was "drawn out" while others wanted additional time to digest the content.

Importantly, participants noted concerns that could limit their participation. The most common complaints were that the participants were facing financial burdens (13%). Providing the $2,000 stipend aimed to alleviate financial challenges. This was appreciated by AspireAtlantic graduates, but it did not match the cost of living in Nova Scotia. This was intensified as Nova Scotia saw dramatic inflation increases starting in 2021.[65] In addition, 9% of participants noted that they struggled with a lack of accommodations, specific needs for immigration supports, conflicting commitments, or issues with other participants. The goal of this program was to provide personalized supports for people systemically excluded from work opportunities. Though AspireAtlantic shows promise in achieving that goal, these struggles noted by participants highlight the strength of these obstacles. In employer discussions, we heard that a mindset shift was necessary to work towards equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility. This is supported by industry data, which shows employers in manufacturing, ICI, and HC often do not have policies supporting these initiatives (60% - 86%) nor plans to implement these policies in the next year (56% - 71%).

Areas for Future Exploration

AspireAtlantic is a promising prototype for holistic employment services. In today's rapidly evolving job market, there is a growing need for innovative approaches to workforce development. The WorkAdvance Model, known for its comprehensive approach, has demonstrated potential in urban employment settings in the United States. AspireAtlantic additionally showed potential in urban and some rural settings in Canada. This program shows early signs of being helpful to people facing disproportionate unemployment and underemployment. That said, further exploration is required to better understand the impact of this model on a larger scale.

Although AspireAtlantic promoted inclusivity, we still found that our training program for the male-dominated fields of construction and manufacturing were male dominated. This implies that our enrollment may not have attracted additional women who were facing barriers relating to their gender. Some of our participants mentioned facing issues relating to their gender in their job search. In addition, many of the barriers the job seekers wanted supports for throughout the process were "gendered" issues such as childcare. As previously mentioned, there was also commentary from participants that they continued to be impacted by systemic barriers relating to things like disability and immigration. This is evidence thatapp careful consideration is needed in delivering employment services to create more inclusive programs and workplaces in Nova Scotia.



7 Conclusion

AspireAtlantic was developed to give job seekers and employers in Nova Scotia an innovative service option. The WorkAdvance model was adapted for the strengths and needs of Nova Scotia. Employers are looking for new ways to fill skilled labour shortages in a variety of sectors. Job seekers, both with and without experience, are looking to break into these industries to improve their employment experiences. Relationships were at the center of this journey, with strengthened connections and integrated services to better serve both client groups. The implementation of AspireAtlantic did not come without challenges, but a developmental evaluation approach was necessary to make improvements along the way. Ultimately, we demonstrated that AspireAtlantic is a promising model that can enhance employment services in Nova Scotia. Scaling and expansion of this model is required to better understand the full potential of the program for job seekers and employers.

The Implementation Toolkit provides an in-depth overview of promising practices that presents tremendous opportunity to scale and enhance the current employment system.

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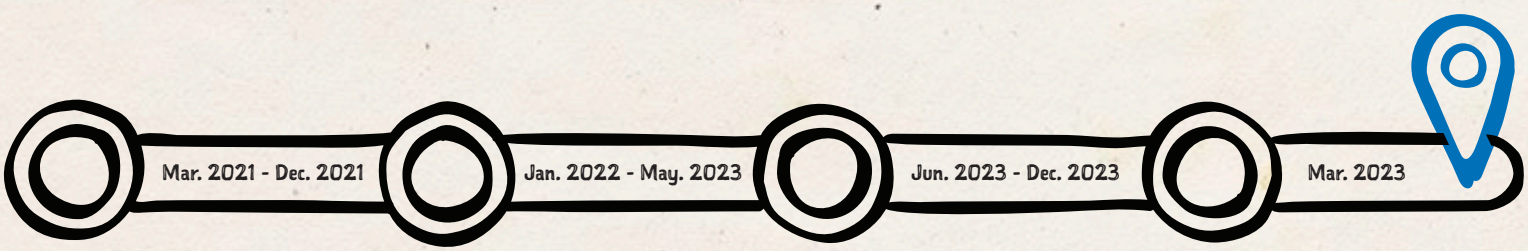
Appendices

Appendix A: Program Timeline



Project Planning, Research Design, Training, Recruitment

- Established contract with FSC
- Established sub-contracts with 6 SPOs.
- Complete program design
- Begin recruitment activities

Program Delivery and Research, Training, Technical Assistance

Job Placement Support and Post-Employment Services

- Program delivery and training are complete
- Job placement support and post-employment services continuing until September 2023
- Research activities relatd to data collection complete

Analysis and Reporting

- Administrative data used to assess outcomes.
- Analysis considered (70+ interviews and 30+ surveys) the perspectives of participants, employer perspectives (4 inteviews), and program staff (jounals and learning circles) and will complement objective outcomes.
- Final reports focused on promising lessons and practices that demonstrate improvements in employment services and supports

Final Reporting Submitted to FSC - March 31

Appendix B: Developmental Evaluation Framework

Learning Framework

KEY DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION QUESTIONS	SUB-QUESTIONS			PRIMARY INTENDED USERS	METHODS	FREQUENCY OF COLLECTION	TIMELINE FOR FEEDBACK
	WHAT?	SO WHAT?	NOW WHAT?				
1. In what ways does the existing organizational structure, processes, and capacity support or hinder AspireAtlantic?	What are the existing organizational structures, processes, and capacity experienced by the Aspire staff? How are existing structures, processes, and capacity supporting or hindering their ability to execute Aspire?	How can we further leverage the existing strengths? How can we work around anything that is a barrier?	What are the next steps? Who will follow-up	Sector Org leads SPO leads Program staff (i.e., ACs, CMs, Program Director)	Staff journalling Staff focus groups	Weekly Strategically timed	Every 2 months In time to inform the next cohort
2. Which outreach strategies are the most effective?	Which outreach strategies bring in the most potential participants? Which outreach strategies helped us connect to participants that were screened into the program? What populations are our outreach strategies not reaching? Are we getting sector buy-in with our employer outreach strategies?	Why do we think some strategies work better than others? How might the outreach strategies be impacting different demographic populations? (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, geography, etc.) Why might we be missing some of our priority populations? Is this level of employer engagement sufficient to execute the advancement supports?	Which outreach strategies should we focus our energies on? What new strategies should we try to increase missed populations? If not, how do we get better employer buy-in?	Sector Org leads SPO leads Program staff (i.e., ACs, CMs, Program Director)	File review/ survey question during intake ("How did you hear about…") Staff focus groups	At intake Shortly after recruitment period	Every 3 weeks during recruitment period In time to inform the next cohort

KEY DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION QUESTIONS	SUB-QUESTIONS			PRIMARY INTENDED USERS	METHODS	FREQUENCY OF COLLECTION	TIMELINE FOR FEEDBACK
	WHAT?	SO WHAT?	NOW WHAT?				
3. How are potential participants experiencing the screening process? 4. Is the screening process effective for sectors?	How many people end up screening out? Are there any commonalities amongst people being screened out? Is there part of the screening process that is particularly difficult for participants?	Why do we think part of the process are difficult? Is it unnecessarily difficult? Are there differential impacts for participants based on demographics (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, geography, etc.)	Do we need to change the screening to address why people are being screened out?	Sector Org leads SPO leads Program staff (i.e., ACs, CMs, Program Director)	File review (i.e., screening records, etc.) Staff focus groups	During screening Shortly after first recruitment period	Weekly during recruitment period In time to inform the next cohort
5. Is what ways is AspireAtlantic meeting the needs of job seekers? In what ways is AspireAtlantic supporting participants' job attainment, retention, and advancement?	Is the training meeting the needs of job seekers? Are the trainings contributing to the short-term outcomes? Are the program supports contributing to the intermediate outcomes? What job attainment, retention, and advancement challenges do both participants streams face? How do participants view the AC and CM roles within AspireAtlantic? What does advancement look like for participants?	Which barriers can participants overcome and which ones prevent them from completing the training? Are there differences in program experiences for participants based on socio-demographics (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, geography, etc.) What does this tell us? How might participants' definition of advancement differ from how we are measuring it/original way WorkAdvance defined advancement?	What changes do we need to make to the training? Which barriers might not be able to be addressed through this Aspire? What should we do about these barriers? What, if at all, should we do about it? How does this change how we define advancement for the program?	Sector Org leads SPO leads Program Staff (i.e., ACs, CMs, Program Director) LAE Employers Participants	Participant Interviews	Halfway through training 2 months, 6 months, 1 year post training	The following learning circle unless the circle is scheduled after the opportunity to implement changes (an ad hoc circle should be called)

KEY DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION QUESTIONS	SUB-QUESTIONS			PRIMARY INTENDED USERS	METHODS	FREQUENCY OF COLLECTION	TIMELINE FOR FEEDBACK
	WHAT?	SO WHAT?	NOW WHAT?				
7. Are the core program components being implemented as intended?	Are the program staff able to implement each component successfully? In what ways are the Case Manager and Advancement Coach supporting the participant throughout the program? What adaptations are being introduced?	What implementation supports have been most helpful for staff? If not, why? Where is there role overlap and how was that negotiated? Is the adaptation producing better outcomes? Why?	What other supports are needed? Which role is best positioned to do what? Should this adaptation be incorporated into the model?	Sector Org leads SPO leads Program staff (i.e., ACs, CMs, Program Director)	Site observation Staff journaling	During components Weekly	To be integrated into scheduled learning circles Reviewed in time to inform next cohort

Appendix C: Staff Roles

ROLES	TASKS/RESPOSIBILITIES
CASE MANAGER	• Attend planning sessions with Pier Labs teams as required • Contribute to the development of outcomes for each SPO and sector • Work clollaboratively with sector organizations and Pier Labs team to identify perticipant screening criteria for each training and to co-create the TA service
ADVANCEMENT COACH	• Provides sector specific, career advancement support to all participants • Focuses on career coaching (whereas the Case Manager provides life support and assists clients in overcoming barriers to perticipation) • Supports managers in their HR efforts within organizations that include diversity and inclusion efforts, conflict resolution, performance review, and other leadership skills • Supports the AspireAtlantic team in terms of job development and alert the participants to potential opportunities
PROGRAM DIRECTOR	• Supports various AspireAtlantic partners • Oversee the program staff and sector partnerships
TA TEAM	The TA team is comprised of Pier Labs researchers and a service designer Overall, the TA team: • Translating best practices from labour market intervention research to program delivery • Utilizes implementation science strategies to ensure that the model is successfully adopted by program stakeholders • Leads development evaluation • Provides ongoing TA to support the delivery of program components

Appendix D: Methodology

Participant Demographic Information

To understand whether AspireAtlantic served the intended populations, participants provided personal information at the beginning of training, including the referral source, gender, immigration status, whether they identify as a racialized person, geographic location, highest education level, location they completed their education, employment history, and income and benefits. Participant information was analyzed descriptively to gain an understanding of the profile of participants who participated in the program.

Participant Interviews

Invitations were sent to AspireAtlantic participants to complete structured interviews about their experience. The interviews aimed to gain insight into how the program met participants' needs for both training and Advancement. These interviews were offered on a rolling basis scheduled according to their program completion dates. A summary of the data collected through these interviews is shown in Figure 3. Interview 1 was conducted during the program and aimed to understand the participant's experience with recruitment and screening. Participants were also asked for their initial perspectives about the training. Overall, 46% of the 97 participants completed the initial interview. Moreover, interview 2 was conducted 2-months post-graduation. Invitations were sent to the 88 graduates and 32% participated. This interview addressed their experience with AspireAtlantic in general and their perspectives on career readiness and occupational skills training. In this interview, participants also discussed the post-training supports they had received at this point. 6-months following graduation, participants were given the opportunity to discuss the results of their job search, the value of AspireAtlantic and its specific components, and recommended changes. All participants were invited to participant, though some cohorts were slightly less than 6 months post-graduation, at the time interviews were conducted. Of the 88 participants invited, 18% of graduates completed Interview 3. Interview 4 was the final point of contact planned for the evaluation. It was scheduled for one year after graduation. This addressed job readiness, advancement planning, and AspireAtlantic relationships. Five (10% of invited participants, 6% of all graduates) have completed their fourth and final interview. Analysis of qualitative interview data was completed by two members of the Pier Labs team. Theoretical thematic coding was completed using NVivo.

Participant Surveys

Participants completed 4 surveys before and after training. These surveys were designed to gather comprehensive data on participant's background, experiences with the program, post-training outcomes, and to track their progress over time. Survey 1 was completed during intake. Participants were asked to provide personal information such as characteristics, family status, income, education, and employment history. Survey 2 was done immediately following program completion. This survey aimed to quantify participant experiences with AspireAtlantic. They were asked to outline their satisfaction with the program, their experiences with training, as well as updated employment and education information. Surveys 3 and 4 were conducted 3 and 9 months after graduation, respectively. They were asked about the supports they received and for an update on employment and education information. Descriptive analyses were conducted to understand overall responses as well as responses considering group characteristics.

Employer Interviews

Invitations were sent to various employers in Nova Scotia to participate in semi-structured 1-hour interviews. We reached out to businesses who had hired AspireAtlantic graduates as well as those who had previously expressed interest in the program or had connections with sector councils. The goal of these interviews was to understand general perspectives of the labour market, previous experiences working with employment programs, as well as their feelings around the AspireAtlantic program and graduates. Five employers who had hired from AspireAtlantic agreed to take part. People interviewed worked for organizations of varying sizes within different sectors. Theoretical thematic coding was completed using NVivo.

Program Staff Learning Circles

AspireAtlantic staff were invited to participate in learning circles to allow for knowledge sharing and reflection amongst SPOs and sector partners. By fostering open dialog and collaborative problem-solving, these learning circles aimed to facilitate learning exchanges. The purpose was to collectively discover effective aspects of the program for further optimization, identify barriers encountered during implementation, and devise adaptations to effectively overcome these obstacles. During these sessions, they were asked to address the positive experiences and lessons learned throughout different parts of the program. Learning circle one focused on program initiation, recruitment, and screening. Learning circle two focused on CRT and Learning circle three focused on OST. Learning circle 3 occurred after all sessions were completed, so staff were invited to discuss overall thoughts about the program and future opportunities for employment programming in Nova Scotia. Insights from these learning circles were used to identify necessary alterations throughout, as well as for the final evaluation.

Program Staff Journals

Staff were asked to complete weekly journals which outlined relevant skills, challenges faced, and further supports required. Staff journals were structured around a set of 'practice profiles', which were developed as part of the implementation science strategies used in this program and intended to help guide implementation fidelity. These journals served as complementary information, aimed at gathering insights on how the existing organizational structures, processes, and staff capacity (specifically, Program Director, CMs and ACs) either supported or hindered the program's implementation quality. Thematic coding was conducted on these journals. Codes were developed using practice profiles, which provide behavioural anchors for rating the performance of the staff. There were three performance ratings: Acceptable performance, developmental performance, and unacceptable performance.

Fidelity Assessment Observations

A researcher observed sessions in early cohorts to conduct fidelity assessments on training delivery. Observations were also guided by the practice profiles on which the journals were based and were intended to help the TA/DE team understand whether expected competencies were observable in training sessions. Information recorded in these observations related to program implementation. Specifically, the site observations aimed to assess adherence to intended program implementation, evaluate staff ability, identify effective support, examine deviations, and determine additional support needs for successful implementation. Thematic coding was conducted on these observations.[66]

Appendix E: Data Collection Tools

1. Interviews:

AspireAtlantic Participant Interview #1

Opening: Thank you for taking part in this interview today. [Confirm consent form] We have received your consent form and before we get into the interview I want to know if you have any questions at all. [If no questions] I will be taking some notes regarding your answers to my questions, is that ok with you? [If not ok, audio or video recording is an option; if recording of any kind is not ok, then terminate interview]

Participant Name:

How did you first hear about AspireAtlantic?

Why did you apply? What did you expect to get from the program?

Tell me about the application and recruitment process.

Was the process clear to you?

Did the selection process seem fair?

Did you have the information you needed to make a decision about the program?

Tell me about the Career Readiness Training:

- What did you think of the CRT?
- Do you think the content will be useful for your future career?
- What was the most useful part of the training?
- What part or parts of the training did you feel could have been improved?

What do you hope will happen next for you in this program?

Overall, do you believe this program has been worth your time?

What parts of the program could be made better, for future program applicants and participants?

Do you have anything else you would like to add about your experience with the program?

Close by mentioning that we will be back in touch for a follow-up interview in 2-3 months, and confirm that is ok. If they do not want to be contacted again for interview, make a note of this in the interview summary.

AspireAtlantic Interview #2

Tell me about the Occupational Skills Training:

- What did you think of the OST?
- Do you think the content will be useful for your future career?
- What was the most useful part of the training?
- What part or parts of the training did you feel could have been improved?

Please tell me about your experience in AspireAtlantic since the end of the Occupational Skills Training:

- Have you had any job interviews? How did these go? (You may know if the person has been employed – if they have a job, ask them how the job is going as well)
- How often have you met with your Case Manager?
- What kinds of things did your Case Manager do to support you?
- How often have you met with your Advancement Coach?
- What kinds of things did your Advancement Coach do to support you?

Thinking back to the training, what parts of the Career Readiness or Occupational Skills training have been most useful in your search for a job?

Was there anything in the training that you do not believe will be useful for your career advancement?

Did you have any concerns about your participation in the program?

Are there any kinds of supports you feel you need at this stage of the program, that you aren't receiving?

What do you hope will happen next for you in this program?

Overall, do you believe this program has been worth your time?

What parts of the program could be made better, for future program applicants and participants?

Do you have anything else you would like to add about your experience with the program?

Close by mentioning that we will be back in touch for a follow-up interview in 3-4 months, and confirm that is ok. If they do not want to be contacted again for interview, make a note of this in the interview summary.

Interview #3 – 6-9 months post OST

In the previous interview, the topic of employment was discussed (modify according to participant situation):

Have you found a position within the sector?

If yes, how does your position compare to what you expected, based on the training? (e.g., are the tasks what you thought you would be doing, is the schedule aligned with what you anticipated, etc.)

If not, what challenges have you encountered while searching for a position related to the sector?

Are the skills that you learned in CRT relevant to your job search/position? If so, could you provide an example?

Are the skills that you learned in OST relevant to your job search/position? If so, could you provide an example?

Advancement is one of the focuses of the AspireAtlantic program. Would you say that you have goals to advance within the company you are currently employed for(modify according to participant situation)? Why or why not?

If so, what position to you plan to advance to?

what is your plan for advancement?

Individuals often value experiences and relationships differently, depending on their situation and needs:

How valuable would you say that having access to a Case Manager during AspireAtlantic has been? Were there parts of the program during which the Case Manager was more/less valuable to you?

How valuable would you say that having access to an Advancement Coach during AspireAtlantic has been? Were there parts of the program during which the Advancement Coach was more/less valuable to you?

What were the key features of AspireAtlantic (screening, CRT, OST, Placement, Post-employment services)?

Were there any important aspects of employment programs that you felt AspireAltantic currently lacks?

Are there any kinds of supports you feel you need at this stage of the program, that you aren't receiving?

What do you hope will happen next for you in this program?

Overall, do you believe this program has been worth your time?

Do you have anything else you would like to add about your experience with the program?

Interview #4

Has your employment situation changed since our last interview?

(If yes) How has it changed? What brought about the change?

Are the skills that you learned in CRT relevant to your job search/position? If so, could you provide an example?

Are the skills that you learned in OST relevant to your job search/position? If so, could you provide an example?

Advancement is one of the focuses of the AspireAtlantic program. Would you say that you have goals to advance within the company you are currently employed for (modify according to participant situation)? Why or why not?

a) If so, what position do you plan to advance to?

b) what is your plan for advancement?

Individuals often value experiences and relationships differently, depending on their situation and needs:

How did access to a Case Manager through AspireAtlantic help you with your job search?

How valuable would you say that having access to an Advancement Coach during AspireAtlantic has been? Were there parts of the program during which the Advancement Coach was more/less valuable to you?

From your perspective, what were features of AspireAtlantic (screening, CRT, OST, Placement, Post-employment services) were most beneficial forkl you?

Were there any important aspects of employment programs that you felt AspireAltantic currently lacks?

Are there any kinds of supports you feel you need at this stage of the program, that you aren't receiving?

What do you hope will happen next for you in your career?

Looking ahead, do you anticipate any long-term benefits or opportunities that may arise because of your participation in AspireAtlantic?

How do you think your time with AspireAtlantic will continue to be valuable to you in the future?

Are there any valuable insights or lessons you gained from AspireAtlantic that you believe will have a lasting impact on your personal or professional development? If so, can you elaborate on them?

Did you encounter any challenges or obstacles during your time in the AspireAtlantic program, and how did you navigate or overcome them? What strategies or resources did you find particularly helpful in addressing these challenges?

What are your thoughts on the current job market in Nova Scotia (maybe mention we noticed a lot of participants are from ISANS and seem to lack experience as a Canadian worker)?

Do you have anything else you would like to add about your experience with the program?

2. Participant Surveys:

AspireAtlantic Participant intake survey

Thank you for taking the time to answer the following questions. This survey should take about **10 to 15 minutes** to complete. Please answer as honestly as you can. Your responses will help us better understand how AspireAtlantic can be improved in the future.

Your responses will be confidential and will be used for research and program improvement purposes only. Your responses are also voluntary; you are free to exit the survey at any time.

This survey was designed by Blueprint, a non-profit research organization tasked with evaluation of AspireAtlantic. If you have any questions about the survey, about the evaluation of AspireAtlantic, about how your data will be used, or if you wish, at any point, to withdraw your data, please contact [personal information removed]

Socio-demographics

Sex at birth

This question is needed to facilitate data linkage with government administrative data to improve our understanding about long-term employment outcomes. A question about gender identity will follow.

What sex were you assigned at birth (i.e. on your original birth certificate)?

- Male
- Female
- Not listed above - Please specify below [Text entry]

Self-Identified Gender

What best describes your gender? Please select only one:

- Man
- Woman
- Gender non-binary (including gender fluid, genderqueer, androgynous)
- Two-spirit
- I would like to self-describe [Text entry]
- Prefer not to answer

Do you identify as transgender?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

Age

What is your date of birth?

Location

In which province or territory do you currently live?

[Dropdown list]

From which of the following programs did you receive income last month?

If you received income from multiple programs in the list, please select the one from which you received the most.

- Income Support
- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped
- Income Assistance

- Disability Assistance
- Employment and Income Assistance
- Transitional Assistance Program
- Extended Benefits Program
- Employment Support and Income Assistance
- Ontario Works
- Ontario Disability Support Program
- Social Assistance Program
- Disability Support Program
- Social Assistance Program (aide sociale)
- Social Solidarity Program (solidarité sociale)
- Saskatchewan Assistance Program
- Transitional Employment Allowance
- Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability
- Employment Insurance
- None of the above

Region and municipality

What is your postal code? [skip if they do not reside in Canada]

[Text and numeric entry]

Marital status

What is your marital status?

- Never legally married
- Legally married (and not separated)
- Living with a common-law partner (live together as a couple but not legally married to each other)
- Separated, but still legally married
- Divorced
- Widowed

Including yourself, how many people live in your household on a regular basis?

[Dropdown list]

Children

Are any of the members in your household aged 17 or under?

- Yes
- No

[Display if Are any of the members in your household… == yes]

- How many members of your household are aged 17 or under? [Text entry]
- How many members of your household are aged 6 or under? [Text entry]

[Display if Are any of the members in your household… == yes]

Are you primarily responsible for the care and upbringing of any member of your household aged 17 or under?

- Yes
- No

Household income

What was your total household income before taxes, last year?

- Under $20,000
- $20,000 - $40,000
- $40,000 - $60,000
- $60,000 - $80,000
- $80,000 - $100,000
- Over $100,000

Francophone

First language is French, or French is first official language

What is the language that you first learned at home in childhood and still understand?

- English [Skip to Newcomer status]
- French
- Other language - please specify [Text entry]

Can you speak English or French well enough to conduct a conversation?

- English only [Skip to Newcomer status]
- French only [Skip to Newcomer status]
- Both English and French
- Neither English nor French

What language do you speak most often at home?

- English
- French [Skip to Newcomer status]
- Other language - please specify [Text entry]

Do you speak any other languages on a regular basis at home?

- No
- Yes, English
- Yes, French
- Yes, Other language - please specify [Text entry]

Indigenous identity

Self-identified indigenous identity

Do you identify as Indigenous – that is, First Nations, Métis, and/or Inuit? Please select all that apply.

- No
- Yes, First Nations
- Yes, Métis
- Yes, Inuit
- Another Indigenous identity – please specify: [Text entry]

Newcomer status

Were you born in Canada?

- Yes
- No

Year of arrival

[If not born in Canada] In what year did you arrive in Canada?

Permanent resident status

[If not born in Canada] What is your Canadian immigration status?

- Canadian Citizen (by birth)
- Canadian Citizen (by naturalization)
- Permanent resident/Landed immigrant (a person who has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities)
- Refugee claimant
- Other - please specify: [Text entry]

Race

In our society, people are often described by their race or racial background. For example, some people are considered "White" or "Black" or "East/Southeast Asian", etc.

Which race category/categories best describe(s) you? Select all that apply.

- Black (African, Afro-Caribbean, African-Canadian descent)
- East Asian (Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Taiwanese descent)
- South East Asian (Filipino, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Thai, Indonesian, other Southeast Asian descent)
- Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, Inuit descent)
- Latino (Latin American, Hispanic descent)
- Middle Eastern (Arab, Persian, West Asian descent, e.g. Afghan, Egyptian, Iranian, Lebanese, Turkish, Kurdish, etc.)
- South Asian (South Asian descent, e.g. East Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan, Indo-Caribbean, etc.)
- White (European descent)
- Another race category [Text entry]
- Prefer not to say

Disability

Self-identification of disability

Disability is understood as any physical, mental, developmental, cognitive, learning, communication, sight, hearing, or functional limitation that, in interaction with a barrier, could hinders a person's full and equal participation in society.

Do you identify as a person with a disability?

- Yes
- No

Education

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- No certificate, diploma or degree
- High school diploma or equivalency certificate
- Registered Apprenticeship or other trades certificate or diploma
- College, CEGEP, or other non-university certificate or diploma
- University certificate, diploma, or degree below bachelor level
- University Bachelor's degree (e.g. B.A., B.A. (Hons.), B.SC., B.Ed., LL.B.)
- University certificate, diploma or degree above bachelor level

[If above bachelor level is selected] What is the highest level of university certificate, diploma or degree you have completed above bachelor level?

- Master's degree (e.g. M.A., M.SC., etc.)
- Doctorate (PhD)
- Other - Please specify below [Text entry]

Location of highest credential attainment

Did you complete your highest level of education in Canada or outside of Canada?

- In Canada
- Outside Canada

Employment

Employment status

In the past week, have you worked in a job or at a business from which you received an income?

- Yes (employee and/or self-employed)
- No

[If employed] How many jobs did you work last week?

[Dropdown list]

[Display if How many jobs did you work last week == not empty]

Please provide a nickname for the job for which you will be responding to the next set of questions. This will help us to understand which job you are referring to in each response.

Note: you will see this set of questions [number of jobs selected in Q28] times.

[Text entry]

[If employed] When did you start [nickname of job]? If you are not sure, please provide your best estimate.

Month ▼ January ...

Year ▼ January ...

[If employed] How do you feel about [nickname of job]?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Overall, I am satisfied with my job					
In my current job, I think I will be able to advance in my career					
I worry about losing my job					

[If employed] Is [nickname of job]? casual (you are called to work on an as-needed basis)?

- Yes
- No

[If employed] Is [nickname of job] seasonal (you only work at certain times of the year)?

- Yes
- No

[If employed] Is [nickname of job] temporary (it has a fixed end date)?

- Yes
- No

[If employed] On average, how many hours a week do you usually work in [nickname of job]?

[If employed] In [nickname of job], does your employer offer you any of the following benefits (even if you choose not to take them)? Please select all that apply.

- Medical insurance or health plan in addition to public health insurance coverage
- Dental plan or dental coverage with health plan
- Life and/or disability insurance plan
- Private pension plan
- At least two weeks of paid time off/paid vacation days
- None of the above

[If employed] What is your job title at [nickname of job]?

Please type in your job title and select the job title that is the best fit. If you can't find a title that matches your job in the list, please just type in your job title and proceed to the next question.

[Text entry with autofill]

[If employed] What industry is your job at [nickname of job] in?

Please type in the industry of your job and select the industry that is the best fit from the list.

[Text entry with autofill]

[If employed] Are you paid an hourly wage at [nickname of job]?

- Yes
- No

[If employed and paid an hourly wage] How much are you paid each hour—including tips and commissions, but before taxes and other deductions at [nickname of job]?

[If employed and not paid an hourly wage] What is the easiest way to report your wage or salary, before taxes and other deductions at [nickname of job]?

- Yearly
- Monthly
- Semimonthly (twice per month)
- Biweekly (every two weeks)
- Weekly
- Other - Please specify [Text entry]

[If employed] What is your [response selected above] wage or salary, before taxes and other deductions at [nickname of job]?

[Numeric entry]

[Display if not employed]

The next few questions will ask you a bit more about your last job. If you had more than one job, please answer the questions by thinking about the job in which you worked the most hours each week.

[If not employed] When did you start your last job? If you are not sure, please provide your best estimate.

Month ▼ January ...

Year ▼ January ...

[If not employed] When did your last job end? If you are not sure, please provide your best estimate.

Month ▼ January ...

Year ▼ January ...

[If not employed] What was your last job title?

Please type in your job title and select the job title that is the best fit. If you can't find a title that matches your job in the list, please just type in your job title and proceed to the next question.

[Text entry with autofill]

[If not employed] What industry was your last job in?

Please type in the industry of your job and select the industry that is the best fit from the list.

[Text entry with autofill]

Aspireatlantic participant post-training survey

Thank you for taking the time to answer the following questions. This survey should take about 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Please answer as honestly as you can. Your responses will help us better understand how AspireAtlantic can be improved in the future.

Your responses will be confidential, and will be used for research and program improvement purposes only. Your responses are also voluntary; you are free to exit the survey at any time.

This survey was designed by Blueprint, a non-profit research organization tasked with evaluation of AspireAtlantic. If you have any questions about the survey, about the evaluation of AspireAtlantic, about how your data will be used, or if you wish, at any point, to withdraw your data, please contact [personal information removed]

Program satisfaction

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I am satisfied with the Career Readiness Training					
I am satisfied with the occupational Skills Training					
I am satisfied with the job search and placement support					
I am satisfied with the Case Manager I was assigned					
I am satisfied with the Advancement Coach I was assigned					
The sector I chose to receive training in is a good match with my educational background and work experience					
AspireAtlantic is useful in helping me prepare for future employment					
Overall, I am satisfied with AspireAtlantic					

Based on your experience in the program, how likely are you to recommend AspireAtlantic to others?

- Very unlikely to recommend
- Unlikely to recommend
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Likely to recommend
- Very likely to recommend
- I've already recommended AspireAtlantic to someone

Income Source

In which province or territory do you currently live?

From which of the following programs did you receive income last month?

If you received income from multiple programs in the list, please select the one from which you received the most.

- Income Support
- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped
- Income Assistance
- Disability Assistance
- Employment and Income Assistance
- Transitional Assistance Program
- Extended Benefits Program
- Employment Support and Income Assistance
- Ontario Works
- Ontario Disability Support Program
- Social Assistance Program
- Disability Support Program
- Social Assistance Program (aide sociale)
- Social Solidarity Program (solidarité sociale)
- Saskatchewan Assistance Program
- Transitional Employment Allowance
- Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability
- Employment Insurance
- None of the above

Employment

In the past week, have you worked in a job or at a business from which you received an income?

- Yes (employee and/or self-employed)
- No

[If employed] How many jobs did you work last week?

[If employed] Please provide a nickname for the job for which you will be responding to the next set of questions. This will help us to understand which job you are referring to in each response.

Note: you will see this set of questions [number of jobs selected in Q28] times.

[Text entry]

[If employed] When did you start [nickname of job]? If you are not sure, please provide your best estimate.

[If employed] How do you feel about [nickname of job]?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Overall, I am satisfied with my job					
In my current job, I think I will be able to advance in my career					
I worry about losing my job					

[If employed] Is [nickname of job]? casual (you are called to work on an as-needed basis)?

- Yes
- No

[If employed] Is [nickname of job] seasonal (you only work at certain times of the year)?

- Yes
- No

[If employed] Is [nickname of job] temporary (it has a fixed end date)?

- Yes
- No

[If employed] On average, how many hours a week do you usually work in [nickname of job]?

[Numeric entry]

[If employed] In [nickname of job], does your employer offer you any of the following benefits (even if you choose not to take them)? Please select all that apply.

- Medical insurance or health plan in addition to public health insurance coverage
- Dental plan or dental coverage with health plan
- Life and/or disability insurance plan
- Private pension plan
- At least two weeks of paid time off/paid vacation days
- None of the above

[If employed] What is your job title at [nickname of job]?

Please type in your job title and select the job title that is the best fit. If you can't find a title that matches your job in the list, please just type in your job title and proceed to the next question.

[If employed] What industry is your job at [nickname of job] in?

Please type in the industry of your job and select the industry that is the best fit from the list.

[If employed] Are you paid an hourly wage at [nickname of job]?

- Yes
- No

[If employed and paid an hourly wage] How much are you paid each hour—including tips and commissions, but before taxes and other deductions at [nickname of job]?

[If employed and not paid an hourly wage] What is the easiest way to report your wage or salary, before taxes and other deductions at [nickname of job]?

- Yearly
- Monthly
- Semimonthly (twice per month)
- Biweekly (every two weeks)
- Weekly
- Other - Please specify [Text entry]

[If employed] What is your [response selected above] wage or salary, before taxes and other deductions at [nickname of job]?

[Display if not employed]

The next few questions will ask you a bit more about your last job. If you had more than one job, please answer the questions by thinking about the job in which you worked the most hours each week.

[If not employed] When did you start your last job? If you are not sure, please provide your best estimate.

[If not employed] When did your last job end? If you are not sure, please provide your best estimate.

[If not employed] What was your last job title?

Please type in your job title and select the job title that is the best fit. If you can't find a title that matches your job in the list, please just type in your job title and proceed to the next question.

[Text entry with autofill]

[If not employed] What industry was your last job in?

Please type in the industry of your job and select the industry that is the best fit from the list.

[Text entry with autofill]

Additional employment

How useful was AspireAtlantic in helping you find/get your current job?

- Not useful
- A little useful
- Somewhat useful
- Very useful

Enrollment in further education

Are you enrolled in any additional training or education program, outside of AspireAtlantic? Please select "Yes" even if you are currently on a break from this program (such as summer break), but you are scheduled to start again in the next 5 months.

- Yes
- No

[If enrolled in additional training] Which of the following best describes the type of program in which you are enrolled?

- A high school, college, or university program
- Other training program

[If enrolled in a high school, college, or university program] In which type of high school, college, or university program are you enrolled?

- High school (including adult high school, learning centre, online)
- High school equivalency (including GED, ACE certificate or Academic upgrading)

- College (certificate, diploma, or degree program)
- University (certificate, diploma, or degree)
- Other

[If enrolled in other training program or other] What types of training are you enrolled in? Please select all that apply.

- On-the-job training
- English as a Second Language (ESL)
- Employability skills training (to prepare you to find and keep a job)
- Essential Skills training (e.g. numeracy, literacy, digital skills…)
- Apprenticeship training
- Other - Please specify [Text entry]

What is your current field of study?

Please type in your field of study and select the category that is the best fit. If you can't find a category that matches your field of study in the list, please just type in your field of study and proceed to the next question.

Aspireatlantic participant 3-month post-training survey

Thank you for taking the time to answer the following questions. This survey should take about 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Please answer as honestly as you can. Your responses will help us better understand how AspireAtlantic can be improved in the future.

Your responses will be confidential, and will be used for research and program improvement purposes only. Your responses are also voluntary; you are free to exit the survey at any time.

You will receive a $15 gift card for taking the time to participate in the survey.

This survey was designed by Blueprint, a non-profit research organization tasked with evaluation of AspireAtlantic. If you have any questions about the survey, about the evaluation of AspireAtlantic, about how your data will be used, or if you wish, at any point, to withdraw your data, please contact [personal information removed]

Program satisfaction

After the training, did you receive job search and placement support provided by the AspireAtlantic team?

- Yes
- No

After the training, did you receive post-employment services, including career advancement support, provided by the AspireAtlantic team?

- Yes
- No

Display if After the training, did you receive post-employment services… == Yes]

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
(If yes to Q1) I am satisfied with the job search and placement support					
(If yes to Q1) I am satisfied with the case manager I was assigned					
(If yes to Q2) I am satisfied with the post-employment services, including career advancement support					
(If yes to Q2) I am satisfied with the Advancement Coach I was assigned					

Income Source

In which province or territory do you currently live?

[Dropdown list]

From which of the following programs did you receive income last month?

If you received income from multiple programs in the list, please select the one from which you received the most.

- Income Support
- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped
- Income Assistance
- Disability Assistance
- Employment and Income Assistance
- Transitional Assistance Program
- Extended Benefits Program
- Employment Support and Income Assistance
- Ontario Works
- Ontario Disability Support Program
- Social Assistance Program
- Disability Support Program
- Social Assistance Program (aide sociale)
- Social Solidarity Program (solidarité sociale)
- Saskatchewan Assistance Program
- Transitional Employment Allowance
- Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability
- Employment Insurance
- None of the above

Employment

In the past week, have you worked in a job or at a business from which you received an income?

o Yes (employee and/or self-employed)

o No

[If employed] How many jobs did you work last week?

[If employed] Please provide a nickname for the job for which you will be responding to the next set of questions. This will help us to understand which job you are referring to in each response.

Note: you will see this set of questions [number of jobs selected in Q28] times.

[If employed] When did you start [nickname of job]? If you are not sure, please provide your best estimate.

[If employed] How do you feel about [nickname of job]?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Overall, I am satisfied with my job					
In my current job, I think I will be able to advance in my career					
I worry about losing my job					

[If employed] Is [nickname of job]? casual (you are called to work on an as-needed basis)?

- Yes
- No

[If employed] Is [nickname of job] seasonal (you only work at certain times of the year)?

- Yes
- No

[If employed] Is [nickname of job] temporary (it has a fixed end date)?

- Yes
- No

[If employed] On average, how many hours a week do you usually work in [nickname of job]?

[If employed] In [nickname of job], does your employer offer you any of the following benefits (even if you choose not to take them)? Please select all that apply.

- Medical insurance or health plan in addition to public health insurance coverage
- Dental plan or dental coverage with health plan
- Life and/or disability insurance plan
- Private pension plan
- At least two weeks of paid time off/paid vacation days
- None of the above

[If employed] What is your job title at [nickname of job]?

Please type in your job title and select the job title that is the best fit. If you can't find a title that matches your job in the list, please just type in your job title and proceed to the next question.

[If employed] What industry is your job at [nickname of job] in?

Please type in the industry of your job and select the industry that is the best fit from the list.

[If employed] Are you paid an hourly wage at [nickname of job]?

- Yes
- No

[If employed and paid an hourly wage] How much are you paid each hour—including tips and commissions, but before taxes and other deductions at [nickname of job]?

[If employed and not paid an hourly wage] What is the easiest way to report your wage or salary, before taxes and other deductions at [nickname of job]?

- Yearly
- Monthly
- Semimonthly (twice per month)
- Biweekly (every two weeks)
- Weekly
- Other - Please specify [Text entry]

[If employed] What is your [response selected above] wage or salary before taxes and other deductions at [nickname of job]?

[Display if not employed]

The next few questions will ask you a bit more about your last job. If you had more than one job, please answer the questions by thinking about the job in which you worked the most hours each week.

[If not employed] When did you start your last job? If you are not sure, please provide your best estimate.

[If not employed] When did your last job end? If you are not sure, please provide your best estimate.

[If not employed] What was your last job title?

Please type in your job title and select the job title that is the best fit. If you can't find a title that matches your job in the list, please just type in your job title and proceed to the next question.

[If not employed] What industry was your last job in?

Please type in the industry of your job and select the industry that is the best fit from the list.

Additional employment

How useful was AspireAtlantic in helping you find/get your current job?

- Not useful
- A little useful
- Somewhat useful
- Very useful

Enrollment in further education

Are you enrolled in any additional training or education program, outside of AspireAtlantic? Please select "Yes" even if you are currently on a break from this program (such as summer break), but you are scheduled to start again in the next 5 months.

- Yes
- No

[If enrolled in additional training] Which of the following best describes the type of program in which you are enrolled?

- A high school, college, or university program
- Other training program

[If enrolled in a high school, college, or university program] In which type of high school, college, or university program are you enrolled?

- High school (including adult high school, learning centre, online)
- High school equivalency (including GED, ACE certificate or Academic upgrading)
- College (certificate, diploma, or degree program)
- University (certificate, diploma, or degree)
- Other

[If enrolled in other training program or other] What types of training are you enrolled in? Please select all that apply.

- On-the-job training
- English as a Second Language (ESL)
- Employability skills training (to prepare you to find and keep a job)
- Essential Skills training (e.g. numeracy, literacy, digital skills…)
- Apprenticeship training
- Other - Please specify [Text entry]

What is your current field of study?

Please type in your field of study and select the category that is the best fit. If you can't find a category that matches your field of study in the list, please just type in your field of study and proceed to the next question.

Aspireatlantic participant 9-month post-training survey

Thank you for taking the time to answer the following questions. This survey should take about 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Please answer as honestly as you can. Your responses will help us better understand how AspireAtlantic can be improved in the future.

Your responses will be confidential, and will be used for research and program improvement purposes only. Your responses are also voluntary; you are free to exit the survey at any time.

You will receive a $15 gift card for taking the time to participate in the survey.

This survey was designed by Blueprint, a non-profit research organization tasked with evaluation of AspireAtlantic. If you have any questions about the survey, about the evaluation of AspireAtlantic, about how your data will be used, or if you wish, at any point, to withdraw your data, please contact [personal information removed]

Program satisfaction

In the past six months, did you receive job search and placement support provided by the AspireAtlantic team?

- Yes
- No

In the past six months, did you receive post-employment services, including career advancement support, provided by the AspireAtlantic team?

- Yes
- No

Display if In the past six months, did you receive post-employment services … == Yes]

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
(If yes to Q1) I am satisfied with the job search and placement support					
(If yes to Q1) I am satisfied with the Case Manager I was assigned					
(If yes to Q2) I am satisfied with the post-employment services, including career advancement support					
(If yes to Q2) I am satisfied with the Advancement Coach I was assigned					

Income Source

In which province or territory do you currently live?

From which of the following programs did you receive income last month?

If you received income from multiple programs in the list, please select the one from which you received the most.

- Income Support
- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped
- Income Assistance
- Disability Assistance
- Employment and Income Assistance
- Transitional Assistance Program
- Extended Benefits Program
- Employment Support and Income Assistance
- Ontario Works
- Ontario Disability Support Program
- Social Assistance Program
- Disability Support Program
- Social Assistance Program (aide sociale)
- Social Solidarity Program (solidarité sociale)
- Saskatchewan Assistance Program
- Transitional Employment Allowance
- Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability
- Employment Insurance
- None of the above

Employment

In the past week, have you worked in a job or at a business from which you received an income?

- Yes (employee and/or self-employed)
- No

[If employed] How many jobs did you work last week?

[If employed] Please provide a nickname for the job for which you will be responding to the next set of questions. This will help us to understand which job you are referring to in each response.

Note: you will see this set of questions [number of jobs selected in Q28] times.

[If employed] When did you start [nickname of job]? If you are not sure, please provide your best estimate.

[If employed] How do you feel about [nickname of job]?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Overall, I am satisfied with my job					
In my current job, I think I will be able to advance in my career					
I worry about losing my job					

[If employed] Is [nickname of job]? casual (you are called to work on an as-needed basis)?

- Yes
- No

[If employed] Is [nickname of job] seasonal (you only work at certain times of the year)?

- Yes
- No

[If employed] Is [nickname of job] temporary (it has a fixed end date)?

- Yes
- No

[If employed] On average, how many hours a week do you usually work in [nickname of job]?

[If employed] In [nickname of job], does your employer offer you any of the following benefits (even if you choose not to take them)? Please select all that apply.

- Medical insurance or health plan in addition to public health insurance coverage
- Dental plan or dental coverage with health plan
- Life and/or disability insurance plan
- Private pension plan
- At least two weeks of paid time off/paid vacation days
- None of the above

[If employed] What is your job title at [nickname of job]?

Please type in your job title and select the job title that is the best fit. If you can't find a title that matches your job in the list, please just type in your job title and proceed to the next question.

[If employed] What industry is your job at [nickname of job] in?

Please type in the industry of your job and select the industry that is the best fit from the list.

[Text entry with autofill]

[If employed] Are you paid an hourly wage at [nickname of job]?

- Yes
- No

[If employed and paid an hourly wage] How much are you paid each hour—including tips and commissions, but before taxes and other deductions at [nickname of job]?

[If employed and not paid an hourly wage] What is the easiest way to report your wage or salary, before taxes and other deductions at ${job_name/ChoiceTextEntryValue}?

- Yearly
- Monthly
- Semimonthly (twice per month)
- Biweekly (every two weeks)
- Weekly
- Other - Please specify [Text entry]

[If employed] What is your [response selected above] wage or salary, before taxes and other deductions at [nickname of job]?

[Display if not employed]

The next few questions will ask you a bit more about your last job. If you had more than one job, please answer the questions by thinking about the job in which you worked the most hours each week.

[If not employed] When did you start your last job? If you are not sure, please provide your best estimate.

[If not employed] When did your last job end? If you are not sure, please provide your best estimate.

[If not employed] What was your last job title?

Please type in your job title and select the job title that is the best fit. If you can't find a title that matches your job in the list, please just type in your job title and proceed to the next question.

[If not employed] What industry was your last job in?

Please type in the industry of your job and select the industry that is the best fit from the list.

Additional employment

How useful was AspireAtlantic in helping you find/get your current job?

- Not useful
- A little useful
- Somewhat useful
- Very useful

Enrollment in further education

Are you enrolled in any additional training or education program, outside of AspireAtlantic? Please select "Yes" even if you are currently on a break from this program (such as summer break), but you are scheduled to start again in the next 5 months.

- Yes
- No

[If enrolled in additional training] Which of the following best describes the type of program in which you are enrolled?

- A high school, college, or university program
- Other training program

[If enrolled in a high school, college, or university program] In which type of high school, college, or university program are you enrolled?

- High school (including adult high school, learning centre, online)
- High school equivalency (including GED, ACE certificate or Academic upgrading)
- College (certificate, diploma, or degree program)
- University (certificate, diploma, or degree)
- Other

[If enrolled in other training program or other] What types of training are you enrolled in? Please select all that apply.

- On-the-job training
- English as a Second Language (ESL)
- Employability skills training (to prepare you to find and keep a job)
- Essential Skills training (e.g. numeracy, literacy, digital skills…)
- Apprenticeship training
- Other - Please specify [Text entry]

What is your current field of study?

Please type in your field of study and select the category that is the best fit. If you can't find a category that matches your field of study in the list, please just type in your field of study and proceed to the next question.

3. Practice Profiles:

PROFICIENCY	ACCEPTABLE PERFORMANCE	DEVELOPMENTAL PERFORMANCE	UNACCEPTABLE PERFORMANCE	COMPONENT	WHO	FIDELITY EVALUATION QUESTION	INDICATOR OF FIDELITY	DATA SOURCES
				RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING	CASE MANAGER			
				CAREER READINESS TRAINING	CASE MANAGER			
PARTICIPANT RELATIONSHIP	Sees their coaching relationship with the participant as a partnership with focus on self-reliance Example: Provides pathways to the participants and allows the participant to make the decisions based on what success looks like for them as an individual, even if this means that goals have to be re-set	Has a hierarchical coaching relationship with the participant; Does not encourage independence Example: Provides pathways to the participants and expects the participant to follow their advice and fit in with the previously defined goals or the program definition of success	Just 'checking in' on participant Example: Calling a participant and saying: "hey this is Alex here; I'm just calling to check in."	Post Employment Services	Advancement Coach	What is the dynamic of the coaching relationship between AC and participant?	0 = Just 'checking in' on participant 1 = Has a hierarchical coaching relationship with the participant; Does not encourage independence 2 = Sees their coaching relationship with the participant as a partnership with focus on self-reliance	Salesforce, Staff Journal, Interview, Observations

PROFICIENCY	ACCEPTABLE PERFORMANCE	DEVELOPMENTAL PERFORMANCE	UNACCEPTABLE PERFORMANCE	COMPONENT	WHO	FIDELITY EVALUATION QUESTION	INDICATOR OF FIDELITY	DATA SOURCES
				RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING	CASE MANAGER			
				CAREER READINESS TRAINING	CASE MANAGER			
PARTICIPANT GOALS	Dynamic focus on the participant's personal goals and understand that these goals can change as their life circumstances change Example: Revisits the participants goals and re-set goals if the goals of the participants have changed	Static focus on the participant's preset personal goals Example: Revisits the participant's goals in Advancement Coaching sessions	Does not focus on the participant's personal goals Example: Does not revisit the goals that the participants set in their advancement plan	Post Employment Services	Advancement Coach	How is the AC focusing on the participant's goals?	0 = Does not focus on the participant's personal goals 1 = Static focus on the participant's preset personal goals 2 = Dynamic focus on the participant's personal goals and understand that these goals can change as their life circumstances change	Salesforce, Staff journal, Interview, Observations

PROFICIENCY	ACCEPTABLE PERFORMANCE	DEVELOPMENTAL PERFORMANCE	UNACCEPTABLE PERFORMANCE	COMPONENT	WHO	FIDELITY EVALUATION QUESTION	INDICATOR OF FIDELITY	DATA SOURCES
				RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING	CASE MANAGER			
				CAREER READINESS TRAINING	CASE MANAGER			
PARTICIPANT MOTIVATIONS	Uses techniques such as probing and open questions and to help participants articulate their own motivation for change; asks participants follow up questions to probe further to arrive at next steps Example: Using an exercise like 'walk the line' to help participants evaluate where they are currently at and where they would like to be at Example: The conversations are strategic and include advancement focused questions like "Is there anyone working at your job where you would love to have their job one day?"	Refers back to participants' initial motivations as a way to keep participants accountable to advancement outcomes Example: Asks questions regarding goals or mentions the goals that the participants had set for themselves in their advancement plan	Does not utilize participant motivations in pursuing advancement outcomes of the participant and/or becomes bogged down in life barriers Example: Does not initiate conversation or ask questions around the participants goals, instead solely focused on what is happening right now in the day to day	Post Employment Services	Advancement Coach	How is the AC leveraging participant's motivations for advancement?	0 = Does not utilize participant motivations in pursuing advancement outcomes of the participant and/or becomes bogged down in life barriers 1 = Refers back to participants' initial motivations as a way to keep participants accountable to advancement outcomes 2 = Uses techniques such as probing and open questions and to help participants articulate their own motivation for change; asks participants follow up questions to probe further to arrive at next steps	Salesforce, Staff journal, Interview, Observations

PROFICIENCY	ACCEPTABLE PERFORMANCE	DEVELOPMENTAL PERFORMANCE	UNACCEPTABLE PERFORMANCE	COMPONENT	WHO	FIDELITY EVALUATION QUESTION	INDICATOR OF FIDELITY	DATA SOURCES
				RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING	CASE MANAGER			
				CAREER READINESS TRAINING	CASE MANAGER			
PARTICIPANT COMMUNICATION	Engages with participants through a wide range of interactions; ensures that it is easy and convenient for participants to reach out Example: Does use all opportunities to connect with participants, such as meeting the participant for a walk, meeting them for a coffee, etc.	Uses a range of communication tools to reach out to participants Example: Employs a range of communication tools to connect with participants such as email, text, phone, in person sit down meeting at the office	Engages with the participants through one communication tool; difficult for participants to reach out Example: Only trying to connect with participants through phone.	Post Employment Services	Advancement Coach	How is the AC communicating with participants?	0 = Engages with the participants through one communication tool; difficult for participants to reach out 1 = Uses a range of communication tools to reach out to participants 2 = Engages with participants through a wide range of interactions; ensures that it is easy and convenient for participants to reach out	Salesforce, Staff journal, Interview, Observations

PROFICIENCY	ACCEPTABLE PERFORMANCE	DEVELOPMENTAL PERFORMANCE	UNACCEPTABLE PERFORMANCE	COMPONENT	WHO	FIDELITY EVALUATION QUESTION	INDICATOR OF FIDELITY	DATA SOURCES
				RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING	CASE MANAGER			
				CAREER READINESS TRAINING	CASE MANAGER			
PARTICIPANT FOLLOW-UP	Proactively engages with all participants and persists in engaging less responsive participants Example: Offers an incentive that might re-engage participants such as "gift cards"	Selectively engages with participants who are highly responsive Example: Reaches out to participants, but does not try to reengage them if they do not get a response	Does not proactively engage with their participant case load Example: Waits for the participant to reach out and engages is surface level conversations	Post Employment Services	Advancement Coach	How is the AC following up with participants?	0 = Does not proactively engage with their participant case load 1 = Selectively engages with participants who are highly responsive 2 = Proactively engages with all participants and persists in engaging less responsive participants	Salesforce, Staff journal, Interview, Observations

PROFICIENCY	ACCEPTABLE PERFORMANCE	DEVELOPMENTAL PERFORMANCE	UNACCEPTABLE PERFORMANCE	COMPONENT	WHO	FIDELITY EVALUATION QUESTION	INDICATOR OF FIDELITY	DATA SOURCES
				RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING	CASE MANAGER			
				CAREER READINESS TRAINING	CASE MANAGER			
COACHING SCHEDULE	Coaching is scheduled based on client needs and is designed to start intensively and taper off when participants are faring well in the workplace. Example: Starts with weekly contact initially and slows down to quarterly engagement for the those who are employed and thriving. When participants are in crisis and the participant request additional support the coach makes themselves available and increases contact.	Maintains a steady coaching schedule regardless of the participants performance and circumstances. Example: Initially starts with weekly contact, moves to biweekly after the first two weeks, then moves to monthly check ins for the rest of the probation period and moves to quarterly check ins once the probation period is over	Takes a reactive approach to coaching. Example: Only provides coaching when this is requested by the participant.	Post Employment Services	Advancement Coach	How is the AC scheduling coaching with participants?	0 = Takes a reactive approach to coaching 1 = Maintains a steady coaching schedule regardless of the participants performance and circumstances 2 = Coaching is scheduled based on client needs and is designed to start intensively and taper off when participants are faring well in the workplace	Salesforce, Staff journal, Interview, Observations

PROFICIENCY	ACCEPTABLE PERFORMANCE	DEVELOPMENTAL PERFORMANCE	UNACCEPTABLE PERFORMANCE	COMPONENT	WHO	FIDELITY EVALUATION QUESTION	INDICATOR OF FIDELITY	DATA SOURCES
				RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING	CASE MANAGER			
				CAREER READINESS TRAINING	CASE MANAGER			
EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT	Builds and maintains contact with employers of participants as well as potential employers; creates feedback channel Example: Advocate for participants' advancement where appropriate, for example convincing an employer to let the participant interview for a higher paying position	Engages with employers that employ AspireAtlantic participants Example: Ensures that they receive feedback from employers on how AspireAtlantic participants are doing and how the program could add additional value	Does not reach out to employers; not responsive to employer feedback on the program and its participants Example: Receives feedback from employers and does not pass this on to the Program Director and/or follow-up with the employer about how the issue is being addressed	Post Employment Services	Advancement Coach	How is the AC engaging with employers?	0 = Does not reach out to employers; not responsive to employer feedback on the program and its participants 1 = Engages with employers that employ AspireAtlantic participants 2 = Builds and maintains contact with employers of participants as well as potential employers; creates feedback channel	Salesforce, Staff journal, Interview, Observations

PROFICIENCY	ACCEPTABLE PERFORMANCE	DEVELOPMENTAL PERFORMANCE	UNACCEPTABLE PERFORMANCE	COMPONENT	WHO	FIDELITY EVALUATION QUESTION	INDICATOR OF FIDELITY	DATA SOURCES
				RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING	CASE MANAGER			
				CAREER READINESS TRAINING	CASE MANAGER			
HR SUPPORT	Proactively becomes familiar with employers' HR policies on recruitment, hiring, employee retention and promotion; provides employers with HR support, as needed Example: Initiates conversation with employers and makes suggestions on how to support the advancement of their employees Example: Initiates conversation with employers and makes suggestions on steps that employers can take to be more inclusive	Waits until there is an issue identified to intervene with employers Example: Hears that an AspireAtlantic hire is having a difficult time with his/her supervisor and reaches out to employer to help rectify this	Does not provide HR-related support to employers or intervene if there is an issue Example: Does not intervene with the employer at all	Post Employment Services	Advancement Coach	How is the AC supporting participants and employers through HR challenges?	0 = Does not provide HR-related support to employers or intervene if there is an issue 1 = Waits until there is an issue identified to intervene with employers 2 = Proactively becomes familiar with employers' HR policies on recruitment, hiring, employee retention and promotion; provides employers with HR support, as needed	Salesforce, Staff journal, Interview, Observations

4. Staff Journals:

For the Week of:

Data Collected From:

- Case Managers
- Advancement Coaches

Challenges Identified:

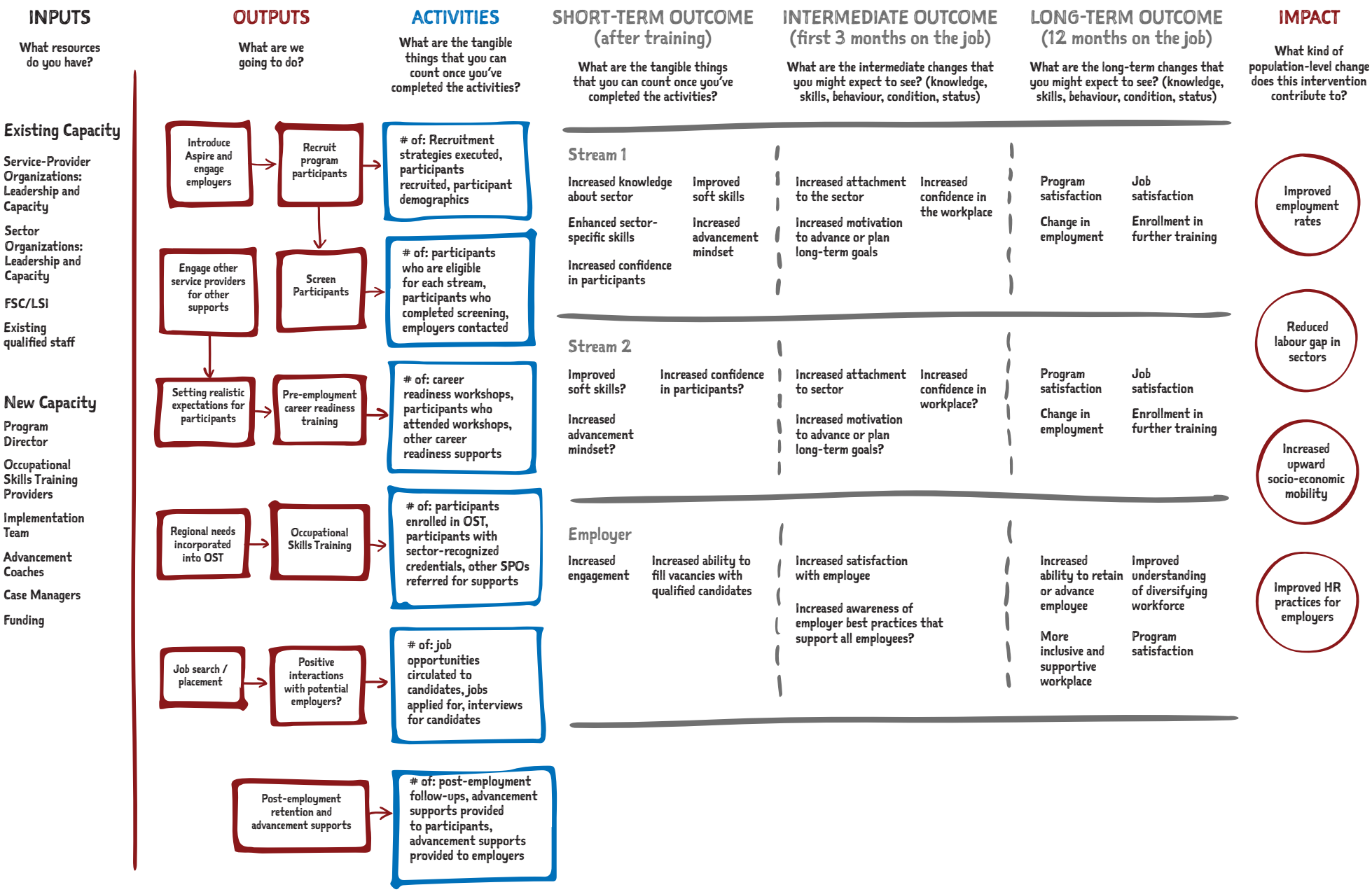
Component(s)/Skills Engaged:

Implementation Support Received:

Appendix F: AspireAtlantic Logic Model

Issue Statement: Employers in specific sectors have labour gaps or vacancies that are difficult to fill. There is low retention and advancement of low-income unemployed individuals and low-wage workers.

Goals: To help fill labour gaps for specified sectors by providing recruitment and training services, and HR-related support. To increase upward mobility for low-income persons by providing sector-specific career readiness, occupational skills training, and advancement coaching.



PIER LABS

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INPUTS	OUTPUTS	ACTIVITIES	SHORT-TERM OUTCOME (AFTER TRAINING)	INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME (FIRST 3 MONTHS ON THE JOB)	LONG-TERM OUTCOME (12 MONTHS ON THE JOB)	IMPACT
What resources do you have? **EXISTING CAPACITY**	What are we going to do?	What are the tangible things that you can count once you've completed the activities?	What are the immediate changes that you might expect to see? (knowledge, attitudes, skills, behaviour, condition, status)	What are the intermediate changes that you might expect to see? (knowledge, skills, behaviour, condition, status)	What are the long-term changes that you might expect to see? (knowledge, skills, behaviour, condition, status)	What kind of population-level change does this intervention contribute to?