

Project Insights Report

Testing and Evaluating the Impact of a New Model of Innovation in Workforce Development in Newfoundland and Labrador: Pathway to Future-Proofing Our Skills Development Ecosystem



PARTNERS

College of the North Atlantic



LOCATIONS

Newfoundland and Labrador



INVESTMENT

\$339,660



PUBLISHED

November 2025



CONTRIBUTORS

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Executive Summary

Because province-wide attempts to develop the workforce have had mixed outcomes in Newfoundland and Labrador, a new strategic initiative using a regional model was established. This project was administered by the College of the North Atlantic, with the Newfoundland and Labrador Workforce Innovation Centre and the Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills. It aimed to test and evaluate the impact of Regional Workforce Development Committees. The committees had three primary objectives at the regional level: 1) developing and disseminating labour market information; 2) identifying key areas for training and skills development; and 3) enhancing the use of labour market programs, including immigration support.

Ten regional committees participated in an 11-step action planning process. Through an evaluation, the model and approach were shown to be effective in enhancing regional workforce planning and stakeholder collaboration. The project also produced a digital, searchable [Workforce Development and Innovation Ecosystem Map](#), regional labour market information infographics, and a programs and services booklet.

Several key recommendations from the project address challenges and spotlight successes. These include securing multiple funding sources to ensure action plans are implemented; creating an ecosystem map and maintaining updated labour market information; and ensuring broad stakeholder involvement in committees, particularly from industry partners, and address administrative and implementation support.

KEY INSIGHTS

- 1** Ten Regional Workforce Development Committees were established in Newfoundland and Labrador, with 69% of participants reporting improved resource sharing with the committees, as well as an improvement in their own capacity to conduct regional workforce planning.
- 2** This project produced three useful resources: a digital, searchable Workforce Development and Innovation Ecosystem Map, regional labour market information infographics, and a programs and services booklet.
- 3** To ensure the success of regional committees, program leaders put forth several learning outcomes from this project: secure multiple funding sources; create an ecosystem map and provide updated labour market information; ensure broad stakeholder involvement, including industry partners; and address administrative and implementation support.

► The Issue

Newfoundland and Labrador has grappled with workforce development issues for years. In 2023, the participation rate of its working population was 57%, well below the ideal ratio of over 70%. This shortfall was aggravated by an aging population and the outmigration of youth, which led to labour shortages in key industries. This situation underscored the need for innovative approaches to workforce development, particularly to attract and retain immigrants for both economic growth and cultural vitality.

Effective solutions to these labour force issues have remained elusive, highlighting the need for a new approach. In the past, province-wide attempts to develop a robust workforce showed mixed outcomes. The province's geographical vastness, sparse settlement and regional economic disparities complicated these efforts, as did diverse demographics and infrastructure across regions.

Another strategy is to approach workforce development at a regional level to address challenges and leverage opportunities within each region. In 2019, the government mandated the NL Workforce Innovation Centre to develop regionally tailored workforce development action plans. Regional Workforce Development Committees were proposed to support effective implementation of these action plans. These committees would plan and implement labour market activities and initiatives tailored to each region.



What We Investigated

A project was launched to examine the effectiveness of regional committees. Led by the College of the North Atlantic, the project was called “Testing and Evaluating the Impact of a New Model of Innovation in Workforce Development in Newfoundland and Labrador: Pathway to Future-Proofing Our Skills Development Ecosystem.”

The committees had three primary objectives: to 1) develop and disseminate labour market information; 2) identify key areas for training and skills development; and 3) enhance the use of labour market programs, including immigration support. The target demographic included regional labour market stakeholders such as government representatives, education providers and community organizations.

A regional workforce development model was developed using an 11-step process so that the committees could be evaluated on design, implementation and effectiveness in addressing regional labour market needs. Two main project deliverables included a playbook for effective regional workforce development coordination and a digital, searchable workforce ecosystem map of organizations and their programs, services and opportunities.

The research had three main effectiveness outcomes. The quality of labour market information and regional workforce planning practices improved in the short term. In the medium term, capacity to conduct regional workforce development increased. In the long term, labour market results improved.

What We're Learning

Ten Regional Workforce Development Committees were established. In total, 100 committee meetings and 12 focus group discussions were held. Each committee identified regional workforce challenges and opportunities. Each committee's work culminated in a comprehensive ecosystem map and action plans tailored to the region.

Based on the evaluation results, the regional committee model was found to be effective. The evaluation included 75 surveys of committee members, 10 interviews with facilitators and 3 interviews with project organizers, as well as observation notes from all meetings.

Committees produced effective labour market information

Labour market information was shared through graphics. Ninety percent of participants rated the labour market information graphics as effective tools in the action planning process. A programs and services booklet was developed to document all available labour market programs and services. The booklet was cited as an effective resource by 90% of participants. Overall, 92% of respondents reported greater awareness of workforce development and better understanding of programs and services in their regions.

Promising outcomes for Regional Workforce Development Committees

Committee members indicated their participation led to more coordinated responses to workforce development needs. A total of 98% rated the communication level among committee members as very good or good, and 69% reported improved information and sharing of information since the inception of the committees. Overall, 59% of participants noted an improvement in their capacity to conduct regional workforce planning. Almost all participants (97%) indicated that the action planning framework was an effective model to address workforce issues. The framework guided committees through a structured process, from setting objectives to implementing and monitoring action plans. Participants reported that they were able to come up with better solutions for issues related to workforce development.

The team generated the following recommendations to address challenges:

- **Secure multiple sources of funding.** Funding for both operations and implementation are needed, particularly for larger projects, to ensure implementation in the face of changing funding priorities.
- **Create an ecosystem map and maintain updated labour market information.** A web-based platform of workforce development programs and services benefits organizations, job seekers and other labour market stakeholders.
- **Broaden stakeholder involvement.** Having more stakeholders participate in committee meetings will foster knowledge mobilization. More industry partners, Indigenous governments and organizations, and municipal governments are recommended.
- **Improve meeting logistics.** Hybrid meetings strike a balance between greater participation (because of the virtual component) and higher productivity and engagement (through in-person participants).
- **Plan for administrative and implementation support.** Because most committee members have other work obligations, additional staff are needed to implement the Action Plans.



Why It Matters

This project has relevance to other jurisdictions facing labour shortages, geographical challenges, regional economic disparities and other similar issues as Newfoundland and Labrador. In such settings, a regional approach using the Regional Workforce Development Committees model could be used to solve labour force issues. This model can also be modified to solve issues related to economic or industrial development. The project playbook serves as a resource on how to establish this model.

Other tools that were found to be effective include a Workforce Development and Innovation Ecosystem Map and regional labour market information presented using infographics. The project also highlights the importance of ensuring funding is available to operationalize all action plans.



State of Skills: Evaluation and Learning in the Skills and Training Ecosystem

The Future Skills Centre's approach to evaluation and learning has evolved over time, reflecting the challenges of measuring social impact. It has shifted from a focus on common outcomes to a broader approach that embraces multiple methods for understanding impacts on individuals, institutions and systems.

[Read Thematic Report](#)

► What's Next

The Future Skills Centre continues to collaborate with the Newfoundland and Labrador Workforce Innovation Centre to implement projects on employer-led workforce development and developing welcoming communities.

Have questions about our work? Do you need access to a report in English or French? Please contact communications@fsc-ccf.ca.

How to Cite This Report

Tobin, S. (2025). Project Insights Report: Testing and Evaluating the Impact of a New Model of Innovation in Workforce Development in Newfoundland and Labrador: Pathway to Future-Proofing Our Skills Development Ecosystem, College of the North Atlantic. Toronto: Future Skills Centre. <https://fsc-ccf.ca/projects/skills-development-ecosystem/>

Funded by the
Government of Canada's
Future Skills Program



Testing and Evaluating the Impact of a New Model of Innovation in Workforce Development in Newfoundland and Labrador: Pathway to Future-Proofing Our Skills Development Ecosystem is funded by the Government of Canada's Future Skills Program. The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.

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