

# STRATEGIC WORKFORCE PLANNING



## COURSE MODULES

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ASSOCIATION OF INDUSTRY SECTOR COUNCILS  
[www.aisc.ca](http://www.aisc.ca)

**AISC** Association of Industry  
Sector Councils

## **Preface / Intention for This Document**

This document provides the content and sequencing for a series of **strategic workforce planning** course modules. There are six modules in total – each module is represented by a numbered section within this document. The course begins with an introduction to strategic workforce planning in **Module 1** and proceeds through the planning process, ending with insights into **monitoring and evaluation** in **Module 6**.

The modules are designed to be impactful and concise, with actionable advice, associated rationale and links to helpful online resources. The modules coincide with the **Strategic Workforce Planning Workbook**, which follows the same numbering pattern for easy transition between module content and reflection / planning activities.

This workforce planning activity has been designed for Nova Scotia's Sector Councils. Representing 61% of NS's workforce, this planning framework can be adapted to a wide range of AISC's sector council businesses and organizations from **small and medium-sized enterprises** (SMEs) to larger.

**Some creative adaptation of the modules to fit the size and presenting circumstances of your business or organization is expected.**



*Skilled workers. Quality homes. Better communities.*



**Automotive**  
Sector Council  
of Nova Scotia



Nova Scotia  
Construction Sector Council  
Industrial ~ Commercial ~ Institutional



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# 1 Introduction to Strategic Workforce Planning

## Welcome

Strategic workforce planning is commonly described as the process of making sure your business or organization has the **right people** with the **right skills** doing the **right jobs** at the **right time**.

By beginning this course, you are taking an important step toward organizing your workforce for increased efficiency and effectiveness. Workforce planning will help stabilize your workforce and ensure that your staff are working at the proper level – remaining motivated, successful, and challenged.

Workforce planning will help you analyze your current workforce and plan for your expected future demand. You will create strategic goals and assess the gaps in your workforce; look at the resources necessary to close these gaps and the supply needed to meet anticipated demand.

## Documenting Your Business

In addition to completing the steps outlined within this course, it is important that you formalize and document important procedures and details while ensuring these files are readily available. You may need to access or reference these documents in the future when filing taxes or applying to grant funding programs, among other activities. Additionally, keeping these documents organized will allow for easier and more efficient future development, scaling and workforce expansion.

If you have created a **business plan** or have an organizational strategy in place, this is a great start! In this case, you and / or your senior management or executive team should ensure these files are updated annually. It is a good idea to schedule this annual review in advance to ensure the items are addressed, and time is set aside to keep documents current and relevant.

Finally, it grows increasingly important each year to have your documents digitized and backed up. Cyber security is an issue of growing importance for all businesses and organizations

If you are just beginning on your documentation journey, you may be in the process of [choosing the proper legal structure for your business or non-profit](#). The following resources can assist you in gathering the information you need, creating the proper documentation and registering with the proper authorities:

- [Access Nova Scotia – Drafting a Business Plan](#)
- [CBDC – How to Write a Business Plan](#)
- [Nova Scotia Registry of Joint Stock Companies](#)
- [Access Nova Scotia SME Tax Filing FAQ](#)
- [Canada Revenue Agency Tax Filing Checklist for Small Businesses](#)
- [Government of Canada Not-for-Profit Corporation](#)
- [Reporting Obligations under the Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act](#)

and business continuity is necessary in the event of an unforeseen breach or event.

If you currently keep paper records, it is a good idea to scan these into a computer system and keep them organized in a digital folder. This filing method will provide safeguards in the event of natural disaster, system compromise, etc. This system also allows for easier expansion and scalability than paper filing.

If you have a current digital copy of your files, create an additional backup copy of your files, and save this to an **external hard drive, USB flash drive, or cloud storage** space as seen to the right. Logging a copy with your lawyer is also a good idea.

### Cloud storage systems:

- [Google Drive](#)
- [Amazon](#)
- [OneDrive](#)

Examples of Procedures or Documentation to Have on File:

- Articles of incorporation
- Tax filings
- Copies of any applicable licenses or memberships
- Business plan / strategy
- Proprietary company information including process information, patents, etc.
- Funding applications
- Job descriptions

### Benefits of Strategic Workforce Planning

There are several significant benefits to workforce planning:

- *Addressing / closing workforce labour and skill gaps or realigning with job duties* – Strategic workforce planning will allow you to identify areas of your business or organization where more support is needed. This support may be realized through measures to enhance worker retention or through additional hiring, restructuring, or upskilling the current work force. Ask yourself:
  - Is your talent well positioned within the organization?
  - Is your staff trained in the skill areas they need to fulfill all their job duties?

1

**For your business and organization, this will mean staff are better equipped with the skills to do their job and continue to advance, making them more confident and productive in their work. Strategic Workforce Planning provides you with an adaptable workforce that is prepared to handle both evolving and sudden change while being empowered with the knowledge and resources to continue to do their job.**

- 2
- *Preparing for the unexpected* – Incidences like COVID-19 and changes in the global/national economic cycle or events show that the unexpected can happen at any time. An agile business or organization needs to be ready to pivot when confronted with an interruption or unexpected event. The lessons of the pandemic clearly showed that those organizations that were prepared were able to adapt more quickly and effectively than those that were not. Ask yourself:
    - If you were operational prior to the pandemic, what lessons did you learn? What do you think you could have done differently?
    - Are there any looming threats that you feel it would be beneficial to safeguard against? What might these safeguards look like?

**For your business or organization, this means you will be ready to adjust to rapidly changing workforce needs and priorities, even in the face of potential catastrophe. Familiarization with technology advancements and retention strategies will ensure you have a strong workforce that is ready to support your business or organization through these events.**

- 3
- *Providing a future forward look of the business or organization* – The practice of strategic workforce planning will allow you to not only examine your current workforce but predict how your workforce should look if it is to keep up with demand. It focuses on placing a progression plan in place and forces you to think critically about the future of your business or organization. Ask yourself:
    - What is the risk that I am not able to maintain a sufficient workforce for future demand? Consider potential geographic problems for recruitment or retention.
    - What are the biggest factors that could impact the healthy development of my workforce and what measures can I implement to combat these?

**For your business or organization, this means you will not forgo potential future business in the absence of sufficient resourcing and support. Alternatively, you will not incur unnecessary workforce expense in times of reduced demand. Your workforce will remain balanced and steady as you adapt to market fluctuations, causing less interruption in service and more positive outcomes in product or service offerings.**



### What to Expect Through the Planning Process

The time it takes you to complete this course will depend, in part, on the resources available to you and your previous experience in workforce planning.

You can task a small human resources team to complete this exercise over the next month or two if your resources allow. Ensure you provide adequate time for careful research and planning while the individuals maintain their regular tasks.

Alternatively, if you are an independent owner or you have a small number of employees, this process may take longer – and that’s okay! Take your time and pay careful attention to each module. Your business or organization will benefit from careful planning that may take anywhere from three up to six months, as shown in the **Gantt chart** provided in this section.

The following resources may be helpful to have on hand throughout completion of your strategic workforce plan, whether you prefer to complete online or by hand:

**COMPLETING BY HAND      COMPLETING DIGITALLY**

Printed Workbook	Digital PDF Workbook
Pen or pencil	
Scrap paper	Microsoft Word, OneNote, or other software for notetaking
Highlighter	Highlighter tool
Calculator	Virtual calculator or Microsoft Excel

\*Note: Knowledge of Microsoft Excel is not required for this course. However, you may wish to use Excel’s calculator ability or recreate tables you find within the Workbook and adapt them for your use.

It is important to set aside time each week for gradual completion. Develop a schedule and reasonable timeframe based on the table of contents and course outline below.

Each module is comprised of three to five pages and should take no more than a half an hour each to read. Completion of the corresponding exercises are expected to take anywhere from 15-45 minutes. Expect each module to require at least two one-hour sessions each to complete the content and workbook exercises.

Feel free to complete these at your own pace. If you find yourself stuck, come back to the exercise at a later date or gain additional insight from a knowledgeable source.

The following Gantt chart is a demonstration of a *potential* timeline for completion of this course. It includes steps for circulation and distribution of your strategy and action plan. It also contains a plan for implementation and formal kick-off of your new strategic workforce plan. If you prefer to complete the plan on your own timeline, a fillable Gantt chart is included on *page 4* of your Workbook. Feel free to determine your own timeline and coordinate plan implementation with what works best for your business or organization.

Alternatively, you may use Microsoft Excel to create your own Gantt chart to include any additional phases or subphases you find helpful to map out. In Excel, this chart can remain flexible.

SUGGESTED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	Month 5	Month 6	Month 7	Month 8	Month 9	Month 10	Month 11	Month 12
Phase 1: Introduction to Strategic Workforce Planning	Yellow											
Phase 2: Establish Strategic Direction and Goals Based on Current Objectives	Yellow											
Circulate Your Plan		Yellow	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey
Phase 3: Conduct Current Workforce Analysis and Future Requirements		Yellow										
Phase 4: Develop Specifications for Strategic Workforce Development			Yellow									
Phase 5: Develop and Implement Action Plan				Yellow								
Strategic Workforce Planning Checklist					Yellow							
Distribute Your Plan					Yellow	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey
Business / Organization-Wide Kick Off						Yellow						
Phase 6: Monitoring & Evaluation							Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow

**What to Expect in the Outcome of this Planning Exercise**

The successful completion of this strategic workforce planning exercise means your workforce is moving collectively toward enhanced efficiency and productivity. They are satisfied with and knowledgeable in the work they’re doing, with a clear vision of how they fit into the business or organization and confidence to fulfill their personal goals.

Having a strategic workforce means you have considered the hurdles your employees face through their employment and have strategies in place to mitigate these, encouraging recruitment and retention, and decreasing costs driven by high turnover.

A well-planned workforce means you’re ready to face the unknown. It provides your business or organization with stability when met with unexpected events. Some of the benefits of strategic workforce planning can be drastic, and other positive impacts are realized slowly, over time. Having a plan in place ensures your business or organization is always strategically positioned to

expand, pivot, or monopolize on opportunity when presented, and helps to maintain consistency and reliability for both you and your workforce.



Under Step 1 on *page 9* of your Workbook, record the fundamental aspects of your business or organization including your contact information – or that of the owner, President or a contact in charge, if this is not you – as well as business or organization details.

## Course Outline

This section contains an outline of the entire course and a description of each module.



1. **Introduction to strategic workforce planning** – Complete! Continue to Module 2: Establish Strategic Direction and Goals Based on Current Objectives
2. **Establish strategic direction and goals based on current objectives** – During Module 2, you will consider the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of your business or organization. You will create an initial set of goals and objectives with a future focus and consider recruitment and retention measures specifically. Finally, you will be directed to circulate and communicate your goals with associates to expand or refine your list.
3. **Conduct current workforce analysis and future requirements** – You will be given resources to complete a supply analysis of your current workforce as well as a demand analysis of your future projections and the workforce requirements to meet this demand. You will then be guided through a gap analysis of what changes in resourcing you may need to adequately meet your business or organization’s future demand.
4. **Develop specifications for strategic workforce development** – First you will consider the expected formation of your business or organization under its current hiring trends. You will then compare this with a theoretical snapshot of your business or organization if

it were to keep pace with industry trends. As a result of this comparison, you will develop your custom scenario plan, tailored to the growth manageable for your organization.

5. **Develop and implement action plan** – Expanding on the goals you set previously, Module 5 will ask you to assign actions and tasks to each goal and assign a resource who will complete each action. You will then discuss your plan with department leads and/or assigned resources to ensure cohesiveness and coordination of plan implementation. Communicate your plan to department leads so that it can be implemented widely.
6. **Monitor and evaluate** – This module will instruct you through the implementation of monitoring and evaluation metrics to ensure your plan remains on track and successful.

## 2 Establish Strategic Direction and Goals Based on Current Objectives

**Module 2** will take you through the activities associated with setting your business or organization's strategic direction. The first step involves assessing any current objectives outlined through existing plans or documentation as identified in **Module 1**, while identifying how these goals or objectives may be supported by your workforce plan. You will be asked to review past recruitment and retention efforts and identify current trends specific to your sector. Finally, you will create new goals for the workforce strategy.

This step is critical in laying the groundwork for the rest of your strategic workforce planning journey. It is important to make your goals aspirational but realistic. Including a mix of goals that are easier to achieve with some that require longer-term planning can be an effective way of building momentum while planning for long-term organizational resilience.

Identify the point person for this plan who will see the plan is implemented if this is to be someone other than yourself. This will commonly be your most senior HR representative.

Engage your senior management team and board of directors in this stage, if applicable. It will be vital that your goals and objectives receive buy-in from those who will help you see that the plan is implemented. These parties may also have additional insight and input at this stage that will allow you to build a more comprehensive plan.

## Understanding Your Business or Organization's Current Plan

Whether your business or organization had previously recorded goals, it is essential that past objectives be considered in your workforce planning moving forward.

If you were able to locate previous plans or documentation like past organizational planning documents, annual performance reports or business plans, you will want to begin by referring to any goals or frameworks within these files. Determine what, if any, relevance they have to your current strategic workforce planning. Some of these goals may currently be active, in which case you can extract these and include them with your strategic workforce planning goals.

Older documents may contain goals or objectives that were aspired to or met in the past. Review these to reflect on how your business or organization has advanced. These formative goals can be used as potential new goals to build on or for inspiration as you determine the direction you will take with your workforce.

You can begin inserting these thoughts into the space provided on *page 10* of the Workbook.

## Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis

To gain the full picture of your business or organization, a SWOT template is included on *pages 11 and 12* of the Workbook.

SWOT stands for *Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities* and *Threats*. At the first stage, you will highlight the strengths of your business or organization – this may be your positive reputation for customer service, comradery among your employees, or your highly knowledgeable accounting administrator. In the provided space, list the traits of your business or organization that you would consider to be strengths.

### THE NOVA SCOTIA WORKFORCE

It's time to pause and reflect on the importance of this strategic planning process and how it will help the development of your workforce. The following resources will provide you with a broad overview of the trends, challenges and opportunities within the current Nova Scotian workforce.

Though no two business or organizations are alike, you can identify potential challenges to your organization by analyzing **labour market information** (LMI) pertaining to your industry. The Province of Nova Scotia supplies workforce tools and data that can be found [here](#). The [Association of Industry Sector Councils](#) compiles their own LMI broadly for the province which is also free to use and access. You can find labour market information pertinent to your industry by using the drop-down menu below:

- Atlantic Home Building & Renovation Sector Council – [State of the Industry](#)
- Automotive Industry Labour Market Analysis, 2019 – [Women, Youth, and Indigenous Persons in Canada's Automotive Industry](#)
- Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters – [Expanding the Skilled Labour Pool](#)
- Digital Nova Scotia – [Tech Sector Talent Dashboard](#)

In the next space, consider and record weakness, or traits of your business that you would like to improve. This may be based on your own observations of your business, observations of your competitors or feedback from employees or customers / clients. Weakness may entail limitations or an insufficient knowledge base among staff, high turnover, low productivity or lack of applicants for job postings.

Opportunities for your business or organization may be directions for growth that will require workforce expansion, advances in automation, access to upskilling or training programs or funding for migrant workers. Note down your identified opportunities in the next spot on the matrix.

Finally, consider threats or challenges within your current workforce. You may include challenges previously experienced like animosity among your workforce, or challenges you can foresee down the road, like a high proportion of aging staff approaching retirement. Record your perceived threats or challenges in the last space.

Based on this analysis, what are the specific and most pressing workforce challenges your business or organization is expected to face in the short and long-term? Highlight your priorities. Point out a few opportunities that appear achievable, as well as pending threats you can work to mitigate over time.

### Goals for the Future

The next step will build on the SWOT analysis and previous goals and takeaways identified. At this stage, consider your aspirations for the future.

What are some of your expected changes over the next one to three years? What do you foresee driving these changes? Most importantly, what impact could these changes have on your business or organization? In the longer term, what do you foresee for your sector or industry over the next decade and what are the organizational implications for preparing for these changes?

- Forestry Sector Council – [Labour Market Information](#)
- Forestry Sector, GreenestWorkforce.ca – [Labour Market Information](#)
- Impact Organizations of Nova Scotia – [Community Impact Sector Data Dashboard](#)
- Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency – [Nova Scotia Skilled Trades, 2021](#)
- Nova Scotia Construction Sector Council – [Industry Snapshot](#)
- Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture – [Labour Market Report](#)
- Tourism HR Canada – [Tourism Employment Tracker](#) and [Tourism Labour Market Information](#)
- Food Processing Skills Canada – [LMI Atlantic Canadian Fish and Seafood Final Report](#)
- Government of Canada Industry Brief – [Fishing and Seafood Processing: Atlantic Region 2022](#)
- Trucking HR Canada – [Labour Market Information](#)

Take about a half an hour and jot down some notes in the space provided on *page 12* of the Workbook – (*example below*). After giving yourself time to reflect, write down a list of goals or objectives for your organization in the coming months or years.

Sample Goals:

Goal	Category
Grow local workforce	Recruitment
Expand international hiring	Recruitment
Increase job satisfaction	Retention
Provide upskilling and educational assistance programs	Retention
Adopt <b>multi-skilling strategies</b> to leverage internal talent	Retention
Improve infrastructure and adopt innovations to improve productivity (physical, tech, investment in automation)	Productivity enhancement / retention
Implement work-life balance strategies (i.e., virtual work options, flexible work hours)	Retention

Categorize your goals according to the objective they speak to or achieve. Some categories may include recruitment, retention, productivity enhancement, expense reduction, technological innovation, or others that apply to your industry, business or organization.

### Recruitment & Retention

Think about your current or past recruitment and retention efforts. Are there any takeaways that can further inform the development of your workforce strategy?

If you have yet to implement strategies dedicated to recruitment and retention, the following resources can help you get started:

- Nova Scotia's HR Toolkit – [Finding Workers](#)
- Tourism HR Canada's [Now Hiring: A Guide to Helping Employers](#)
- McInnis Cooper's Employee Recruitment and Retention Strategies / Legal Risk Mitigation Tactics [Webinar](#)
- [Continuing Care: A Recruitment and Retention Resource Guide for Employers](#) – though aimed toward continuing care organizations, this guide includes general direction for creating job postings, reducing turnover and marketing and
- Several factors for consideration in recruitment and retention are covered by the Public Policy Forum [here](#).

Nova Scotia also provides resources dedicated to equitable hiring practices and [welcoming workplaces](#). It is important that you understand how to connect with and effectively recruit members of diverse groups and that you are prepared to lead an **inclusive workplace** by example. The Government of Canada and other organizations provide additional resources to guide equitable hiring practices:



- [Creating an Equitable, Diverse and Inclusive Research Environment: A Best Practices Guide for Recruitment, Hiring and Retention](#)
- [The Conference Board of Canada – Inclusion](#)
- Mindfulness and Bias – [Recruitment with a Lens for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#)

After reviewing these resources, ask yourself the following questions before advancing with plan circulation. Consider whether your current goals may be adjusted in light of best practices you've learned.

- What is the demography of the current workforce and the implications (e.g., expected retirements, stability/anticipated longevity of existing employees, ability to use existing workforce in different ways to meet emerging requirements, training/upskilling needs, and opportunities)?
- Are there opportunities to use technology and investment in new equipment or processes (lean manufacturing) to enhance productivity and lessen skill requirements?
- What legislative, policy or regulatory changes may impact your business or organization?

### **21<sup>st</sup> Century Reality Around Workforce Strategy Development in the Face of Skill Shortages**

A new approach to workforce strategy development is required including the following features:

- Taking a systems or 'ecological' approach to the analysis of, and solutions to, occupational labour shortages.
- Recognizing the complexity of the challenge and the need for intensive collaboration with major players - supply chain, unions, industry groups, governments and education and training providers.
- The need for the creation of self-sustaining networks of relevant associates responsible for skills and knowledge in an industry, including education and training providers, unions, professional organizations, governments, supply chain partners, among others with the focus on building individuals' ability to analyze and understand the relationship between skills, broader economic conditions, the nature of the industry, and other relevant issues; and
- To effectively address skill shortages the focus needs to be on the existing workforce and not only on training or acquiring new entrants. Shortages can often be efficiently addressed by up-skilling and multi-skilling existing workers and preventing high labour turnover as opposed to training new workers.

Now revisit your goals.

Do any of your goals conflict with what you've learned about recruiting for your business or organization? Are there any goals that can be modified or streamlined considering your observations?

### **Circulate Your Plan**

Before proceeding to build out your plan, circulate your goals and objectives to your senior management team and / or Board of Directors. These associates should have a beneficial view of the organization or a specialized part of the organization and may have additional valuable input to consider.

Importantly and if applicable, your Human Resources lead should be involved at this step if they have not been engaged already. They will have a deep understanding of prevalent recruitment and retention problems in your industry and especially those specific to your organization.

If you will be the primary lead responsible for implementing the plan, socialize your goals with your next in command, your partner, or a trusted advisor to obtain a second opinion. Ideally, they would have special knowledge of your business or organization, or the nature of your industry.

Record any insights from these meetings in the space provided on *page 14* of the Workbook.

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Check in with your Gantt chart at this time and see if you're still on track. If you've strayed from your planned timeline – **don't worry!** Readjust the dates on your Gantt chart and continue to Phase 3.

### 3 Conduct Current Workforce Analysis and Future Requirements

In this module, you will undertake a supply analysis of your current workforce. You will map out your resources and identify skills and skill gaps.

You will then perform a demand analysis of the expected market over the next several years. You will be directed to use the labour market information provided in **Module 2** in addition to your previous financial statements to map out expected future demand.

Finally, you will be asked to compare your current workforce supply to your expected demand to identify gaps in your planning. You will be asked to brainstorm potential strategies to close these gaps prior to moving into a deeper analysis through **Module 4**.

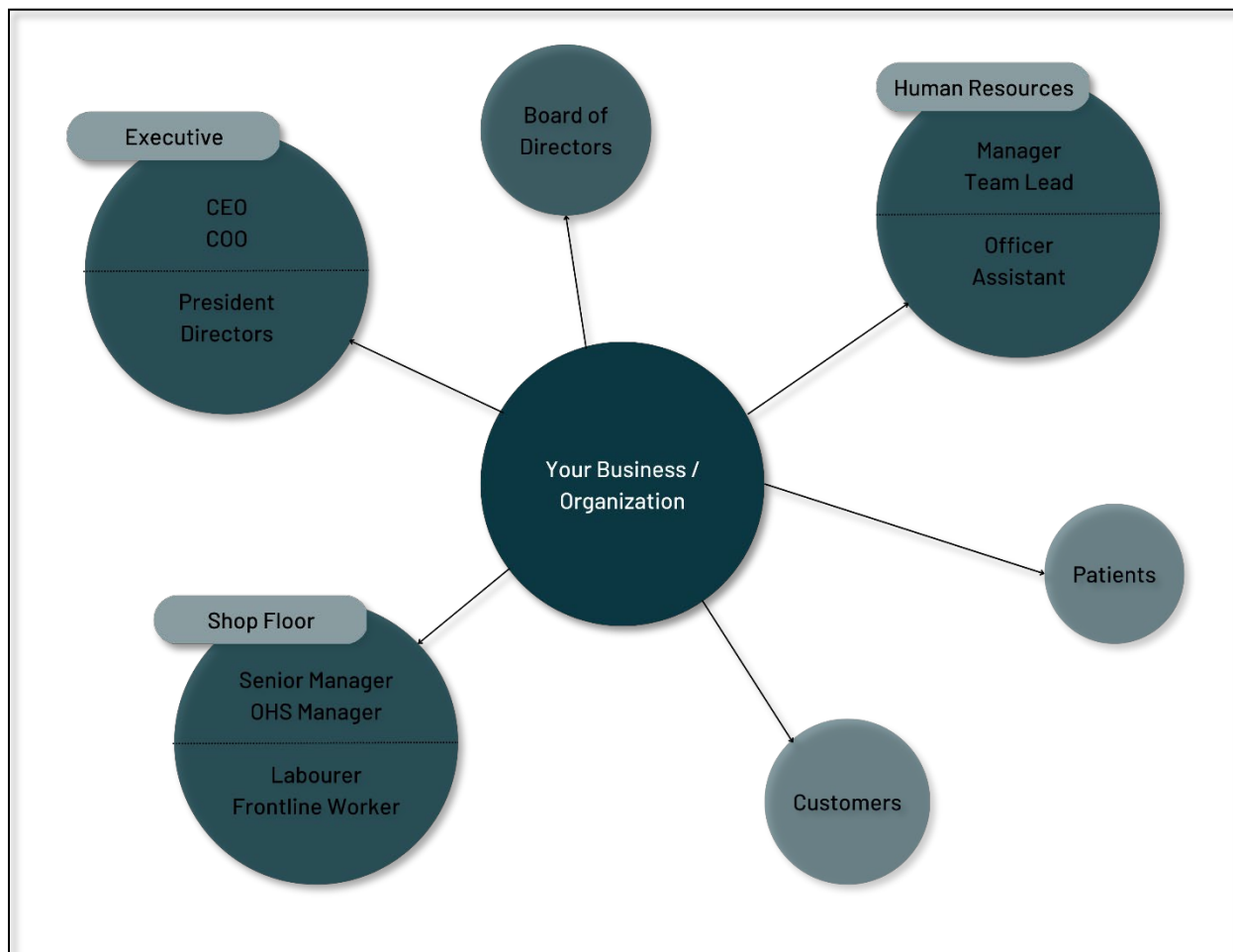
### Supply Analysis

It's time to look at the workforce you have right now.

Is it meeting the organization's current demand? Are there any initial gaps you can identify? Are there any workforce supply issues that have been brought to your attention, whether with specific individuals or positions?

Example positions and departments are provided below, but you may adapt these to suit your business or organization:

Human Resources	Shop Floor	Other	Executives
Manager Team Lead	Senior Manager OHS Manager	Board of Directors	CEO COO
Officer Assistant	Labourer Frontline Worker	Customers Patients	President Directors



The table and web on the previous page are both designed to assist you in identifying key individuals and positions to assess at this stage. Using your Workbook on *page 15*, create a workforce web or table – you do not need to complete both unless you feel it will assist you.

Firstly, identify top level executives and management. Branch out into each department noting department leads and list each position and the associated number of positions.

If you are designing this plan for a larger organization, you may modify the following exercises by grouping workers with the same or similar job duties / responsibilities.

Consider the demography of your workforce:

- How many employees or staff members are at each organizational level?
- What is the current distribution of employee years of service?
  - How much of your workforce will be retirement eligible in the coming years? Are these individuals in leadership/mission critical/hard to fill positions?

Think about the turnover of your current workforce:

- How does turnover affect your organization's ability to deliver services, meet customer requirements, training costs or produce quality product?
- What are some of your hardest-to-fill positions?
  - Are there other factors to consider such as shortages in skilled trades and front-line positions that may have a less attractive rate of pay?
- How are employees replaced? Is it commonly internal promotion or external recruitment?
- What are the associated costs?
- Can retention be enhanced through methods such as schedule flexibility, process re-design, automation that addresses ergonomics and health and safety issues, and measures to keep or attract older workers?

If you frequently find it challenging to recruit talent, consider using one of the following resources:

*Reputable Job Listing Sites:*

- [Indeed](#)
- [CareerBeacon](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [Glassdoor](#)

*Recruitment Agencies:*

- [Aplin](#)
- [Schwarz & Vogel](#)
- [YMCA Nova Scotia Work Centre](#)

*Hiring Newcomers:*

- Atlantic Immigration Program
  - [Canada](#)
  - [Nova Scotia](#)
- Canada – [Hiring Foreign Workers](#)

*General Recruitment Information:*

- [HR Toolkit](#)
- [Developing an HR Plan](#)

Now, think critically about your current recruitment and retention strategies, identifying room for modification or expansion:

- How are **equity, diversity and inclusion** measures incorporated into your hiring strategy?
- Which immigration programs do you currently use?
- Do you engage employees to get their ideas and to enhance the potential for increased retention by giving them a say in the future?

Specifically, consider the people working for you. Think about the unique skill of each worker, if this is feasible given the size of your business or organization. On *page 16* of the Workbook you'll find an employee mapping exercise. Using this template, identify your highest potential and best performing employees in the top sections. Place those who may benefit from additional upskilling in the bottom sections.

Take time to reflect on the potential of those employees placed in the bottom sections of the matrix. Are there areas where skill gaps may explain any underperformance? Use this reflection to identify opportunities for additional training and upskilling.

Alternatively, this workforce quality assessment may be used to map *positions* (as opposed to individuals) with high skill versus low skill requirements. There is flexibility to whether you complete this activity with job positions or specific employees in mind.

Ultimately, the outcome of the activity is to identify entry-level, mid-range and high-skill positions, in addition to opportunities for advancement and upskilling.

Be sure to check the **Glossary** if you are unsure of any assessment terms.

### **Demand Analysis**

To facilitate the gap analysis, the next step in **Module 3** is to perform a demand analysis. Through this demand analysis, you should look both at demand in your sector as well as projected demand for your business or organization.

To assist you in performing this analysis, labour market information can be found through the [Province of Nova Scotia](#), [AISC](#), and industry-relevant resources listed in **Module 2**.

Using Microsoft Excel or a piece of paper, map out **projected demand** based on your own past financial trends as well as expected industry trends. Examine your past financial statements and budgets, if you have them. Create a new budget plan for the next three to five years to provide a baseline for your projected demand.

Look at your current output compared to your current workforce supply to estimate the workers needed for your target output. Use *page 17* of your Workbook to record this activity.

To complete this comparison, you will need to choose a method of workload measurement. You may need to measure workload across different positions with different units of measurements.

For example, *nurse-to-patient ratio* will not work for the administrative staff in a clinic or care home. Frontline workers may be measured per customers assisted. Tradespeople may be measured by some unit of produced output.

Assign a number to the demand. How many people are required to meet the demanded output for their position? How many frontline workers do you expect to be required to see the expected results? In this analysis, be sure to consider future technological gains or program changes that may enhance efficiency.

Finally, consider the demand cycle – are there periods throughout the year where demand is higher? How do you account for this? Do you require seasonal workers or can you coordinate seasonal fluctuations with inventory planning?

### Gap Analysis

How does your projected demand compare to your current supply? Is demand met? Exceeded?

With both your supply and demand laid out, what gaps appear? Which do you designate as most critical to accomplishing your strategic goals?

How would you prioritize these gaps in terms of urgency to address – which should be addressed first? Are there any that have more or less impact on the performance of your organization than others?

Write these gaps in the space provided on *page 18* of the Workbook. Notate the prioritization and any challenges you see arising in your pursuit to close some of these gaps.

Analyze how you expect your resources to evolve over time through turnover, upskilling or general career progression. How might the integration or enhancement of technology impact these gaps?

If your analysis has revealed a lack of supply to support anticipated demand, consider your options for hiring. Are there internal employees with special knowledge of the business or organization that may be advanced?

The following resources may be useful to you when examining your training and upskilling options:

- [Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency](#) – in collaboration with trade associations contains a vast library of resources pertaining to training, with a [database](#) of trades designated under the Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Act and their associated certifications and requirements
- [SkillsPEI](#)
- [SkillsonlineNS](#)
- Nova Scotia's [HR Toolkit](#) – [Develop Your People](#) Training Hub

- Health Care Human Resources – Orientation & Onboarding Resource for Employers in the Long-Term Care Sector
- Automotive Sector Council – [Pathways to Success](#)
- [Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters](#) Training Resources
- [Labour, Skills & Immigration](#) (LSI) Training Program – (\*More information on the [WIPSI](#) and the [WEI](#) can be found in **Appendix A**)

Will you need to hire externally?

You may work with local colleges, universities and other training institutions to recruit students into entry level positions. You may look within your industry and at your competitors for pre-trained talent with relevant skills. The recruitment tools included in the **Supply Analysis** may be used to find applicants both within Canada and internationally.

Alternatively, there may be opportunity to meet a supply gap using technology, automation, or process management. Explore the possibilities to introduce new technology – speak to advisors, other members of your supply chain or industry group, and importantly, ask your employees if they know of any resources you can introduce to assist them.

Now that you have assessed your resource supply, compared it with your demand and highlighted some of your potential strategies to close these gaps, you can proceed to **Module 4**, where the impact of supply and demand on the organization’s workforce will be assessed in more detail.



## 4 Develop Specifications for Strategic Workforce Development

This module will take you through a series of exercises designed to prompt thinking about the organizational change that will occur as a result of your plan.

First you will look at the makeup of your business or organization if it remains on its current trajectory.

Then you will be asked to think about your desired future formation if your business or organization is to keep up with industry growth.

You will undergo a comparison activity, before finally settling on one future scenario to use as the basis for the action plan developed in **Module 5**.

### Expected Formation Exercise

The *expected formation exercise* builds on the supply analysis completed in **Module 3**.

Think about your current employees and workforce structure. How recently did you hire a new employee? How recently did you add a new position?

On the current trajectory, without a strategic workforce plan in place, envision your company in three to five years progressing at its current rate. What does this look like? How many employees do you have? What levels of output are they able to accomplish?

Think about any bottlenecks in your hiring process or day to day operations and assume they will not change.

Use the web you created during **Module 3** to help you picture the future shape of your business or organization. Create copies of your web and add anticipated positions associated with the expected formation. Your Workbook reserves space for this exercise on *page 20*.

This is the workforce you will have if you do not adequately account for growth or adapt to meet sector or industry needs in your future hiring. If your industry is trending down, you may end up over supplied with resourcing which can result in lost profits, or even under stimulated employees. Alternatively, a failure to account for growth can result in lost profits in the form of under resourcing your business or organization.

After reflecting on the makeup of your company if it progresses at the current rate, think about whether this rate of change is sufficient to meet your projected demand, or if your organization will be able to keep up with its current rate of growth.

Now think back to the goals you've created. Does your current rate of progress allow you to achieve your goals in the next three to five years?

Now consider this in reverse.

If you can identify workforce challenges within this model, do the goals you've identified address these issues?

### Future Desired Formation Visualization

The *future desired formation* visualization is similar to the previous activity but will build on the demand analysis completed in **Module 3**.

Repeat the exercise above, but from the perspective of the workforce you will need to meet the demand you've forecasted.

Recreate your workforce web in the space provided on *page 21* of the Workbook.

Compare the expected formation to the future desired formation to identify numerical resource gaps. Are there multiple critical gaps to be addressed? Do you need a **multi-pronged approach**?

What is the approximate **opportunity cost** of a failure to adequately forecast and plan for future demand?

You may write these numbers down if you wish. However, the purpose of this exercise is to allow for a conceptual evaluation of the growth or restraint from which your business or organization may benefit.

Determining your ideal workforce numbers is not the end of the story. You may not be in a position to do certain layoffs, or hire the number of people your industry's anticipated growth may be calling for.

However, now that you can visualize the difference between planning and not planning, also ask yourself whether not planning to grow makes you susceptible to competitive actions like takeovers or dramatic loss of market share?

The next section will allow you to tailor and customize your findings to your organization according to what you deem manageable.

### Scenario Planning

Just because you've determined the ideal workforce in your industry climate, this does not mean it's ideal *for you*. Maybe you are not able to hire the required number of workers due to budgetary constraints or training bottleneck. Perhaps you cannot reduce certain parts of your workforce due to dispersed specialized knowledge.

These exercises have provided a framework within which to build a plan that is able to be carried out.

Through the above exercises, you should be forming a picture of some of the opportunities for change and gaining a better understanding of how you may shift your workforce to close some of the gaps identified throughout **Modules 3 and 4**.

Look at the key gaps you've identified and determine a reasonable outcome as a result of efforts to close this gap.

Perhaps you project need for seven more highly experienced technicians within the next three years and determine that on your current trajectory, you would have hired two more. This means you will need to implement a strategy to enhance your hiring ability by up to five experienced technicians.

Assess your restrictions. Perhaps you do not have an adequate budget to hire all five on this three-year timeline. Set a target, for example, to hire three of these five needed technicians.

Next, analyze potential solutions pertaining to these gaps. In this example, you may apply to funding programs to secure funding for additional hiring. What existing workforce strategies might you be able to leverage?

- Right size programs
- Administrative efficiencies
- Hiring controls
- Consolidation of roles
- Leveraging technology
- Upskilling and multi-skilling
- Immigration and support for migrant workers

### **Categorizing Policies**

Using the table in the Workbook on *page 22*, list the job types, numbers, and locations of the needed workers, management positions and departments you've identified. Balance your desired future formation with a realistic growth plan and outline your target growth numbers.

As part of this exercise, you should re-evaluate some positions that may be identified as redundant or unnecessary. Analyze workers holding these positions and determine if their transferrable skills and organizational knowledge may fill a gap elsewhere in the organization. Think critically about your employee base and look for opportunities to shift mid-career employees or job titles to roles that better suit the organization of the future or the individual's skill set.

This table may be helpfully used in the future to develop policies and mandates for various workers by position or department.

Hiring packages or other workforce resources may be designed based on the groupings in this database.

## 5 Develop and Implement Action Plan

This is where the magic happens. In **Module 5**, you will break down the goals you identified within the previous three steps. Now you will assign actions to each goal and objective, as well as a representative to advance each action.

Next, disseminate your plan to each person responsible so that it may be put into action. Arrange regular meetings with assigned resources or department heads to ensure a smooth rollout.

Ensuring that everyone involved understands the plan from here out is imperative to its success.

You will be instructed to prepare summary documentation to plainly and clearly lay out the items for each department.



### Assign Actions

You may begin this module on *page 24* of your Workbook. Insert one goal in each space.

Reflect on the goals you've set over the course of these modules. Some of these goals may be those you initially identified in **Module 2**. Others may be a result of your refinement in **Modules 3** and **4**. There is room for 10 goals with five actions each.

One goal may be to *empower your employees with more opportunity for upskilling*.

A corresponding action item may be to create a directory of training programs for your employees to reference. This may include resources for supervisory training or specialization. You may have another action item to keep these training options communicated to employees. Your planning may go a step further and aim to implement programming to support your employees in their training and career development through mentorship or sponsorship.

The following are resources to assist you in the setting and completion of your goals and actions:

- Training and upskilling
  - [Nova Scotia Workplace Education](#)
  - AISC's [Training Hub](#) – access the Skillspass Marketplaces for all 14 of Nova Scotia's Sector Councils.
  - [Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency](#)
  - [Labour, Skills & Immigration](#) (LSI) Training Program
    - [WIPSI](#)
    - [WEI](#)
  - The Community Business Development Corporation presents [Business Management Training](#) across Canada.
- Recruitment
  - The Government of Canada provides a recruitment and hiring hub with resources to assist in your hiring practices.
  - The Canadian [Introduction to Human Resource Management](#) textbook is available online for free download. Access the chapter on Recruitment [here](#).
- Retention
  - The payroll processing firm ADP offers a full [online guidebook](#) targeted at effective retention strategies and monitoring mechanisms.
- Funding Programs
  - Nova Scotia provides a "[Graduate to Opportunity](#)" program, offering to cover part of the salary when hiring a recent graduate.
  - Also provincially supplied is the [Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive](#) to fund training and productivity enhancement
  - ESDC offers a [database of grants](#) related to training and development projects.
- Restructuring

- The Conference Board of Canada provides a [Corporate Restructuring](#) document covering workforce adjustment strategies.
- Technology enhancement
  - A roadmap for digital transformation from [McKinsey & Company](#).
  - Find information about digital transformation and a short 20-minute course using this [SalesForce resource](#).
  - Digital Nova Scotia provides a report on [digital transformation in healthcare](#).
- Process improvement
  - A comprehensive guide to process improvement can be found [here](#).
  - The University of Toronto's School of Continuing Studies also offers a [series of courses](#) in process improvement.

Next, you will assign the appropriate member of your workforce to own or carry out each task.

### Assign Resources

Careful attention should be paid to the development of this action plan, as it may end up comprising a good part of your workers' job duties over the coming months or years. It is important to ensure the right resource is assigned to each item. You must ensure the resource assigned is empowered to see the action item through to completion, that they have adequate training, and that there is not a more appropriate employee to carry out the task.

In other words, when assigning resources, ensure:

1. The task aligns with their position or level.
2. The assigned individual is in an empowered position to carry out the task. This means they have decision making authority to complete their duties and the necessary tools and resources at their disposal.
3. **Administrative oversight** is in place for each item or goal category.

### Circulate and Discuss with Plan Leads

When the plan is complete, visit the checklist at the end of this phase to assess your readiness.

When you feel comfortable, circulate the plan to your senior staff, management and/or Board of Directors.

It is important to get their input and feedback, as they will have a high level of knowledge about the business or organization and may provide a unique perspective on the workforce strategy.

It is beneficial to have additional conversations at this stage about possible factors that may impede the success of the strategy. Having these conversations early will enable senior management, including yourself, to align views and risk mitigation strategies should problems arise.

### Plan Regular Review Meetings

Before taking the step to circulate and implement your plan across your business or organization, you should hold a launch meeting with your team to discuss and coordinate details.

This meeting may include all employees or be limited to department heads who will be responsible for overseeing components of the action plan.

Distribute your plan to the affected individuals prior to the meeting to ensure they understand their role. Have them identify the resources or departments with which they are closely aligned to manage timing and delivery of their assigned actions.

They may wish to consider the impact of budget availability upon recruitment and upskilling initiatives, technology and system enhancements, and expansion in production capacity or service delivery, among other points for coordination.

Gather this group for quarterly meetings – or an alternative timing suitable for your business or organization – to provide updates from each department or resource. More guidance in reporting and evaluating progress will be given in **Module 6**.



### Communication Planning

At this stage, you are ready to communicate to the plan to all interested parties.

This will likely include other executives or owners, senior management, other levels of management and workers. How you communicate this plan may vary depending on the organizational level you are discussing this plan with.

Create a brief summary of your action plan. Depending on the amount of action items included, you may tailor this summary to each department so that they understand where their responsibilities lie. Distribute a summary of your plan with specific action items for anyone involved in the action plan.

It is imperative your senior management has a thorough understanding of the plan and their requirements, as they will likely be responsible for further distributing the information to their management teams. Communicate the planned timeline so they know what is expected and can set deadlines with their teams.

The next and final module, **Module 6**, will be used to ensure adherence to the plan and that momentum is not lost.

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Check in with your Gantt chart again. Adjust the dates on your Gantt chart if needed.

Your timeline may have changed as a result of your planning process or input from your associates. Set a reasonable date for your strategic workforce plan launch and communicate your plan widely.

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Remember to take a moment at this stage to be proud of what you've accomplished and reflect on the steps you've taken toward the longevity of your business or organization. You have strategically analyzed your workforce, assessed your market and created an action plan to address your future projections.

This has been no small feat – **CONGRATULATIONS!**



## Strategic Workforce Planning Checklist

*Refer to page 29 of the Workbook to complete this checklist.*

Have you located and compiled your up-to-date planning and financial documents?

Have you chosen 5-10 concrete, achievable goals as your plan's foundation?

Have you built a roadmap to completion for these goals using the action planning activities within this module?

Have you identified your key associates and employees, including staff or volunteers?

Is there a job description written for each employee group or position? Is it up to date?

Are there backup processes in place to ensure knowledge transfer and contingency planning for employees in the case of an emergency or absence?

Have you asked your employees for feedback and ideas for retention, training, or other items?

Do you have any previously established training or development programs that may be revitalized or reworked?

Have you ever received feedback from past employees on their employment with your business or organization? Do you have a mechanism in place to receive this information?

Do you have a communications plan to engage employees in this process?

## 6 Monitor, Evaluate and Revise

**Module 6** will be an ongoing activity.

Once your employees understand their responsibilities and the plan is implemented into their daily activities, it is vital to continue monitoring progress and outcomes to ensure your business or organization achieves its strategic workforce goals.

Designate a key individual with the annual revision of the plan. This may be a member of senior management or your lead HR representative. Your team should consider this workforce plan to be a *living document* – that is, a plan that needs constant attention and refinement to ensure it stays relevant, usable and beneficial.

## Milestones and KPIs

### *Milestones*

Milestones are periodic points in time that occur upon certain events or are designated as moments of reflection. Upon each plan milestone, you are afforded a chance to reflect on the progress you and your team have made toward achievement of your goals.

If your goal is to successfully upskill a set of employees such that you are able to complete a new task that your team was not able to complete before, you may set a timeline to accomplish this goal – for example, three months.

At the end of three months, you or the individual designated to own the goal and associated actions will reflect on the outcomes of the actions taken and determine whether the goal has been hit.

In the space provided on *page 30* of your guide, set out your plan's milestones or timeline for reflection. For this workforce plan, it may be beneficial to have at least one opportunity for reflection every six months. Some goals may have an expected completion of less than six months, and others may last longer than a year.

Some milestones may be hit early. Others may require re-evaluation. The timeline you assign as a milestone should be ambitious but achievable.

Without ambition, you run the risk of falling behind your industry's growth. Without achievable goals and actionable tasks, your plan may never get off the ground.

If you ever find, upon reflection, that any of your timelines have gotten offtrack, refocus on the desired outcome based on any progress made and the current status. Reset expectations and target milestones and communicate changes to those responsible for carrying out the action items.

### *Key Performance Indicators*

A KPI, or Key Performance Indicator, is a measure or evaluation of an activity. In the above example, the indicator or measure that the goal has been accomplished may be the team's successful completion of the new task.

If this task is, for example, a sales task, there may be numeric measure applied. In another example, your business or organization has implemented a new process for sales prospecting. A KPI for this goal and its associated tasks may be an increase of two prospects per salesperson per day.

If there is an increase of two or more prospects found per salesperson per day, the process may be found to be a success.

Create target KPIs relevant to your identified goals and actions. Input these KPIs and timelines in the space provided on *page 30 to 33* of the Workbook.

## Additional Considerations

Use the following questions to guide your milestone and KPI drafting:

- How will workforce solutions be monitored and how will progress be measured? What metrics or key performance indicators will be used?
- What are the critical success factors?
- How will revisions be implemented?
- How will you collect relevant workforce data and trends for this plan?
- How will new workforce issues be addressed?
- What is the plan to course correct if one action or goal isn't going as planned or a new plan is needed?

### WORKFORCE DATA AND TREND ANALYSIS

The following resources may be used for collecting labour market information for performing trend analysis and workforce planning:

- <https://aisc.ca/labour-market-information/>
- <https://explorecareers.novasc>

## Glossary

A glossary of terms is included for those new to or unaware of certain terms used throughout the guide.

**Administrative Oversight:** Organization and supervising of an organization or the individuals within.

**Business Plan:** A document that sets out a business's objectives and the strategies planned to achieve them.

**Cloud Storage:** A model of computer data storage where data is held in logical pools – a.k.a. the online “cloud”.

**Equity, Diversity and Inclusion:** An organizational framework seeking to promote fair treatment and full participation of all individuals, with focus on those who have been historically underrepresented or subject to discrimination.

**External Hard Drive:** A computer storage device located outside of a computer, commonly connected through USB cable.

**Gantt Chart:** A bar chart that displays a project schedule.

**Inclusive Workplace:** A workplace that welcomes and supports all people despite differences in information processing, interaction or other traits.

**Key Performance Indicator:** A quantifiable unit of measurement used to evaluate the activities of a business or organization, employee or other party.

**Labour Market Information:** Data that provides timely, relevant and accurate information about current labour markets to impact decision making.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** The process of continuous assessment of programs and projects based on early results and information.

**Multi-Pronged Approach:** An approach having several separate branches or elements drawing from various separate areas of knowledge that together create a new solution.

**Multi-skilling Strategies:** The process of training employees in a variety of skills.

**Opportunity Cost:** The loss of potential gain from alternatives when one alternative is chosen.

**Projected Demand:** The activity of predicting future demand based on current trends and growth estimates.

**Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises:** Any business, including affiliates, with less than 100 employees or annual gross revenue below \$5 million.

**Strategic Workforce Planning:** Provides an organization with human resources planning and the ability to identify talent needs that align with an organization's goals or processes.

**USB Flash Drive:** A small, external computer memory storage device that can be connected to a computer through its USB port.

### Definitions from the Employee Mapping Exercise

**Questionable:** These individuals have likely demonstrated unfavourable behaviour or a significant lack of drive to establish themselves as a valuable employee.

**Blocker:** These employees may initially appear to fit well within the organization but can also end up blocking progress or negatively impacting team cohesion.

**Needs Development:** These individuals are highly motivated but their area of expertise may not align well with the nature of your business or organization – yet. This individual may be a candidate for upskilling or multi-skilling.

**Questionable Fit:** These employees may have the skills required to get the job done but are struggling to apply themselves. Motivational coaching may be recommended to individuals in this category.

**Core Employee:** A core employee is vital to your operations. They are reliable and knowledgeable in their area. They are comfortable with the work they do.

**Star on the Rise:** These employees are motivated to learn and advance. They are probably early or midway through their career and you can identify a long and bright future for these individuals within your business or organization.

**Needs Coaching:** These individuals put their best effort into everything they do but may not be seeing favourable results. Incentives and motivation coaching can help enhance the performance of those with high potential.

**High Potential:** You should invest heavily in your high potential employees. These individuals are likely still learning the ropes of their field, or have recently switched to new fields where their skill level is not yet at the top. Due to their drive or their previous experience, they have high potential to succeed within your business or organization with some additional upskilling or mentorship.

**Rock Star:** These employees are the best of the best. They may have a high skill level, special knowledge of the organization, be extremely motivated, or all of the above. You should place high priority on retaining this category.

## APPENDIX A

### Labour, Skills & Immigration (LSI) Training Program Information

#### *Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive (WIPSI)*

WIPSI is a grant that supports the development of new skills to help businesses increase their productivity, innovation, competitiveness, and address inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility (IDEA), to make them more competitive outside of Nova Scotia. It typically supports training on new software or equipment, continuous process improvement, and training that can make workplaces more inclusive. Some examples of WIPSI training support include re-tooling and skill development, technology and optimization, robotics and automation, and IDEA training to help to improve an organization's current services, workplace culture and hiring processes.

WIPSI is not intended to support training activity that will result in competitiveness between Nova Scotia businesses. Additionally, WIPSI cannot support training activity that is supported by other government programs (e.g. the Workplace Education Initiative supporting essential business skills like leadership, sales and marketing).

For more information visit: [Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive - Government of Nova Scotia, Canada](#)

#### *Workplace Education Initiative (WEI)*

The Workplace Education Initiative (WEI) provides business skills training for working Nova Scotians. This training enhances individuals' workplace skills and supports businesses and organizations to be more successful, open to change and ready for growth. This program is funded and delivered by the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration in partnership with business, industry, and community organizations. Programs offered are listed on our website.

WEI training offers participants 40 hours of training over approximately 10 weeks, customized to individual, industry and community needs. WEI delivers programs in individual companies and sector councils, and in clusters of businesses and industries with a common need for training hosted by partner organizations. Classes are kept relatively small, with 8 to 12 participants, to allow for individual attention and support throughout the training and positioning participants for success. Regional Workplace Education and Training Coordinators support the assessment of the learning needs of individual businesses or groups of businesses and will recommend education programs to fill those training needs. The Coordinator also assists with the application for funding, which covers the cost of instruction, and provide support while a program is taking place.

For more information visit: [Workplace Education | novascotia.ca](#)