



## Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive

# Program Funding Guidelines

Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration

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# Introduction

Please read this entire document. This information will become part of an agreement with the Province of Nova Scotia for the delivery of the Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive (WIPSI) program. The purpose of this guide is to inform applicants about the goals and application process of the WIPSI Funding Program. The guide will cover all eligibility requirements along with assessment criteria that will be used in assessing applications to the WIPSI Program. Note that for WIPSI projects, a project proposal must be submitted as part of the Labour Market Programs Support System (LaMPSS) application.

## What is WIPSI?

WIPSI is a targeted workforce development program designed to support Nova Scotia businesses and key sectors in strengthening their workforce through high-impact training, innovation, and productivity enhancements. This initiative prioritizes projects that align with the Province's economic and workforce priorities, including upskilling employees and new capacity building, adopting new technologies, and addressing critical skills gaps. Funding is available for initiatives such as sector-specific training programs, technical skills training, and projects that enhance workforce adaptability in response to industry shifts. The program also supports collaborative efforts that drive innovation, increase workplace efficiency, and contribute to long-term business growth and competitiveness.

## Program Objective

The Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive provides financial assistance to individual businesses and sectors/associations that aim to:

- Address critical workforce skills needs within priority economic sectors.
- Implement innovative training solutions to improve productivity and competitiveness.
- Support capacity-building and talent development.

The fund supports projects that drive economic growth, support sustainability goals, and strengthen Nova Scotia's workforce in alignment with government priorities.

All proposals will be considered; however, the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration (LSI) is under no obligation to fund every application submitted. Please note that prior government support does not guarantee funding for the same or similar project. LSI will not provide deficit funding (expenditures exceeding total approved funding allocation) for an organization resulting from projects delivered. Unless you receive an approval notification from the WIPSI Team at LSI (contact information below), or via the Labour Market Programs Support System (LaMPSS), your application is not considered to be approved and any work that may proceed is to be completed at the risk of the applicant.

Agreement contracts are established for a duration of 12 months, with the possibility of extension.

## Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for funding under the Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive, applicants must meet the following requirements:

- Nova Scotia-Based Legal Entities – Applicants must be a legally registered business, industry association, sector council, or non-profit organization operating in Nova Scotia. Collaborative partnerships between multiple organizations will also be considered if they demonstrate a strategic workforce development impact.
- Employer-Driven Workforce Development – Applicants must have a direct workforce development need, such as upskilling employees to build new capacity, adopting new technologies, or addressing critical skills gaps within their industry.
- Capacity to Implement Training – Organizations must demonstrate the financial and administrative capacity to successfully deliver the proposed initiative, including project coordination, participant tracking, and reporting on outcomes.
- Alignment with Economic and Workforce Priorities – Applicants must operate within or support key sectors that align with Nova Scotia’s economic and workforce development priorities, contributing to industry growth and innovation.

### Priority Consideration Will Be Given To:

- Projects that address critical skill shortages, particularly in high-demand occupations and emerging industries.
- Initiatives that support workforce participation and career advancement for underrepresented communities, including Indigenous peoples, Black and African Nova Scotians, newcomers, persons with disabilities, 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, youth, and rural workers.
- Businesses and sector groups in key economic sectors identified as priorities by the province.
- Proposals that leverage strategic partnerships with educational institutions, training providers, or industry collaborators to enhance impact and long-term sustainability.

## Funding and Contribution Details

The Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive provides financial support to both Sectors/Associations and individual businesses.

- Intake period: Twice per year (April and October).
- **Funding Contribution:** Up to 75% of eligible costs.

Eligible costs may include training fees, instructor costs, course materials, and travel associated with workforce training. Maximum funding per project is subject to annual review and budget availability.

## Eligible Activities

The Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive supports targeted training and capacity-building initiatives that strengthen workforce skills, enhance productivity, and drive innovation.

Activities eligible for funding through the Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive must be directly tied to workforce development and new capacity building, including but not limited to:

### Innovative Skills Training

Programs that help businesses and sectors adapt to evolving industry needs by integrating new approaches, tools, and methodologies. This may include:

- Technology and Digital Skills Development – Training that supports businesses in adopting and effectively using new technologies, digital tools, or data-driven decision-making.
- Sustainability and Process Innovation – Workforce training in strategies that enhance environmental, operational, or economic sustainability.

### Sector-Specific Training

Industry-aligned training that addresses workforce challenges and opportunities unique to specific sectors. This may include:

- Customized Workforce Training – Programs designed to equip employees with the skills required to meet sector demands, industry standards, or regulatory requirements.
- Workforce Readiness and Adaptability – Training initiatives that help businesses and employees respond to industry shifts, emerging trends, or evolving business models.

### Capacity Building

Initiatives that strengthen workforce capabilities and support long-term business growth and resilience. This may include:

- Workforce Development and Skills Enhancement – Training that supports employee upskilling, cross-training, or succession planning.
- Talent Pipeline and Workforce Planning – Initiatives that enhance recruitment, retention, and workforce sustainability within businesses or sectors.
- Process and Productivity Improvements – Training that fosters efficiency, adaptability, and innovation in business operations.

### Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility

Projects that promote a diverse and inclusive workforce by improving access to training and career development opportunities. This may include:

- Training Programs for Underrepresented Groups – Initiatives designed to support workforce participation and advancement for equity-deserving communities.

- Inclusive Workforce Strategies – Programs that help businesses create accessible, equitable, and supportive work environments through training and skills development.

#### **WIPSI does not fund:**

- Training that has already received WIPSI support and is not developing new capacity
- Training funded through another government program (e.g. the Workplace Education Initiative)
- Conferences or retreats
- Professional development focused on skills typically required for an employee to perform their existing role

## Proposal Assessment Criteria

All proposals submitted through LaMPSS to the Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive will be assessed based on the following criteria. Each criterion is assigned a specific weight, reflecting its importance in the overall assessment. Applicants should ensure that their proposals comprehensively address each criterion to maximize their assessment score. Assessment scoring criteria can be found in Appendix A.

### Criteria for Sector/Associations and Individual Businesses

#### Alignment with Program Objectives

- Rationale: The proposal clearly articulates the problem and needs to be addressed.
- Relevance: The proposal clearly demonstrates how the project aligns with the Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive's goals of enhancing workforce skills, driving innovation, and improving productivity.
- Strategic Fit: The project addresses identified economic and workforce priorities within Nova Scotia.

#### Project Design and Feasibility

- Clarity and Coherence: The proposal outlines clear, realistic, and measurable objectives, with a logical sequence of activities. Objectives should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timebound, linked to expected results, and allow the measurement of progress.
- Methodology: The approach and activities proposed are appropriate and effective for achieving the project's objectives.
- Feasibility: The timeline is realistic, and the resources allocated are adequate to successfully complete the project.

#### Impact and Sustainability

- Expected Outcomes: The proposal clearly defines the anticipated outcomes, such as skill development, innovation, or productivity improvements.

- Partnership and Collaboration: The project demonstrates collaboration with industry, organizations, post-secondary institutions and/or government to bring value to the project (e.g., leverage resources and/or expertise, strengthen collaboration or partnerships, promote equity, diversity, and inclusion).
- Scalability and Replicability: The potential for the project to be scaled or replicated in other sectors or regions is considered.

## Fostering Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility in the Workforce

- Commitment to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility: The proposal demonstrates a clear commitment to fostering equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility in the workplace by addressing barriers to participation and supporting underrepresented groups.
- Inclusive Partnerships and Collaboration: The project actively engages with diverse partners, including industry, community organizations, and educational institutions, to create inclusive opportunities and promote equitable access to skills development.
- Sustainable and Scalable Impact: The initiative has the potential to create lasting change by embedding inclusive practices that can be scaled or replicated across different sectors and regions.

## Additional Criteria for Sectors/Associations

### Collaboration and Resources Sharing

- Leveraging Financial and In-Kind Contributions: The proposal demonstrates how partnerships with industry, organizations, and/or government will contribute funding, in-kind support, or other resources to maximize project impact and cost efficiency.
- Defined Roles and Resource Commitments: The project clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of each partner, specifying contributions such as financial investment, staff time, expertise, equipment, or facilities.
- Cost-Effectiveness and Sustainability: Partnerships help reduce duplication of efforts, enhance resource efficiency, and support the long-term sustainability of project outcomes.

The final score for each proposal will be calculated by multiplying the score for each criterion by its assigned weight and summing the results. Proposals must achieve a minimum overall score to be considered for funding. The minimum score threshold will be determined based on the quality of submissions and available funding.

## Application Process

### Step 1: Application and Proposal Submission

- You must register in LaMPSS online to apply for WIPSI funding. To learn how to do this please refer to: <https://novascotia.ca/lae/lampss/lampss.asp>. If your organization is not already

registered with LaMPSS, you will need to register with LaMPSS to obtain an organization ID, to submit an application. The LaMPSS application is required to create a contract with LSI for the funding agreement.

- With your LaMPSS application, submit a detailed proposal including:
  - **Executive Summary**
    - **Overview:** Provide a brief summary of the proposal, highlighting the project's purpose, objectives, and expected impact on workforce development.
    - **Alignment with Priorities:** Summarize how the project aligns with government priorities.
  - **Project Objectives and Scope**
    - **Specific Goals:** Clearly outline the primary goals of the project (e.g., skill development, productivity improvement).
    - **Target Audience:** Describe who will benefit from the project (e.g., sectors, or individual business).
    - **Scope of Work:** Define the scope, including key activities, locations, and the number of participants.
  - **Project Justification and Need**
    - **Problem Statement:** Identify the workforce gap or skill shortage the project aims to address.
    - **Relevance to Sector Needs:** Explain the sector-specific demand or emerging trends that make the project relevant and timely.
    - **Capacity-Building Focus:** Show how the project will increase the organization's capacity, either by enhancing internal skills, adopting new technologies, or fostering innovation.
  - **Detailed Project Description**
    - **Activities and Deliverables:** Outline planned activities, deliverables, and timelines.
    - **Trainer Qualifications and Expertise:** Outline trainers' educational qualifications, industry experience, certifications, and areas of expertise. Demonstrate that trainers have relevant experience with the specific skills and knowledge areas. Collect references from previous training engagements to demonstrate past performance their ability to deliver impactful training.
    - **Training Methods:** Describe the training approach, such as on-site training, online learning, or workshops, and why these methods are suited to the project.

- **Innovation Elements:** Highlight any innovative aspects, like the use of new technology, partnerships, or novel skill-building approaches.
- **Expected Outcomes and Impact**
  - **Measurable Outcomes:** Define specific outcomes (e.g., number of employees trained, or productivity improvements).
  - **Long-Term Impact:** Describe the anticipated impact on the organization or sector, such as fostering talent pipelines, enhancing workforce resilience, or supporting regional economic growth.
  - **Alignment with Program Objectives:** Link outcomes to the government's goals for economic, social, or environmental advancement.
- **Evaluation and Measurement Plan**
  - **Success Metrics:** Specify metrics to measure success (e.g., skill gains, operational efficiency).
  - **Evaluation Process:** Detail how outcomes will be tracked, including data collection methods, reporting timelines, and tools for measuring impact.
- **Project Timeline**
  - **Milestones:** List major milestones, deliverables, and a proposed project schedule.
  - **Start and End Dates:** Provide start and completion dates to ensure adherence to the 12-month funding period.
- **Budget and Funding Requirements**
  - **Detailed Budget:** Break down the budget by line items (e.g., training costs, materials, instructor fees, travel expenses).
  - **Funding Request:** Specify the amount of funding requested and outline other sources of funding and contributions.
  - **Cost Justification:** Justify each budget item, showing how funds will support the project's goals and expected outcomes.
- **Organizational Capacity and Expertise**
  - **Project Management Plan:** Outline how the project will be managed, including team roles and responsibilities, to demonstrate the organization's ability to execute the project.
- **Sustainability and Scalability**
  - **Sustainability Plan:** Explain how the organization will maintain the benefits of the project over time.

- **Scalability:** Indicate whether the project could be scaled or replicated for greater impact within the sector or across other regions.

## Step 2: Assessment and Decision

- Applications are assessed based on defined assessment criteria. Criteria definitions and levels of compliance are detailed in this section of the Guidelines.
- Once assessed and scored a recommendation will be prepared for LSI senior leadership. Final funding decisions will be made by senior leadership to ensure transparency and strategic alignment.

## Step 3: Decision

Once the Project Proposal has been assessed and a recommendation has been approved this will be communicated to the applicant and completed in LaMPSS.

Note: Not all proposals will be recommended for approval, however, all organizations will be contacted and informed of decisions.

## Service Registration

Any projects that have a participant component will be required to complete Service Registration for those individuals. Service Registration is a term used in LaMPSS for the set of functions to help an organization manage the services delivered under their agreement(s) with government. It includes the ability to register uniquely identified clients, indicate what services they receive, capture key client characteristics, and generate reports. Personal information is required, from individuals, to verify their eligibility as participants as well as to enable government to understand the effectiveness of the services being delivered. All information about participants that is collected or compiled should be done confidentially, and all necessary measures should be in place to protect against unauthorized release or disclosure of that personal information.

Service Registration is accessed through LaMPSS and will require an Intake Form to be completed. Information on Service Registration will be provided by the WIPSI Team but can also be found on the LaMPSS resource website.

## Reporting Requirements

After receiving a funding agreement, it is crucial to maintain regular communication with the WIPSI team throughout the lifecycle of the agreement. The following reports are required to ensure compliance with the funding agreement:

### LaMPSS Activity/Accountability Reports:

- **Frequency:** Reports are required at least twice during the project lifecycle, with specific due dates indicated in the service agreement.

- **Content:** These reports should detail the progress of project activities, including milestones achieved, challenges encountered, and any adjustments made to the project plan. They should also include quantitative and qualitative data on participant engagement and outcomes.

## Financial Reports:

- **Frequency:** Financial reports are required at the same intervals as activity reports.
- **Content:** These reports should provide a detailed account of all expenditures related to the project, as defined in the Itemized Budget Breakdown submitted with the funding proposal. They should demonstrate that funds are being used in accordance with the approved budget and highlight any variances.

## Additional Reporting Requirements:

- **Interim Updates:** Depending on the project's scope and duration, additional interim updates may be requested by the WIPSI team.
- **Site Visits:** The WIPSI team may conduct site visits to verify project activities and progress.

Failure to complete and submit any of the required reports according to the agreement schedule will result in delays to continued funding support.

## Contact Information

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## Appendix A

WIPSI Proposal Assessment Scoring Criteria – Individual Businesses

Criteria	Weight (%)	Score Levels	Description
Alignment with Program Objectives	35%	<b>0-5</b> (Does not meet expectations)	The proposal lacks a clear problem statement, does not link to specific business needs, or fails to demonstrate alignment with business goals. The project lacks a clear focus on employee skill enhancement or fails to outline measurable outcomes. It does not provide evidence that it addresses skill shortages, supports employee development, or aligns with business growth strategies.
		<b>6-10</b> (Partially meets expectations)	The proposal defines a problem and outlines some connection to business needs but lacks depth or supporting evidence. The applicant does not fully articulate the project's impact on employee skill enhancement, productivity, or business growth. While the proposal includes some measurable outcomes, it lacks a detailed evaluation plan to track progress effectively.
		<b>11-15</b> (Meets expectations)	The proposal clearly articulates a problem and provides evidence supporting its relevance. The project demonstrates clear, quantifiable outcomes, such as skills gained or operational efficiency improvements. It directly addresses high-demand skills, emerging business needs, or employee development. Additionally, the proposal includes meaningful partnerships with training providers or industry collaborators to maximize long-term impact.
Project Design and Feasibility	25%	<b>0-5</b> (Does not meet expectations)	The project lacks clear, measurable objectives, has an unrealistic timeline, or does not outline a logical approach.
		<b>6-10</b> (Partially meets expectations)	The proposal provides objectives and a basic timeline but lacks clarity on methodology or feasibility
		<b>11-15</b> (Meets expectations)	The proposal includes specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) objectives with a clear, realistic methodology and timeline.
Fostering Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility	15%	<b>0-5</b> (Does not meet expectations)	The proposal does not address Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility or fails to demonstrate how it will reach underrepresented groups
		<b>6-10</b> (Partially meets expectations)	The proposal includes some diversity initiatives but lacks a structured approach.
		<b>11-15</b> (Meets expectations)	The proposal has a strong, actionable commitment to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility, with clear strategies and partnerships.
Impact and Sustainability	25%	<b>0-5</b> (Does not meet expectations)	The project lacks defined outcomes, does not explain immediate business benefits, or does not provide a plan for measuring effectiveness.
		<b>6-10</b> (Partially meets expectations)	The project outlines expected outcomes but lacks clarity on immediate business benefits or how the training will be integrated into business operations.
		<b>11-15</b> (Meets expectations)	The project clearly defines immediate business impact, has a plan for measuring effectiveness, and outlines potential for future training needs.

**WIPSI Proposal Assessment Scoring Criteria – Sectors/Associations**

Criteria	Weight (%)	Score Levels	Description & Examples
<b>Alignment with Program Objectives</b>	30%	<b>0-5 (Does not meet expectations)</b>	The proposal lacks a clear problem statement, does not link to workforce or productivity priorities, or fails to demonstrate alignment with government goals. The project lacks a clear workforce development focus or fails to outline measurable outcomes. It does not provide evidence that it addresses skill shortages, supports underrepresented communities, or aligns with provincial economic priorities.
		<b>6-10 (Partially meets expectations)</b>	The proposal defines a problem and outlines some connection to program objectives but lacks depth or supporting evidence. The applicant does not fully articulate the project's impact on workforce development, productivity, or economic growth. While the proposal includes some measurable outcomes, it lacks a detailed evaluation plan to track progress effectively. Additionally, there is minimal collaboration with training providers, educational institutions, or industry partners to enhance project sustainability.
		<b>11-15 (Meets expectations)</b>	The proposal clearly articulates a problem and provides evidence supporting its relevance. The project demonstrates clear, quantifiable outcomes, such as skills gained or operational efficiency improvements. It directly addresses high-demand occupations, emerging industries, or underrepresented communities. Additionally, the proposal includes meaningful partnerships with educational institutions, training providers, or industry collaborators to maximize long-term impact.
<b>Project Design and Feasibility</b>	25%	<b>0-5 (Does not meet expectations)</b>	The project lacks clear, measurable objectives, has an unrealistic timeline, or does not outline a logical approach.
		<b>6-10 (Partially meets expectations)</b>	The proposal provides objectives and a basic timeline but lacks clarity on methodology or feasibility
		<b>11-15 (Meets expectations)</b>	The proposal includes specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) objectives with a clear, realistic methodology and timeline.
<b>Fostering Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility</b>	15%	<b>0-5 (Does not meet expectations)</b>	The proposal does not address Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility or fails to demonstrate how it will reach underrepresented groups
		<b>6-10 (Partially meets expectations)</b>	The proposal includes some diversity initiatives but lacks a structured approach.
		<b>11-15 (Meets expectations)</b>	The proposal has a strong, actionable commitment to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility, with clear strategies and partnerships.
<b>Impact and Sustainability</b>	25%	<b>0-5 (Does not meet expectations)</b>	The project lacks defined outcomes, does not explain long-term impact, or does not provide a sustainability plan.
		<b>6-10 (Partially meets expectations)</b>	The project outlines expected outcomes but lacks clarity on sustainability or scalability
		<b>11-15 (Meets expectations)</b>	The project clearly defines impact, has a plan for sustaining benefits, and outlines potential for expansion.
<b>Collaboration and Resource Sharing</b>	5%	<b>0-3 (Does not meet expectations)</b>	The proposal does not identify partnerships or fails to demonstrate shared resources.
		<b>4-6 (Meets expectations)</b>	The project includes partnerships with some level of resource-sharing but lacks full commitment details.
		<b>7-10 (Exceeds expectations)</b>	The project has well-defined, committed partnerships with financial or in-kind contributions. It specifies partners' roles, resource commitments, and demonstrates how cost-sharing enhances project sustainability and impact.