



The Way Forward on Adult Literacy

The Way Forward


Newfoundland
Labrador

Introduction

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has named its priorities through **The Way Forward: A Vision for Sustainability and Growth in Newfoundland and Labrador**.

We want to build a more educated and economically-diverse province so people can:

- Reach their potential,
- Take part in training, and
- Find and keep jobs.

This five-year action plan outlines the way forward on adult literacy in Newfoundland and Labrador. It includes actions we will take with stakeholders to achieve our goals. We will be responsive to new issues and opportunities, and we will report on our progress each year.





Improving Adult Literacy Outcomes

Literacy touches everybody's lives. Increased literacy skills can help people:

- Find and keep jobs;
- Stay healthy;
- Support their family and community; and
- Stay safe.

Literacy is more than just reading and writing. Literacy is the ability to understand, create, and communicate.

Investments in literacy will help people provide for themselves and their families and help our province grow. We cannot do this alone. We all need to work together.

Adult Literacy in Newfoundland and Labrador

- Our adult literacy levels are among the lowest in Canada.
- People with lower literacy skills sometimes are challenged by routine tasks that involve reading, understanding, and computing.
- In a society requiring greater use of technology, people with lower literacy skills may find it difficult to use a computer to fill out a work application form, pay bills, search for information on the internet or avail of government services.

For people without a high school diploma, getting a high school credential can be life-changing. It can mean improving their ability to understand information, write in an organized way, do basic math, and use a computer. It can also mean access to training opportunities, finding a job, and moving ahead in their career.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, people seeking basic literacy skills or a chance to upgrade their literacy skills can take part in:

- One-to-one tutoring;
- Adult Basic Education (ABE); and
- The General Educational Development (GED) test.

The ABE program and the GED test lead to high school equivalency credentials.

Studies show that people with higher skills tend to work more, earn higher wages, and work in higher skilled jobs. They have fewer and shorter periods of unemployment and rely less on government financial support. Improved literacy skills also prepare workers for managerial and technological changes and help businesses become more competitive.

Our Vision

The Way Forward: A Vision for Sustainability and Growth in Newfoundland and Labrador highlights government's commitment to building a more educated and economically diverse province. We want to support all people in reaching their potential. An adult literacy action plan that builds on existing strengths and partnerships, while taking new and better approaches to adult literacy, is key to reaching this commitment.

Our vision for Newfoundland and Labrador is a strengthened adult literacy system that helps people get the literacy skills needed to lead healthier, more productive lives, and fully take part in the province's economy.

Our Guiding Principles

Consistent with **The Way Forward: A Vision for Sustainability and Growth in Newfoundland and Labrador**, the adult literacy action plan is built on the following key guiding principles:

- **Recognizing literacy as:**
 - the basis for all education and learning, and
 - the key to social and economic growth;
- **Working together with our stakeholders; and**
- **Challenging ourselves.**



Implementation

Strong literacy skills are a cornerstone of social and economic growth.

The Adult Literacy Action Plan has been developed to help Newfoundlanders and Labradorians increase their education and improve employability, well-being, and quality of life. The investments we make in this action plan will improve the adult literacy system in this province and provide adult learners with increased opportunities to strengthen their literacy skills. Implementation of this action plan will contribute to improved literacy, help prepare Newfoundlanders and Labradorians for future educational and career opportunities, and strengthen our local labour force to meet the changing labour market demands in the provincial economy.

The Adult Literacy Action Plan will be implemented in three phases over five years, as follows:

- **Short-term:** 12 actions to be substantially completed by March 2020.
- **Medium-term:** 13 actions to be substantially completed by March 2022.
- **Long-term:** five actions to be substantially completed by March 2024.

Appendix A includes a list of the short, medium and long-term actions and who is responsible for leading their implementation.

Putting these actions into practice requires the effort, persistence and commitment of everybody. We look forward to continuing collaboration with all our partners. Together, we can strengthen our adult literacy system to achieve more for everyone.

Our Focus Areas

We are focused on strengthening the literacy skills within the province and building a more empowered, skilled and ready workforce. We will invest \$60 million in the implementation of the action plan over the next five years to:

1. **Raise awareness about adult literacy programs and services;**
2. **Increase access to adult literacy programs and services;**
3. **Enhance programs and services for adult literacy;**
4. **Improve employability of persons with literacy challenges; and**
5. **Measure progress of provincial adult literacy.**



Raising Awareness

- 1. Raise awareness of available programming and potential pathways for people seeking to improve their literacy skills, along with the benefits and opportunities for lifelong learning.**

There are many options for adults with literacy challenges to improve literacy skills. To help support lifelong learning for everyone, we will use innovative approaches to promote literacy, available resources, tools and supports.
- 2. Promote the use of Plain Language Guidelines in Provincial Government communications and publications to make sure inclusiveness for people with low literacy skills.**

Plain language is writing designed to be understood quickly and easily. Clearly written text is direct, inclusive, and focuses on the needs of the reader. Good layout and design makes a document easy to navigate. We will explore ways to use plain language in more government documents, policies, applications, programs and services.

- 3. Establish an interdepartmental committee on adult literacy to oversee and coordinate cross-departmental initiatives and to identify new opportunities to support adult literacy goals.**

Literacy is an important consideration for every office that offers services to the public. Successful implementation of The Way Forward on Adult Literacy requires a cross-departmental approach. We will create an interdepartmental committee to oversee and coordinate cross-departmental initiatives influencing and affected by adult literacy.

Increasing Access

- 4. Work with service and training providers to improve intake and referral services, including recognition of prior learning experiences, for people wishing to access adult literacy skills programming.**

Different people have different needs. Intake, assessment, and program referrals help people identify the right education and training pathway to meet their needs. We will review processes to make sure the best learning opportunities are in place for people to help them reach their goals.

- 5. Work with service and training providers to add flexibility within the Adult Basic Education program, including alternatives to full-time classroom-based programming such as online and blended delivery options.**

Many adult learners may have work responsibilities, transportation issues, or childcare challenges. Thus, they may not be able to take part in weekday ABE classes. Also, ABE is not available in all areas of the province. With service and training providers and other partners, we will review how we offer ABE to find ways to add program flexibility and greater access.

- 6. Review financial supports available to enroll in Adult Basic Education.**

The Provincial Government provides income support funding and supports for childcare, transportation, and tuition to ABE students. We will review current supports to make sure ABE clients are getting the most out of our funding programs.

- 7. In collaboration with Newfoundland and Labrador public libraries, develop programming to help people strengthen their literacy skill competencies.**

Parents with stronger literacy skills have better economic security. Better economic security contributes to healthy child development. Public libraries will help us offer a range of adult literacy programs and services. We will offer family literacy programs in areas that may not currently have access to such programming.

- 8. Work with the Department of Justice and Public Safety to review adult literacy programming offered in correctional facilities and find opportunities to boost literacy skills services to help people that are in custody prepare for reintegration into their communities after release from custody.**

Research has shown a connection between low literacy, dropout rates, and crime. Improving literacy skills is one way to help people trying to reintegrate into society after release from custody. Stronger literacy skills will help them get and keep a job, stay healthy, and adapt to life's changes.

- 9. Work with the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, in collaboration with seniors groups, community organizations, and training providers to develop literacy programming to promote and enhance the well-being and independence of older adults.**

Improved literacy can help older adults keep their independence, stay active, and lead healthy, productive lives. In particular, we will look at ways to strengthen financial and digital literacy skills to help them adapt to the increasing role of technology in daily life.

- 10. Support efforts in The Way Forward on Immigration that contribute to the enhancement of critical literacy and essential skills for newcomers and refugees.**

Newcomers face unique challenges that may stop them from getting the training needed to move into the workforce or going back to school. Building on the work started through the Immigration Action Plan, we will:

- Add to the opportunities available to newcomers for English as a Second Language;
- Ease the entry of newcomers into Adult Basic Education programming; and
- Look at what literacy services help newcomers when settling here.

- 11. Engage with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development on opportunities to increase the uptake and successful completion of the General Educational Development test.**

The GED test measures the general knowledge, ideas, and thinking skills that are usually gained in high school and provides a chance to earn a high school equivalency credential. It gives flexibility in getting high school equivalency, as test takers are not required to attend daytime classes. We will increase the



availability of GED test preparation and computer-based testing. We will also explore opportunities to encourage adults to take the steps to write the GED test and achieve a high school credential.

12. Partner with Indigenous governments, groups and organizations to explore initiatives to address unique literacy needs of Indigenous peoples in Newfoundland and Labrador.

There remains a gap in educational attainment and unemployment rates between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous people. We will collaborate with Indigenous governments, groups and organizations and other partners to enhance adult literacy services and build culturally relevant resources for everyone.



Enhancing Programs and Services

- 13. Facilitate a procurement process to implement a delivery model for an Adult Basic Education program that reflects The Way Forward on Adult Literacy.** The new Public Procurement legislation modernizes government's purchasing processes and focuses on ways to improve services and outcomes. Through the procurement process, we will make sure that the ABE program supports positive learning outcomes for people, to help them get training, find jobs, and take part in their communities.

- 14. Work with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to develop and implement a plan to establish strong linkages including communications, planning, and policy development on K-12 education system and adult literacy programming intersections.** There are natural connections between the K-12's Education Action Plan and the Adult Literacy Action Plan. We will work together to align actions from both plans, including policies on early school leavers, curriculum development, and other areas.

- 15. Engage service and training providers and community organizations to facilitate professional development opportunities for adult literacy instructors and volunteers, including exploring alternative teaching practices to meet needs of diverse adult learner communities.**

We will explore opportunities for professional development for instructors, administrators, and other adult education staff and volunteers, including building knowledge to better help learners with complex needs. We will also identify and introduce new teaching methods to support learning success.

- 16. Review the curriculum of Adult Basic Education (ABE) Level III and develop a process to ensure continued responsiveness to adult learners and ensure appropriate intersection with the provincial high school curriculum.**

Curriculum in K-12 school systems is updated regularly to reflect current teaching approaches and to include new learning materials. We will work with our partners to refresh the ABE Level III curriculum to embed new content, learning resources and teaching strategies. We will also explore new transition-to-study and transition-to-work options to support adult learners in their personal, educational and career goals.

- 17. Review Adult Basic Education Level I and Level II to ensure clearly defined learning pathways and outcomes are consistent with the goals of learners and explore opportunities to include life-skills programming.**

ABE Level I teaches basic literacy and numeracy skills. ABE Level II builds on those skills and provides skills similar to grades 7-9. By including life skills programming, we can help people reach their personal, educational and career goals.

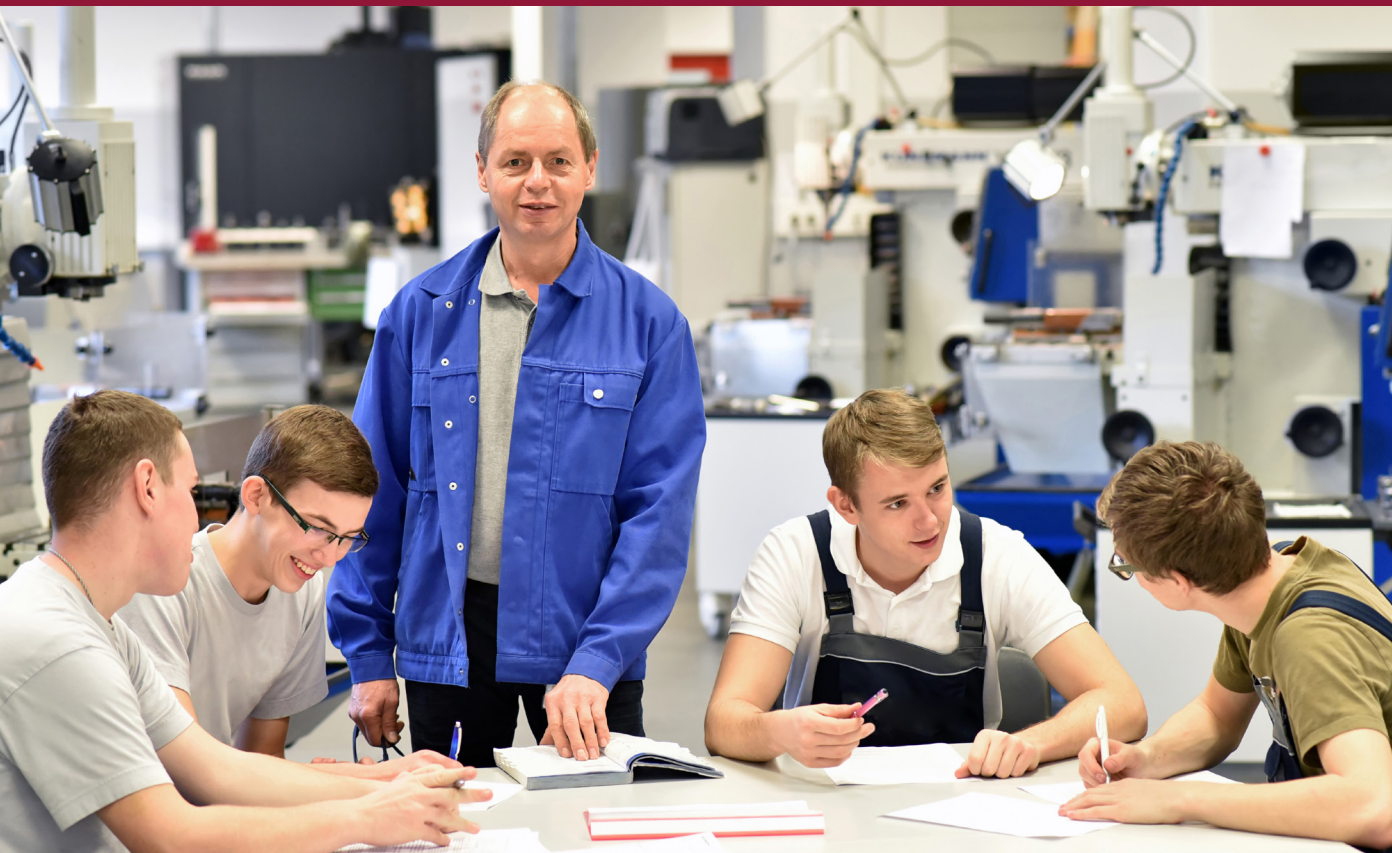
- 18. Work with post-secondary institutions to explore options to assist graduates of Adult Basic Education and adult learners with literacy skill challenges transition to post-secondary education.**

The transition to post-secondary study can be a challenge for some adult learners, especially those who do not yet have a high school diploma. Some people may need help strengthening their skills, while others may need help navigating enrolment and financial aid systems and other aspects of post-secondary life. We will work with our post-secondary institutions to support adults' transition to post-secondary study.

- 19. Review adult literacy programs and identify opportunities to respond to relevant Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action.**
Our government is committed to carrying out the calls to action set out in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report that are applicable to the Provincial Government. To make sure that all present and future generations can grow in the spirit of reconciliation, we will review all provincially-created adult literacy programs and identify opportunities to include curriculum and learning resources on Indigenous peoples in Canadian history and the legacy of residential schools.
- 20. Work with the Department of Health and Community Services and service providers to increase access to information on mental health and addictions supports for people with lower literacy.**
In The Way Forward Towards Recovery: The Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador, our government committed to a vision for a renewed mental health and addictions system. People with lower literacy may need extra support to find and understand information on mental health issues. We will work with the Department of Health and Community Services and others to ensure information on mental health and addiction supports is accessible.
- 21. Work with service and training providers to increase academic supports and accommodation options within adult literacy programming for people with identified learning disabilities and other difficulties.**
Some people have learning difficulties or disabilities that makes learning a challenge. The K-12 education system provides academic supports and accommodations to support successful outcomes. We will work to make sure similar supports are available within the ABE program.

Increasing Employability

- 22. Introduce career development components into the Adult Basic Education program.**
Most entry-level jobs require a high school diploma. Many people enrolling in the ABE program want to get a high school equivalency and then find work. We will find ways to introduce more career development information into



the ABE program. We will also engage industry in promoting local/regional pathways to ABE students, so learners can see the range of post-secondary and labour market options open to them.

23. Develop and launch a pilot program, in partnership with employers, labour, and training providers, to provide targeted training opportunities for developing critical literacy skills within key sector-based workforce groups. Government has industry partnerships with aquaculture, agriculture, oil and gas, mining, forestry, technology and the community sectors, with a focus on driving economic growth and improving quality of life. We will build on these partnerships to increase access to qualified workers.

24. Survey employers to gain insight on the literacy skills challenges of current employees and options to help them address those challenges at their worksites.

We will work with employers to develop relevant workplace literacy initiatives and supportive policies that meet gaps, strengthen their ability to retain and attract workers, and increase the impact of government-funded literacy programs.

- 25. Engage employers and other organizations to find opportunities to increase recognition of the General Educational Development credential.**
The GED test may provide a faster, more affordable route to high school equivalency for some. However, employers may not be fully aware of the GED credential when recruiting workers. We will work with industry to promote the GED credential as an acceptable qualification for the labour market.
- 26. Collaborate with service providers and community organizations to develop and pilot new approaches to facilitate literacy upgrading of unemployed persons seeking a quick return to the labour market.**
For some people that need literacy upgrading, high school equivalency may not be the best path. We will work with our partners to find new solutions to literacy problems, including other skill-building programming.
- 27. In partnership with employers and training providers, develop a program aimed at providing adult learners enrolled in Adult Basic Education an opportunity for on-the-job work experience to help them attach to the labour market.**
Adult learners need help gaining work experiences they can build on to find and keep work. We will work with service providers and employers to provide on-the-job learning placement opportunities for persons with literacy challenges.
- 28. Identify partnership opportunities with the Federal Government through the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills to explore initiatives supporting workplace literacy and essential skills and the needs of employers and workers.**
Although education is the responsibility of each province and territory, the Federal Government has an interest in ensuring Canadians have access to quality training and jobs. By collaborating with the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills, we will make sure we make the best use of funding opportunities on shared priorities.

Measuring Progress

- 29. Review governance models for provincial adult literacy to improve coordination, collaboration, and efficient resource sharing across multiple stakeholders.**

Literacy is everybody's responsibility: students, governments, training providers, community organizations, employment sectors, and others. To support adult literacy growth, we will adapt an appropriate model of collaboration for this province.

- 30. Establish a framework to better measure provincial adult literacy rates and adult learning outcomes to assist with identifying practices that respond to local needs to improve adult literacy skill levels.**

Research and data analysis help us understand adult literacy within Newfoundland and Labrador. When we understand adult literacy, we improve our ability to make decisions about it. We will strengthen our inventory of provincial adult literacy data and related research, including analysis across various demographics and population segments.



Appendix A

Implementation Timelines for The Way Forward on Adult Literacy

Short-term: Substantially Completed March 2020

Action	Responsibility
1 Raise awareness of available programming and potential pathways for people seeking to improve their literacy skills, along with the benefits and opportunities for lifelong learning.	Advanced Education, Skills and Labour (AESL)
3 Establish an interdepartmental committee on adult literacy to oversee and coordinate cross-departmental initiatives and to identify new opportunities to support adult literacy goals.	AESL
5 Work with service and training providers to add flexibility within the Adult Basic Education program, including alternatives to full-time classroom-based programming such as online and blended delivery options.	AESL
10 Support efforts in The Way Forward on Immigration that contribute to the enhancement of critical literacy and essential skills for newcomers and refugees.	AESL
11 Engage with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development on opportunities to increase the uptake and successful completion of the General Educational Development test.	AESL and Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD)
14 Work with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to develop and implement a plan to establish strong linkages including communications, planning, and policy development on K-12 education system and adult literacy programming intersections.	AESL and EECD

16	Review the curriculum of Adult Basic Education Level III and develop a process to ensure continued responsiveness to adult learners and ensure appropriate intersection with the provincial high school curriculum.	AESL
19	Review adult literacy programs and identify opportunities to respond to relevant Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action.	AESL in consultation with EECD and Indigenous and Intergovernmental Affairs (IIGA)
20	Work with the Department of Health and Community Services and service providers to increase access to information on mental health and addictions supports for people with lower literacy.	AESL and Health and Community Services (HCS)
23	Develop and launch a pilot program, in partnership with employers, labour and training providers, to provide targeted training opportunities for developing critical literacy skills within key sector-based workforce groups.	AESL
24	Survey employers to gain insight on the literacy skills challenges of current employees and options to help them address those challenges at their worksites.	AESL
27	In partnership with employers and training providers, develop a program aimed at providing adult learners enrolled in Adult Basic Education an opportunity for on-the-job work experience to help them attach to the labour market.	AESL

Medium-term: Substantially Completed March 2022

Action		Responsibility
2	Promote the use of Plain Language Guidelines in Provincial Government communications and publications to make sure inclusiveness for people with low literacy skills.	AESL in consultation with Children, Seniors and Social Development (CSSD) and Centre for Learning and Development
6	Review financial supports available to enrol in Adult Basic Education.	AESL
7	In collaboration with Newfoundland and Labrador Public Libraries, develop programming to help people strengthen their literacy skill competencies.	AESL in consultations with Newfoundland and Labrador Public Libraries
8	Work with the Department of Justice and Public Safety to review adult literacy programming offered in correctional facilities and find opportunities to boost literacy skills services to help people that are in custody prepare for reintegration into the communities after release from custody.	AESL in consultations with Justice and Public Safety (JPS)
9	Work with the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, in collaboration with seniors groups, community organizations, and training providers to develop literacy programming to promote and enhance the well-being and independence of older adults.	AESL in collaboration with the CSSD
13	Facilitate a procurement process to implement a delivery model for an Adult Basic Education program that reflects The Way Forward on Adult Literacy.	AESL

15	Engage service and training providers and community organizations to facilitate professional development opportunities for adult literacy instructors and volunteers, including exploring alternative teaching practices to meet needs of diverse adult learner communities.	AESL
17	Review Adult Basic Education Level I and Level II to ensure clearly defined learning pathways and outcomes are consistent with the goals of learners and explore opportunities to include life skills programming.	AESL
18	Work with post-secondary institutions to explore options to assist graduates of Adult Basic Education and adult learners with literacy skill challenges transition to post-secondary education.	AESL
21	Work with service and training providers to increase academic supports and accommodation options within adult literacy programming for people with identified learning disabilities and other difficulties.	AESL in consultation with EECD
22	Introduce career development components into the Adult Basic Education program.	AESL and EECD
26	Collaborate with service providers and community organizations to develop and pilot new approaches to facilitate literacy upgrading of unemployed persons seeking a quick return to the labour market.	AESL
28	Identify partnership opportunities with the Federal Government through their Office of Literacy and Essential Skills to explore initiatives supporting workplace literacy and essential skills and the needs of employers and workers.	AESL

Long-term: Substantially Completed March 2024

Action		Responsibility
4	Work with service and training providers to improve intake and referral services, including recognition of prior learning experiences, for people wishing to access adult literacy skills programming.	AESL
12	Partner with Indigenous Governments, groups and organizations to explore initiatives to address unique literacy needs of Indigenous peoples in Newfoundland and Labrador.	AESL in consultation with IIGA
25	Engage employers and other organizations to find opportunities to increase recognition of the General Educational Development credential.	AESL in consultation with EECD
29	Review governance models for provincial adult literacy to improve coordination, collaboration, and efficient resource sharing across multiple stakeholders.	AESL
30	Establish a framework to better measure provincial adult literacy rates and adult learning outcomes to assist with identifying practices that respond to local needs to improve adult literacy skill levels.	AESL

Available in alternate formats

