

The Essential Employability Skills – Health Sector (ESS-HS) project focuses on labour market challenges in the senior health care industry. Led by the Literacy Coalition of New Brunswick (LCNB) in partnership with the Newfoundland and Labrador Laubach Literacy Council and PEI Literacy Alliance, the innovative project prepares unemployed and underemployed participants for in-demand, entry-level positions in the health sector workforce.

Modelled after the highly successful *Essential Skills for Atlantic Fisheries (ESAF)* project, ESS-HS combines hard and soft skills to prepare participants to fill important gaps in the workforce.

The results of the pilot are in and we're thrilled to share what we've learned.



Literacy Coalition
of New Brunswick Ltd.

Best practices

1. We're stronger together:

Pan-Atlantic community-based approach

- The high need for health care workers who support seniors in long-term care, assisted living, and in their homes in Atlantic Canada is widely recognized and many employers are struggling to fill vacant positions.
- The pan-Atlantic partnership approach to the development and delivery of the EES-HS project allowed for a common gap in the job market to be addressed across three provinces: New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Prince Edward Island.
- The partnership developed a winning structure: LCNB as lead, a Steering Committee for overall guidance, a Community Advisory Group (CAG) in each province to work directly with governments and provide on-the-ground support, provincial project coordinators, and local classroom/virtual training facilitators (delivering training to participants, supervisors, and middle-managers).
- Important partnerships with provincial governments were created to access existing employment projects and support services to complement the training delivery model.

2. Professional development for employers:

Workplace mentors

- The EES-HS project went beyond training participants to enter the health sector through the development of a mentorship project focused on building the skills of supervisors and people managers at participating worksites as Workplace Mentors.
- 35 of the 39 supervisors/managers (90%) completed the mentor training.
- Supervisors/managers completed the mentor training before the participants entered the workplace, ensuring that participants were well supported during their work placements and therefore given the greatest chance for success.
- Increasing the capacity of supervisors/managers to coach their new and existing staff can lead to increased employee retention.
- More than one supervisor/manager from each employer pilot site engaged with the project to allow for shared learning, shift coverage, and professional development of valuable supervisory tools and strategies.
- The supervisors and managers gained skills such as listening, confidence-building, and problem-solving to apply in situations that arise in the workplace with EES-HS participants and existing employees.

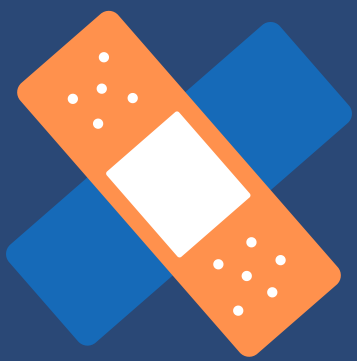
Here's what program participants are saying:

"Before, I felt expendable. Through the program, I began to feel valued again. People needed me!"

- Jessica Baillie, Participant

"I would definitely encourage other employers to take part in this program! The participants are eager to learn and are enthusiastic."

- Sara Trites, Program Mentor



3. Earning while learning: Paid work placements

- Classroom and online training were followed by 1-week on-the-job training and a 5-week paid work placement with one of the participating senior health care employers.
- Participants received income support and training allowances during the virtual training portion of the project and paid wages by the employer during the work placement.
- Employers received a wage subsidy (50% of the participant's wages) for work placements.

4. Identifying & filling gaps: Training the workforce for available positions

- Key to the success of the EES-HS project was identifying in-demand entry-level positions in the sector and training participants specifically for identified jobs.
- 100% of participants (32/32) who completed the project (all 3 project components) were offered a job with their pilot site employer.
- 3 months after the project, of the 73 participants who started the project, 26 were still employed by their EES-HS employer and 16 were employed elsewhere.
- A total of 20 employers participated in the EES-HS project, providing important data about entry-level positions in need of trained workers.

5. A model for success: Transferability across industries

- The EES-HS project was modelled after the highly successful Essential Skills for Atlantic Fisheries project (ESAF) project, which took a sectoral approach with industry engagement at all phases.
- The EES-HS pilot project is proof that the training model can be adapted to address workforce needs in other sectors.
- The pilot results attest to the transferability of the unique approach that allows for a win-win-win situation for participants, employers, and for the economy.
- Curriculum content was adapted from the ESAF project: examples, images, and learning activities were revised or developed to reflect working in a senior health care context.
- Existing curriculum was reframed to include the new Skills for Success framework.
- Common curriculum materials rolled out across all three provinces and featured employability skills integrated seamlessly into the essential skills modules.

6. Hybrid approach: A blended learning model

- Project participants engaged in a combination of in-person and virtual learning, including classroom, independent online, and on-the-job training customized to available jobs in the health sector. This blended learning approach proved to be highly effective because the participants were better prepared for the workplace.
- The online learning platform had both synchronous and asynchronous engagement options allowing for more flexibility and contributed to the success of the training and overall completion rate.