



# NWT Small Communities Employment Strategy

A Strategy to provide targeted employment  
and training supports in the small communities of the NWT







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# Message from the Minister

It is with great pleasure that I share with you the *NWT Small Communities Employment Strategy 2018 to 2024*. A first of its kind, this Strategy outlines how the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) will enhance employment and training opportunities and outcomes in small NWT communities.

The *NWT Small Communities Employment Strategy* is closely linked to the larger *Skills 4 Success (S4S) Strategy*, mirroring its goals and ensuring that skills development and training programs address local labour market demands. It is an important document that lays the groundwork, through actions and objectives, to building a skilled local workforce and a strong local economy.

Together, we can grow and strengthen the NWT workforce and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who participated in focus groups, interviews or the online survey. It is with your input that this Strategy has been developed and will be used to meet the needs of NWT residents.

The vision of this Strategy is *NWT residents in small communities have the knowledge, skills and attitudes for employment success*. The principles, objectives and actions you will read in the coming pages have been developed with this vision in mind.

Over the next six years, the *NWT Small Communities Employment Strategy* will direct our work to address education and employment gaps across the North and strengthen our relationships with business and industry. We've listened to what you've told us about how we can support communities to grow and thrive. We've learned from all of our partners across government, business and industry, and built on the work to date.



We look forward to implementing the Strategy and working with NWT residents to create a strong labour market with opportunities across the North.

Honourable Caroline Cochrane  
Minister of Education, Culture and Employment



Photo Credit: Skills Canada

# Introduction

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT), through the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE), develops and delivers career and employment programs and services in the Northwest Territories (NWT). ECE provides supports for job seekers, employers and community organizations through labour market agreements and training programs as well as through research and planning to meet the current and emerging needs of the NWT.

In 2015, the GNWT released its *Skills 4 Success 10-Year Strategic Framework*, highlighting labour force needs in the NWT up to the year 2030. This was followed by the *S4S, 4-Year Action Plan 2016-2020*, which provided a road map on how to improve employment success for NWT residents, close skill gaps for in-demand jobs, and effectively respond to employer and industry needs.

The S4S Framework and Action Plan build upon other key GNWT strategies, which together, provide a full continuum of education and training supports to assist NWT residents in achieving successful life and work outcomes. The GNWT's Early Childhood Framework and Action Plan, *Right from the Start*, is committed to making sure every child gets the right start towards a bright future; the *Education Renewal and Innovation Framework: Directions for Change* is focused on system-wide improvements to Kindergarten to Grade 12 education in the NWT to better serve students and ensure it keeps pace with changing needs; and S4S aims to ensure that NWT residents are positioned for success in filling jobs that are in-demand today and will be needed in the future.

As part of the *S4S, 4-Year Action Plan 2016-2020*, ECE committed to creating the first ever *NWT Small Communities Employment Strategy* (Strategy), which will enhance employment and training opportunities and outcomes in small NWT communities. For the purposes of this Strategy, the focus will be on communities outside of Yellowknife, and investments will be targeted to those communities with the greatest needs.

This Strategy focuses on the key areas addressed under the *Skills 4 Success 10-Year Framework*, which includes bridging employment and education gaps, increasing skill levels, growing the NWT workforce and improving decision making. However, the Strategy is also heavily focused on employment outcomes for residents. As such, many of the key actions are focused on the creation of jobs, whether this is through infrastructure and economic development projects, partnerships or through support for business development.



## The Need for a New Approach

Employment and employability issues cut across various federal, territorial and municipal jurisdictions. Recognizing and strengthening these connections by working together will underpin the collaborative approach of this Strategy. Through the engagement process, it was noted that the issues facing small communities are not new. A coordinated effort is needed to address systemic barriers to employment, overlap of programs and access to funding. The Strategy recognizes the need to support the foundational aspects of employment and employability as well as the tactical aspects of program delivery.

Statistics from the NWT Labour Market Forecast and Needs Assessment identifies labour market demand up to the year 2030. It is noted that many of these jobs will be outside small communities, either in the larger regional centres or in the mineral and extraction industries. The Strategy will aim to prepare community residents for those vacancies should they choose to pursue them. At the same time, it will look to explore and expand local employment opportunities for those residents who prefer to remain closer to home. This will be done by working with existing territorial, regional and local strategies and plans, and by strengthening partnerships.

## Engagement and Approaches

Three complementary research approaches were undertaken for this Strategy: listening to residents and stakeholders, learning from existing GNWT initiatives, and learning from others.

Direct feedback from engaged residents and community stakeholders was critical to the development of this Strategy. Community focus groups, key informant interviews and an online survey were undertaken, building off of the activities that were undertaken as part of the S4S initiative. Feedback received through community engagements were compiled into a “What We Heard” report, which was released in November 2017.

In addition to listening to residents and stakeholders, current territorial, regional and local strategies and frameworks were reviewed. The aim was to find themes, overlap and points of intersection among these various strategies. As well, strategies from within Canada and around the world that are aimed at increasing employment and livelihood activities in remote or rural communities were reviewed. There was also relevant material from the academic world and in reports from government and non-government organizations, both within the territories and elsewhere.



# Strategic Direction

## Vision for Success

NWT residents in small communities have the knowledge, skills and attitudes for employment success.

## Principles

The development and implementation of this Strategy is guided by the following principles:

### Integrated:

Partnerships are critical for success and strategic activities must be linked to other complimentary strategies and programs.

### Sustainable:

Cultural, environmental and financial impacts must be considered.

### Community-driven:

Success must be fostered at the community level.

### Needs-based:

Supports must be targeted toward communities with the greatest needs.

### Flexible:

A wide variety of tools, resources and programming must be used to meet changing local needs.

### Results-focused and Accountable:

Decisions, resource allocations, performance, standards and results must be accountable and transparent to all stakeholders.





# Strategic Linkage to the *Skills 4 Success Initiative*

This Strategy aligns with the goals set out in the *Skills 4 Success Strategic 10-Year Framework and 4-Year Action Plan 2016-2020*. In some cases, the goal descriptors have been slightly modified to reflect a small community employment focus.

## Strategy Goals – A Framework for Success

### 1. Increase Skill Levels through Relevant Education and Training



PROGRAMS

Skills development and programming addresses local labour market demands and builds long-term capacity in communities.

### 3. Grow the NWT Workforce through Partnerships



NWT WORKFORCE

Communities are able to build a capable local workforce that expands and capitalizes on residents' skills and retains people locally to contribute to the ongoing growth of the economy.

### 2. Bridge Education and Employment Gaps through Targeted Supports



SUPPORTS

NWT residents in communities access supports and incentives that are relevant, effective and aligned with local labour market needs.

### 4. Improve Decision-making with Relevant Labour Market Information



INFORMATION

Students, teachers, parents, job seekers, employers, partners, and career development practitioners have easy access to relevant, accurate and timely labour market information to make informed career and business decisions.



# Overview

## Education and Training

The NWT Labour Market Forecast and Needs Assessment inform us that the majority of future jobs will require high school completion and higher education.

Children start in the primary system as a cohort. As our youth progress through the education system, there are anticipated exit points: high school, post-secondary, graduate, post-graduate. At each exit point, the cohort gets smaller, creating a pyramid<sup>1</sup> of participation. However, not all students exit at these points, as graduation rates in the NWT are consistently lower than the rest of Canada. Risk factors for dropping out of school are higher for boys, Indigenous youth and those in small communities<sup>2</sup>.

In order to have the workforce that is required for the future, we need early interventions to ensure youth finish high school, and also graduate with skills, knowledge and attitudes that will enable them to pursue higher education and skills development to enter the workforce.

There is a tendency to think of education and training as a youth issue; however, the concept of life-long learning has been adopted as a framework for adults. Life-long learning offers a means to adapt to the constantly evolving technological nature of work. The foundation of life-long learning is literacy. Literacy incorporates not just the written word, but also essential skills such as numeracy and problem solving.

As part of the engagement process, the need for life skills, numeracy skills, literacy skills and basic workplace etiquette were noted by many community residents. Foundational skills programming that includes literacy and embedded essential skills has been incorporated into this Strategy, as it must be acquired before entering the workforce or undertaking training opportunities to increase employability.

<sup>1</sup> Reference Labour Market Forecast and Needs Assessment

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/sites/www.ece.gov.nt.ca/files/resources/fact\\_sheet\\_-\\_graduation\\_rates\\_in\\_the\\_nwt\\_-\\_updated\\_november\\_2016.pdf](https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/sites/www.ece.gov.nt.ca/files/resources/fact_sheet_-_graduation_rates_in_the_nwt_-_updated_november_2016.pdf)



Career and life skills training is especially needed at the middle school and high school levels. Many young people finish high school only to discover they need to upgrade their courses or marks for acceptance into post-secondary education programs. There is a need for dedicated resources to advise students on educational pathways leading to a career of their choice, and to keep youth motivated and engaged in learning and planning for their future.

There are initiatives already underway to support the education and training needs of residents, including youth. These include:

- ***Education Renewal and Innovation Framework: Directions for Change***

The *Education Renewal Framework: Directions for Change* (2013) and the three-year rolling Action Plan directly address the underlying causes for poor student achievement such as wellness, safety and issues of disengagement with school. The Plan supports NWT students to complete school and successfully engage in post-secondary learning, employment opportunities and life.

- ***Apprenticeship, Trades and Occupational Certification (ATOC) Strategy***

The *ATOC Strategy* outlines how the GNWT will improve training, apprenticeship and certification opportunities in skilled trades and industrial occupations across the NWT, which will contribute to filling the gaps in the NWT labour market. As part of this Strategy, particular focus is placed on identifying and communicating pathways for youth and students to enter the skilled trades.

While there are many formal approaches to learning, it is important to note that some of the best learning happens informally, in the home, on the land and in the community. Experiential learning is at the heart of adult education principles.





To maximize success, it is important to maintain momentum and build on key initiatives that support enhancing employment and the economy. These include:

- ***NWT Economic Opportunities Strategy and Implementation Plan (2013)***

The *NWT Economic Opportunities Strategy* helps to guide the development of economic potential in all regions of the NWT, strengthening and diversifying the NWT's economy to result in an enhanced quality of life for all NWT residents. The Strategy highlights that vibrant, healthy, well-educated NWT residents contribute to economic growth and the traditional economy is essential to the NWT's well-being.

- ***NWT Mineral Development Strategy and Implementation Plan (2014-2019)***

The *NWT Mineral Development Strategy* aims to realize the potential of mineral resources and ensure lasting prosperity for NWT residents and communities. Enhancing Indigenous engagement and community capacity building is a key element to build community capacity and develop an educated, trained and readily available northern workforce.

- ***Tourism 2020: Opening Our Spectacular Home to the World (2016)***

A core component of the *Tourism 2020 Strategy* is the importance of the tourism sector. The Strategy highlights the linkages and dependence on a partnership with ECE for the tourism training needed to build a strong, skilled, local tourism workforce.

In addition to the large-scale strategies noted above, additional work has been done or is in the process of being developed on other sectors, including agriculture, commercial fishing, manufacturing and forestry. A strategy for employment in small communities must be flexible to support the varying economic strategies that exist or will be introduced in the future.

Moving forward, there are many infrastructure projects that will be undertaken in communities. Projects include upgrades to water treatment facilities, road improvements and new multi-use recreational facilities. These projects are made possible through federal and territorial funding, and it is important that partnerships are established to maximize employment in the completion of infrastructure projects.



Photo Credit: Paddlefest

## Social

The social fabric of small communities is their strength. Close family ties and a strong sense of community belonging are enduring characteristics of small communities. These communities evoke a sense of “home” for their residents; and home sickness, for many, when not in the community. The strength and pull of a tightly woven community cannot be understated or underestimated when residents make choices around employment and education.

In some communities, drug and alcohol abuse are loosening the once strong social fabric. Mental illness is taking a heavy toll on communities. A lack of adequate housing and childcare further stretches communities as they try to support their residents, often with limited resources.

The social aspect of employment is the foundation upon which successful outcomes will be forged. This foundational work is being addressed through the following:

- ***Northwest Territories Community Wellness Initiatives***  
The *Community Wellness Initiative* program is focused on healthy child and youth development, mental health and addictions, healthy living and disease prevention. The mental health area has a strong emphasis on youth programming, cultural identity and traditional values to support mental wellness in the NWT. The focus on wellness speaks to the need to build healthy communities in tandem with preparing residents for training and jobs.
- ***NWT Housing Corporation Strategic Renewal (2017)***  
From December 2016 through February 2017, the NWT Housing Corporation (NWT HC) conducted a housing engagement survey soliciting broad, wide-ranging input from residents and stakeholders. This feedback is helping to focus a review of NWT HC programs, services, initiatives, policies and guidelines in order to decrease barriers in accessing programs and services, and to renew the Strategic Plan. These actions will support economic opportunities that will benefit the territory and residents.

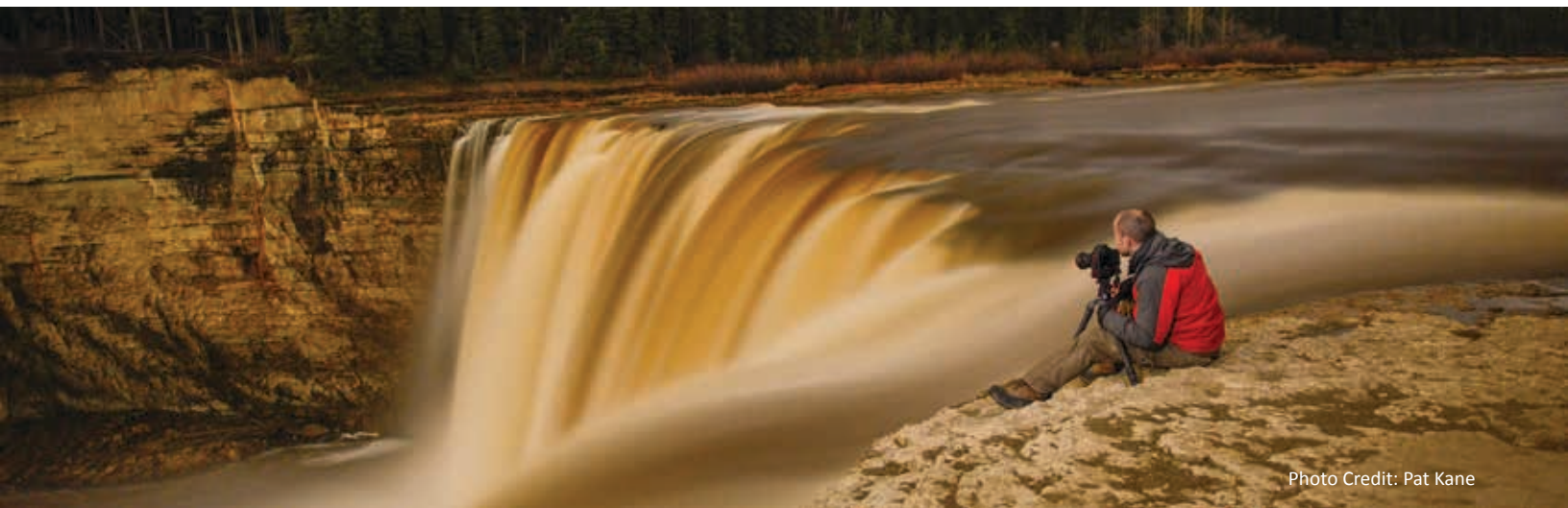


Photo Credit: Pat Kane

- ***Territorial Anti-Poverty Action Plan,***

The *Territorial Anti-Poverty Action Plan* provides funding to community-based partners, supporting community priorities for wellness and developing additional options for action. The Action Plan was the GNWT’s response to reducing poverty in the NWT. Departments sharing in the Action Plan include: ECE; Health and Social Services (HSS); NWT Housing Corporation; Industry, Tourism and Investment (ITI); Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA); and the Department of Justice (DOJ).

- ***Mind and Spirit Mental Health and Addictions Strategic Framework***

The *Mental Health and Addictions Strategic Framework* builds on existing strengths of connectedness to culture and community, which are some of the strongest preventive foundations against mental health crisis and substance abuse in our territory. Grounded in a population-health approach, the Framework sets the direction and philosophies for care. Connected to this Framework are the following strategic plans: a *Child and Youth Mental Wellness Action Plan*, a *Mental Health Action Plan*, and an *Addictions Recovery Action Plan*.

- ***Right from the Start Early Childhood Development Framework and Action Plan***

The *Right from the Start Framework and Action Plan* reflects the GNWT’s commitment to the future success of our most important resource, our children. *Right from the Start* guides investments in early childhood development programs and services by both ECE and HSS.



## Communication and Coordination

All levels of government must work together to improve employment success for NWT residents in communities by providing programs and supports that directly address local education and training needs, and economic realities.

Existing partnerships exist between GNWT departments, the federal government, Indigenous governments, Aurora College, the NWT Association of Communities (NWTAC), Local Government Administrators of the NWT (LGANT), NWT business and industry sector, and local entrepreneurs; however, there is still room to enhance these partnerships.

Regional training partnerships are also an existing vehicle that can be used to encourage collaboration, especially to identify and offer relevant training. There are also a number of regional community interagency groups that can work towards improving communication and targeting resources. Through collaboration, supports can be allocated to those in transition as well as to ensure that there are jobs available at the end of the training cycle through job placements.

It is important to ensure that efforts are not duplicated when working with communities. Some communities have labour market or economic plans that have been created and approved by their respective leadership, and these plans must be considered in determining programs and initiatives that will be offered in communities.

Meanwhile, other communities are without existing plans to guide the delivery of programs and initiatives. Moving forward, there is an opportunity to support communities with community-based labour market planning. The creation of community labour market plans will be an important step towards identifying what is needed at the community level.

The need to communicate with local communities and partners, using appropriate tools and technologies, is critical to enhancing employment and training opportunities and outcomes in communities. The development of a comprehensive communications plan is a critical component to increase awareness of labour market information and programs.





# Action Plan

The *Skills 4 Success Strategic Framework* has identified four goals that offer practical, made in the NWT solutions aimed at closing education and employment gaps, and addressing recruitment and retention challenges. This *Small Communities Employment Strategy* has adopted the *Skills 4 Success* goals, with a view to small community training and employment. Objectives and key actions have been added under each goal to provide a roadmap of how we will meet these goal areas.



PROGRAMS

## Goal 1: Increase Skill Levels through Relevant Education and Training

### Objectives

- 1.1. Provide skills development and training programs that address identified labour market needs.
- 1.2. Increase capacity to deliver community-based training.

### Key Actions

- Expand ECE programming to support residents with skills training and self-employment.
- Partner with communities to support initiatives and projects identified in community labour market development plans.
- Increase the number or sites using distance education technologies to increase access to education and training opportunities.
- Support communities in providing train-the-trainer programs so that education and training programs can be facilitated at the community level.



Photo Credit: Aurora College



SUPPORTS

## Goal 2: Bridge Education and Employment Gaps through Targeted Supports

### Objectives

- 2.1. Increase labour market participation by removing barriers to employment.
- 2.2. Prepare residents for future job opportunities that meet regional and local needs.
- 2.3. Support youth in pursuing education and skills development programs that lead to NWT occupations in demand.

### Key Actions

- Support the establishment of child and youth counsellor positions into schools and communities to focus on addressing health and risk factors that make it difficult for people to attain sustainable employment.
- Support the creation of new childcare spaces and programs in communities.
- Collaborate with partners to enhance and deliver foundational skills programming in communities.
- Improve career development services by introducing a Career Development Officer (CDO) training program, revising ECE programming and streamlining application processes to support occupations in demand.
- Establish career and education advisor positions to guide students in grades 8-12 and youth, aged 18-24, toward success in occupations in demand.
- Invest in programs and initiatives to engage youth in the labour market through education, training and work experience.



NWT  
WORKFORCE

### Goal 3:

## Grow the NWT Workforce through Partnerships

### Objectives

- 3.1. Support territorial/regional strategies and local-based labour market plans that encourage sustainable employment.
- 3.2. Improve communication on the suite of skills development and training programs available to communities and their residents.

### Key Actions

- Partner with communities to support the development of community labour market development plans.
- Enhance ECE programming by introducing a Job Creation Partnerships funding stream to support the creation of employment opportunities in communities.
- Integrate employment and training supports into the development and implementation of community infrastructure and economic development projects.
- Develop a comprehensive communications plan to increase awareness of labour market information and programs.
- Develop an inventory of GNWT funded small community employment supports to improve awareness of available resources.



INFORMATION

**Goal 4:**  
**Improve Decision-making with Relevant Labour Market Information**

**Objectives**

- 4.1 Utilize labour market information to partner effectively with employers, training providers, communities and regional training partnerships.
- 4.2 Communicate labour market information to NWT residents to support them in making career and education decisions.

**Key Actions**

- Introduce an online tool to assist students, teachers, parents, job seekers, employers, partners, career development practitioners and adults in academic and career development planning and goal setting.
- Integrate the NWT Labour Market Forecast and Needs Assessment information into the school system and adult career development services to support career and education decision-making.



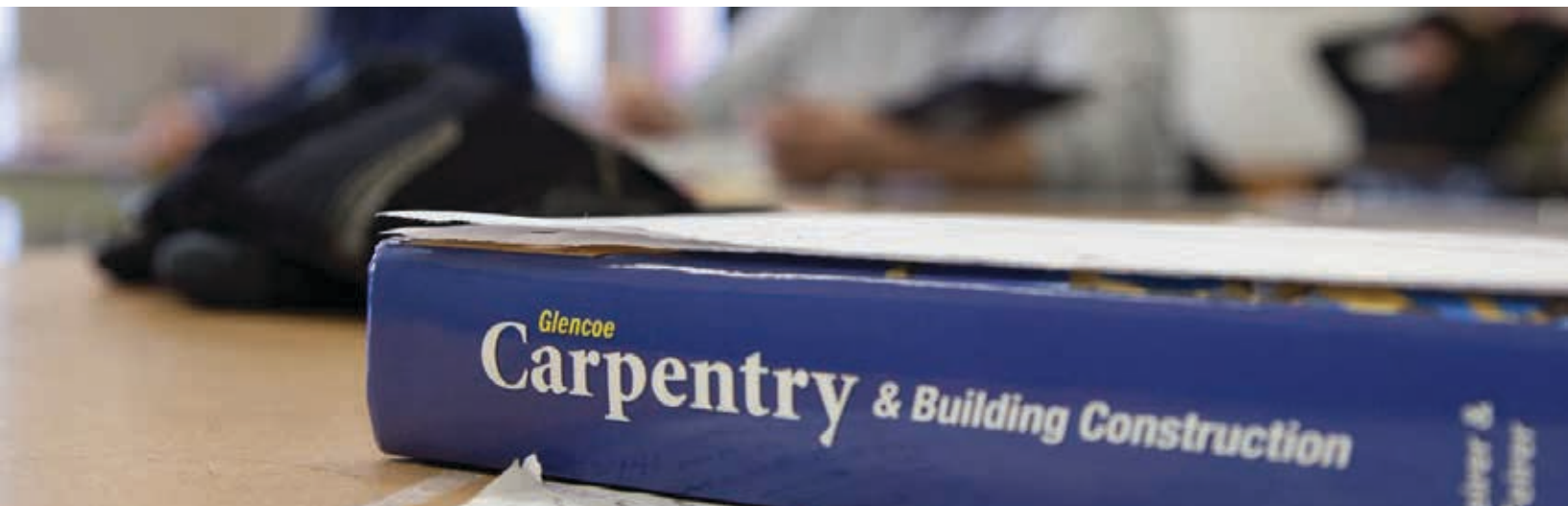


# Performance Measurement Plan

The *Small Communities Employment Strategy 2018 to 2024* Performance Measurement Plan (PMP) provides the roadmap for measuring the effectiveness of the GNWT’s efforts to enhance employment and training opportunities and outcomes in the NWT. A PMP supports accountability between the GNWT, partners, stakeholders and the communities that the Strategy serves.

Through the following PMP, ECE will continually assess and measure the effectiveness of the Strategy to ensure it meets its stated objectives. Performance measures provide useful information to assess the effectiveness of GNWT actions, inform potential changes going forward, and ensure the Strategy and the GNWT’s key activities remain responsive to the needs of the labour market.

Economic activities and performance measurement in the NWT continue to evolve. ECE will utilize performance measurement to inform our actions to build our workforce and meet the needs of businesses and industry.



**Goal 1: Increase Skill Levels through Relevant Education and Training**

Objectives	Performance Measure(s)	Data Source	Data Collection Responsibility
1.1. Provide skills development and training programs that address identified labour market needs.	Number of skills development and training interventions delivered	Administrative Data	ECE
1.2. Increase capacity to deliver community-based training.	Number and type of community-based training programs offered  Number of communities offering training programs delivered by a local trainer	Administrative Data	ECE

**Goal 2: Bridge Education and Employment Gaps through Targeted Supports**

Objectives	Performance Measure(s)	Data Source	Data Collection Responsibility
2.1. Increase labour market participation by removing barriers to employment.	NWT labour force participation rate in communities  NWT employment rate in communities	NWT Bureau of Statistics	ECE
2.2. Prepare residents for future job opportunities that meet regional and local needs.	Number of individuals who report that they are better prepared for employment  Number of individuals who enhanced skills through job readiness training	Interview or survey of stakeholders and residents  Administrative Data	ECE
2.3. Support youth in pursuing education and skills development programs that lead to NWT occupations in demand.	Percent of students in communities enrolled in education and skills development programs that relate to NWT occupations in demand  Percent of students who link their academic and career decisions to NWT labour market information	Administrative Data	ECE



### Goal 3: Grow the NWT Workforce through Partnerships

Objectives	Performance Measure(s)	Data Source	Data Collection Responsibility
3.1. Support territorial/regional strategies and local-based labour market plans that encourage sustainable employment.	<p>Number of communities with community labour market development plans</p> <p>Number of individuals who participated in strategic infrastructure and economic development projects as a result of integrating ECE training and employment supports</p> <p>Number of jobs created in communities as a result of ECE program funding</p>	Administrative Data	ECE
3.2. Improve communication on the suite of skills development and training programs available to communities and their residents.	<p>Number and type of promotional tools introduced to raise awareness of labour market information, programs and resources among partners, employers, job seekers and the general public</p> <p>Number and type of engagements completed with partners, employers, job seekers and the general public</p>	Administrative Data	ECE

### Goal 4: Improve Decision-making with Relevant Labour Market Information

Objectives	Performance Measure(s)	Data Source	Data Collection Responsibility
4.1 Utilize labour market information to partner effectively with employers, training providers, communities and regional training partnerships.	Percent of programs and initiatives delivered in communities through partnerships that support NWT occupations in demand or locally identified needs	Administrative Data	ECE
4.2 Communicate labour market information to NWT residents to support them in making career and education decisions.	<p>Implementation of a labour market information (LMI) portal</p> <p>Number and type of registered users of LMI portal</p> <p>Number of visits to LMI portal</p> <p>Number of schools in communities that use LMI in career and program planning</p>	Administrative Data	ECE





# Working Together *for Improved Opportunities and Outcomes*

Partnerships are essential to improving employment outcomes in the NWT. In developing the Strategy, ECE met with a range of stakeholders to gather their ideas and perspectives on ways to enhance employment and training opportunities and outcomes in the NWT.

The GNWT is committed to working with partners and stakeholders, including Indigenous governments, communities (leadership and staff), employers, residents, GNWT departments, and Aurora College.

As we move forward, we will continue to listen to our partners and stakeholders, learn and build from other GNWT initiatives, and research and review the best practices of other jurisdictions.



If you would like this information in another official language, call us.

English

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Si vous voulez ces informations dans une autre langue officielle, contactez-nous.

French

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Kĭspin ki nitawihtĭn ē nĭhiyawihk ōma ācimōwin, tipwāsinān.

Cree

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Tłjchq yatı k'èè. Dı wegodı newq dè, gots'ō gonede.

Tłjchq

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ʔerihł'ís Dēne Sųłiné yatı t'a huts'elkēr xa beyáyatı theʔa ʔat'e, nuwe ts'ēn yółł.

Chipewyan

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Edı gondı dehgháh got'ıe zhatıé k'èè edat'éh enahddhę nıde naxets'é edahlı.

South Slavey

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K'áhshó got'ıne xadā k'e hederı ʔedjłht'é yerııwę nıde dúle.

North Slavey

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Jii gwandak izhii ginjik vat'atr'ijahch'uu zhit yinothtan jı', diits'at ginohkhii.

Gwich'in

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Uvanittuaq ilitchurisukupku Inuvialuktun, ququaqłuta.

Inuvialuktun

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Ć'bdł ııı'bbΔ' ΛrLJΔr' Δıbııı'ııı'ııı'ııı', Δ'ııı'ııı' Δ'ııı'ııı'ııı'ııı'.

Inuktitut

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Hapkua titiqqat pijumagupkit Inuinnaqtun, uvaptinnut hivajarlutit.

Inuinnaqtun

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Aboriginal Languages Secretariat: 867-767-9346 ext. 71037

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