



UPDATE

NWT Post-Secondary Education Vision Survey

June 2019

In the fall of 2018, the GNWT announced it would transform Aurora College into a polytechnic university. At the same time, the GNWT is developing legislation to standardize post-secondary education in the territory. To guide and support these significant initiatives and all of our continued work in this area, we are developing a NWT Post-Secondary Education Framework.

The NWT Post-Secondary Education Framework, including vision, is expected to be released in August 2019.

To build a vision, we needed to know what northerners think, believe and want when it comes to post-secondary education. Engagement with the public, stakeholders and Indigenous governments was conducted through a survey that was open from March 4 to April 28, 2019. The survey included the following questions:

1. In your opinion, what are the potential benefits of getting a post-secondary education inside the NWT?
2. Building on our strengths, what program or training opportunities should be offered by post-secondary institutions inside the NWT?
3. What research topics do you feel should be a priority for post-secondary institutions in the NWT?
4. In your opinion, what challenges do post-secondary institutions face in delivering quality education programs inside the NWT?
5. In your opinion, what are the benefits of getting a post-secondary education outside the NWT?
6. What kinds of supports are needed to ensure residents can be successful in their post-secondary education, both inside and outside the territory?
7. Do you have any other ideas you would like to share regarding post-secondary education, training or research?

Members of the public and stakeholders could submit the survey online, on paper or online with the assistance of a Government Services Officer and on paper or online with assistance from staff at any ECE Regional Service Centre. Indigenous governments were given the additional option of completing the survey through direct engagement with staff from ECE.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION SPEAKER SERIES

A public speaker series was designed to increase public discussion around the future of our post-secondary education system and inspire survey submissions by members of the public.

A total of nine speaking events were held across Yellowknife, Fort Smith and Inuvik. Organizations that hosted events as part of the public speaker series included Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning, University of Alberta North, Hotì ts'eeda, NWT Chamber of Commerce, Collège nordique francophone and Aurora College.

Video recordings of most public speaker series events were posted online for the duration of the survey period to allow access to residents that were unable to attend the events in-person.

COMMUNICATIONS

Efforts were made to ensure residents from all communities in the NWT were aware of the survey and able to contribute to the establishment of a vision and goals for post-secondary education. The following promotional activities were used to inform and remind all residents of the opportunity to participate in the survey:

- A postcard was mailed to all 19,932 households and business in the territory
- Weekly advertisements in territorial newspaper (News North)
- Weekly advertisements in French territorial newspaper (L'Aquilon)
- Announced at all Speaker Series events
- Announced in a Minister's Statement during Winter Session of Legislative Assembly
- Facebook posts on GNWT and ECE pages
- Email directly to all Student Financial Assistance recipients
- Email directly to all Aurora College staff and students
- Email to JK – 12 staff and educators through Superintendents of Education
- ECE Service Centres and Government Service Offices promoted survey
- Indigenous Governments were contacted directly with offer to do the survey online, in person or by telephone.

SURVEY RESPONSE

There were a total of 743 survey submissions received including submissions by Indigenous governments. The following information provides some background of those who submitted a survey response.

PLEASE NOTE: Participants were not required to answer all survey questions and some survey data presented has been combined to ensure anonymity of participants.

Steps were taken to ensure participation by residents in all regions of the NWT. The data in **Table 1** reveal there were survey submissions from all regions of the NWT. As expected, the number of submissions is highest in regions where the population is greatest and where there are existing Aurora College campuses, namely North Slave, South Slave and Beaufort Delta.

Table 1 – Survey Participant by Region

NWT Region	Count	Percentage of
		Total
North Slave	363	49%
South Slave	143	19%
Beaufort Delta	84	11%
Dehcho	26	3%
Sahtu	26	3%
Outside NWT or not stated	101	14%
Total	743	100%

Table 2 – Survey Participant by Age Group

Age Group	Count	Percentage of Total
14 and under	4	1%
15-19	35	5%
20-29	145	20%
30-39	132	18%
40-49	143	19%
50-59	107	14%
60-69	64	9%
70 and over	17	2%
Not stated	96	13%
Total	743	100%

Steps were taken to ensure participation by residents in a variety of age groups. There was particular attention paid to those under the age of 29 given the importance of this age group to the future labour market in the NWT.

The data in **Table 2** reveals a good distribution of responses across all age groups. The response rate of those under 29 years old is encouraging and is anticipated to greatly benefit development of the vision and goals that will guide the post-secondary education sector moving forward.

By engaging directly with Indigenous governments, steps were taken to ensure participation by Indigenous residents. The data in **Table 3** reveals that nearly one third of those who submitted a survey self-identify as Indigenous.

Table 3 – Proportion of Indigenous Participants

Status	Count	Percentage of Total
Indigenous	209	28%
Non-Indigenous	397	53%
Not stated	137	18%
Total	743	100%

A person's level of educational attainment suggests their level of experience as a student in the post-secondary education system. Efforts were made to ensure wide ranging input from varying types and levels of post-secondary education experience to gain different perspectives.

Table 4 reveals that approximately three quarters of all survey participants have had some experience with post-secondary education. There was also input from a small number of participants that do not have experience which has added an important voice to the responses.

Table 4 – Level of Educational Attainment of Participants

Education Attainment	Count	Percentage of Total
University degree	374	50%
College certificate or diploma	120	16%
Some college and university	89	12%
High school diploma	37	5%
Less than grade 9	9	1%
Some high school	26	3%
Not stated	88	12%
Total	743	100%

Table 5 – Survey Participant Experience with Post-Secondary Education Inside the NWT

Experience with PSE Inside NWT	Count	Percentage of Total
Yes	297	40%
No	359	48%
Not stated	87	12%
Total	743	100%

The data in **Table 5** reveals that approximately half of all survey participants have post-secondary education experience inside the NWT. The data in **Table 6** reveals that more than three quarters of survey participants have post-secondary education experience outside the NWT. Together this indicates a good mix between those with post-secondary education experience inside and outside the territory, as well 34% of survey participants reported experience with both and may be able to provide a comparison.

Table 6 – Survey Participant Experience with Post-Secondary Education Outside the NWT

Experience with PSE Outside NWT	Count	Percentage of Total
Yes	580	78%
No	83	11%
Not stated	80	11%
Total	743	100%

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

The survey collected qualitative data – with survey participants writing responses to questions rather than tick boxes. This type of qualitative data takes a little longer to analyze because we had to read every answer to every question and then analyze the data and put it into thematic groups. This process continues.

The survey data will be the foundation of the vision and post-secondary education objectives. In addition to the data, the GNWT will review other programs and initiatives that are related to post-secondary education. For example, the Skills 4 Success Framework and the Education Renewal Initiative will provide insight into how a post-secondary education vision can support education and economic development priorities more broadly.

While the survey submissions continue to be analyzed, here are some of the themes emerging:

- Youth need to be inspired which would increase the number of residents accessing post-secondary education opportunities.
- The transition into post-secondary education can be challenging for many students and greater support is needed.
- It is important to continue supporting access to a wide range of post-secondary education options both here in the north and at institutions across the rest of Canada.
- Many residents see the benefits of having more post-secondary education options that are close to home so they can be closer to support from family and friends.
- There is interest in expanding access to programs that are relevant to the north and that increase employment opportunities for northerners.
- For many, post-secondary education has been more than an opportunity to develop new skills, it has exposed them to new ideas and viewpoints that helped shape the rest of their lives.

As the analysis of this information continues it will be the foundation of a clear vision statement that will guide the development and growth of the post-secondary education system in the NWT. The vision will be supported by a set of goals that will shape how the GNWT directs future investments in post-secondary education.

NEXT STEPS

- The GNWT will soon engage Members of the Legislative Assembly to gain their input on a draft NWT Post-Secondary Education Framework.
- The NWT Post-Secondary Education Framework will be released publically in August 2019.
- Following release of the NWT Post-Secondary Education Framework, the GNWT will work with post-secondary education stakeholders to implement the vision and goals through an ongoing process of engagement.
- With the vision and goals as a guide, Aurora College will begin a strategic planning exercise to help shape its transformation to a polytechnic university. This will include further engagement with key stakeholders and Indigenous governments.
- Aurora College will develop an implementation plan that combines the strategic plan and commitments made in the Government Response to the Findings and Recommendations of the Aurora College Foundational Review.