

Future in Focus

Atlantic Career Development Framework for Public Education: 2015-2020

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword.....	1
Why a Career Development Framework?	1
The Framework’s Evolution	2
Vision	3
Guiding Principles	4
Goals	4
Accountability	9

Atlantic Career Development Framework for Public Education: 2015-2020

Foreword

The Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training (CAMET) is pleased to launch Future in Focus – Atlantic Career Development Framework for Public Education: 2015-2020. This document outlines the policy direction and goals that ministers will pursue over the next five years to promote career planning and development in the public school systems of the Atlantic provinces.

The implementation of the goals set out in this framework will be the responsibility of each province. Provinces will introduce actions to meet the needs of their student population. The framework is a demonstration of the commitment made by each minister to achieve excellence in career planning and development in Atlantic Canada while respecting the unique needs and priorities of each province.

The Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training (CAMET) is raising the bar for career development in Canada. As regular changes occur in the economy, technology, and population demographics, the Atlantic provinces must continue to monitor labour demands in relation to the skilled labour requirements. Jurisdictions need to be aware of upcoming labour demands and take steps early on to ensure a sufficient supply of people with the competencies necessary to fill these demand requirements. Career development is a proven tool to better prepare citizens to be intentional lifelong learners and successful workers. These are qualities needed for the socio-economic health of individuals, communities and provinces. Accordingly, the Atlantic ministers are strengthening career development in their schools as a strategic investment that will allow youth to take advantage of and create career opportunities at home.

Why a Career Development Framework?

Career development is the lifelong process of managing learning (formal and informal), work (paid and unpaid), and transitions in order to move toward one's preferred future. Ideally, career development programs, services and supports start early and build to ensure that Atlantic Canadians have the critical knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to effectively navigate educational and employment choices, transitions and progression.

The economic and human imperative for career development is compelling and the evidence-based demonstrating return on public sector investment is growing. Career development programs, services and supports reduce high school drop-out rates (Kotamaraju, 2011), increase student academic achievement, particularly in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) (SAS, 2012), provide more motivated and intentional learners (Hughes, 2004, Belfield, Levin and Rosen, 2012), reduce demand for social programs and improve the standard of living in urban and rural communities (Hughes, 2004).

Career development programs, services and supports in public schools include the application of age-appropriate classroom-based career education, experiential exploration of post-secondary and work options, timely career and labour market information, and guidance to students. These programs, services and supports can be provided in a variety of ways by a range of educators and career development practitioners across jurisdictions.

The Atlantic provinces already have a strong foundation of career development programs, services and supports from which to build. This framework promotes quality and cohesion across the provinces, while supporting diversity in implementation to reflect the unique needs and realities in each jurisdiction. It is intended to inform provincial policies and practices and encourage collaboration and partnership within and across provinces.

The Framework's Evolution

In 2013, CAMET contracted the Canadian Career Development Foundation (CCDF) to conduct a comprehensive environmental scan and analysis to examine the breadth, depth, capacity and consistency of current career development programs, services and supports for public school students in the Atlantic region. Based on this and the review of national/international best practices, six recommendations intended to strengthen career education across the region were accepted by the Atlantic ministers of public education and post-secondary education and training. The full report, *Career Education in Atlantic Canada: Research and Recommendations*, is accessible at www.camet-camef.ca. The first recommendation was to develop and publish an Atlantic Career Development Framework for Public Education. Other recommendations included to:

- ***Provide Training and Professional Learning for Educators and Administrators***
Establish a tailored needs-based approach so that teachers have basic career and labour market awareness, career educators and guidance counsellors have specialized training reflective of the Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners, and administrators understand the role of career education within their broader purview.

- Integrate Career Education Early***

Build a developmental approach to career education that engages students early and provides age-appropriate opportunities for targeted skill development, experiential learning/exposure and career planning. It was recommended that provinces infuse career/labour market themes across subjects and integrate career development education into the high school program.
- Follow through to Implementation***

It was recommended that each Atlantic province build from this Atlantic Career Development Framework for Public Education to create regionally tailored implementation plans that are consistent with the Atlantic vision and meet common standards, but also reflect local priorities, needs and realities. These plans will include accountability structures.
- Engage with Key Stakeholders***

To increase student engagement, it was recommended that the Atlantic provinces integrate career experiences/exposure programming across the curriculum and within career development courses. Students should have multiple opportunities for experiential/community-based learning (CBL).
- Evaluate for Accountability, Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement***

Targeted evaluation will be adopted as a priority and the results reviewed on an ongoing basis to guide and refine planning and delivery. It is critical that the Atlantic provinces have access to expertise and resources required to develop and oversee the implementation of the evaluation plan.

These recommendations have informed the vision, guiding principles, goals and accountability measures articulated in this framework. This framework has been developed through the collaborative efforts of provincial senior officials and program specialists. It builds on the effective career development practice data from each Atlantic province and other jurisdictions.

Vision

Every student in Atlantic Canada's public schools will access quality career development programs, services and supports delivered by educators with the career development competencies needed to support their roles. Career development programming will include the experiential learning, supports, information and instruction students need to develop life-building skills and resilience, to be intentional learners, to proactively manage career choices and transitions and to be architects of their preferred futures.

Guiding Principles

Career development policy and programming in the Atlantic provinces will be guided by the following principles:

- All learning and work has value.
- High quality, developmentally appropriate, evidence-based career development programs, services and supports will be accessible to all public school students in K-12.
- Career development in schools is fundamentally enhanced if students have access to multiple experiential learning opportunities from K-12, including direct exposure to diverse post-secondary and work options.
- Career development programs, services and supports will be inclusive and respectful of student diversity, recognizing that students may need targeted career development programming to address their unique learning and personal needs.
- Individuals who deliver and/or oversee career development programs, services and/or supports in public education require appropriate professional learning.
- Provinces within Atlantic Canada and boards/districts within each province seek to establish common high standards for career development while ensuring flexibility to develop career development approaches to respond to the unique realities of their student populations, educational systems, labour markets, and communities.
- The Atlantic provinces are committed to targeted evaluation for quality assurance and accountability in order to support career development in public education.
- Each Atlantic province is committed to collaborating across provincial governments, government departments within provinces, schools and post-secondary institutions. Provinces are committed to engaging key stakeholders including industry, students, families, and communities in the development, delivery, evaluation and continuous improvement of career development in public education.

Goals

This framework reflects a commitment by the Atlantic provinces to strengthen the provision of career development in public schools. It articulates common goals endorsed by all Atlantic provinces while, at the same time, respecting the need for each province to develop initiatives that reflect both the spirit of these common goals and the unique needs, strengths and realities of each province.

The goals for the framework are organized into three categories: Programs, Students, and Educators.

The Atlantic provinces are committed to:

Programs

Goal 1: Support career development using a coordinated whole school approach, organized by career development themes.

Elaboration:

Career development is about helping students see the connections between their learning in school and their lives beyond school—students become more engaged with learning if they are thinking about and preparing for the next steps in their lives. Students who learn strategies for planning and managing their learning and career pathways at school and beyond will have skills they can apply throughout life. The intent is that schools provide high-quality, school-wide, inclusive, culturally responsive career development programs, integrating career development themes as appropriate into subject areas and extracurricular activities. A whole school approach involves planning, co-ordination, and buy-in from staff to embed career development into all aspects of learning and school life. Seeing the connections between what they are learning and their career development helps students to build self-awareness and broaden their horizons of the kinds of learning and work that may be possible. Through planned career development learning, students develop and enhance the skills they need to navigate learning and work strategically and successfully, ensuring their choices and actions are guided by what’s really important to them. Building knowledge, skills, and attitudes through a cohesive career development journey provides a powerful and motivating context for learning. Schools value the key role of families and other community partners in supporting career development and encourage their active engagement and involvement in career development activities.

Goal 2: Implement age-appropriate career development programs, services or supports.

Elaboration:

Effective career development is age-appropriate, future-focused, and personalised. A comprehensive approach provides an array of experiences and supports tailored to the students’ stage of development and responsive to individual interests, strengths, needs, circumstances, and aspirations. The *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs*¹ provides the framework for age-appropriate development of career management competencies pertaining to personal management, learning and work exploration, and life/work building. Students engage in relevant, challenging, inquiry-based learning experiences around key questions in the career development process—*Who am I? What are my opportunities? Who do I want to become? What is my plan for achieving my goals?* Exploring these questions along the learning continuum encourages students to deepen self-awareness, consider opportunities for learning and future work options, set short-term and long-term goals, and make plans for achieving their goals and managing key transitions. Students increase awareness of their strengths, interests, and preferences by exploring choices in school and reflecting on how those choices might provide future opportunities. As they progress through the grades, students have multiple and varied opportunities through awareness,

¹ The *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs*. <http://www.blueprint4life.ca/blueprint/>.

exploration, exposure, experience, and reflection to develop and apply career management knowledge and skills. Beyond a range of career exploration and planning activities in the classroom, participation in extracurricular and community-related activities helps students to enhance their competencies. As they reflect on how their abilities, attributes, values, and passions translate into career interests, students benefit from contact with people in post-secondary or doing jobs of interest and real exposure to campuses and workplaces.

Students

Goal 3: Promote career development as an integral part of student learning.

Elaboration:

The intent is to position career development as part of every school's mission, not as an add-on or by-product of the school's program, but as a priority, recognized as such by administrators, teachers, counsellors, students, parents/caregivers, and other education partners. As noted previously, "the economic and human imperative for career development is compelling." Career development can support students to be intentional, strategic, motivated learners and workers, who can make meaning by connecting what they are learning to their lives beyond the classroom. It can make a definitive difference in young people's lives and contribute to critical educational, social, and economic outcomes. When families, teachers, and other stakeholders understand its benefits for both students and the communities in which they live, they are more likely to view career development as an inherent and valuable element of the school program. Government has an important role in signalling the importance of this crucial area.

Career management skills are essential in today's knowledge economy. We cannot be sure exactly what challenges tomorrow's evolving global economy will pose, what career possibilities it will offer. In our current world of uncertainty and constant change, it is crucial to equip our students with resiliency skills so they can positively adapt, despite adversity, across their lifetimes. If we can communicate our future-focused vision for career development and engage the support of key partners in pursuing common goals, then families and communities can feel confident that students will graduate with a career direction and the career development competencies they will need to respond flexibly to future challenges and opportunities and changing circumstances across their lifetime.

Goal 4: Ensure that each student graduates with a personal career plan.

Elaboration:

The intent is that students graduate with a comprehensive career and transition plan that is clear, meaningful, realistic, and achievable. The plan would support students through their transitions and course selections in school and map out their plans for beyond high school. Students would have ongoing opportunities to record relevant in-school and out-of-school experiences; to further explore and reflect on their interests, strengths, skills, aptitudes, and achievements; and to assess their postsecondary training/education/career options and aspirations. In their plan, students would document their growth and personal development, experiential learning, and the transferable skills they

are developing. Creating, maintaining, reviewing, and sharing a coherent personal plan would help students to make thoughtful, informed, and appropriate decisions regarding their goals and their pathways through and beyond school. The plan would have a particular focus on making successful transitions through their school years and managing the transition to their initial postsecondary destination, whether in apprenticeship training, college, community living, university, or the workplace. The vision is that graduates will be prepared for their next step, confident that their plan reflects intentionality, aware of what to expect in post-secondary training/education and the workplace and what financial plan they need for this life-changing transition. Graduates will be well equipped to move toward achievement of their goals and confident in their ability to revise or adapt their career plan as necessary as they and the world around them change.

Goal 5: Provide multiple opportunities for students to engage in community-based/experiential learning.

Elaboration:

The intent is that career development programs include a wide range of community-based/experiential components that bring the community into the school and give students opportunities to explore areas of potential interest and gain hands-on experience in the community. Community-based/experiential learning that allows students to discover, explore, and “taste” the world of post-secondary education and work also supports their development of self-knowledge, increases their awareness of opportunities, helps them to see how their classroom learning applies in post-secondary and workplace settings, improves intentional learning and engagement, and heightens motivation. Students gain particularly valuable information on sectors, occupations, and jobs when they have opportunities to learn in a real workplace and interact with the people who work there. Structured community-based learning (CBL) programs that provide such experience include in-person or virtual co-operative education courses, job shadowing, job twinning, mentoring, service learning, short-term placements, and volunteering. Experience in the workplace provides opportunities for students to physically engage in authentic tasks and “learn by doing.” Students need direct exposure to more than one potential occupation. Students also benefit from direct exposure to real post-secondary settings and opportunities to meet people with real experience in postsecondary education. Programs such as Destination Imagination, Sanofi Biogenius Canada, and Envirothon Canada are examples of community-based/experiential learning opportunities where students can learn in the real world from subject matter experts with diverse educational backgrounds. The challenge for schools is to build and sustain the necessary partnerships with business, industry, community organizations, colleges, universities and apprenticeship providers, parents, mentors, coaches, and others who can support students’ career development.

Educators

Goal 6: Provide professional learning for educators to ensure effective and engaging career development opportunities for students.

Elaboration:

Educators value professional learning opportunities and resources when they are tailored to their needs and roles. Such opportunities might be designed to engage educators in expanding their knowledge of the career development process and best practices in providing career development programs, services, and supports in schools. Building on foundational pre-service training that provides basic information on career education, worthwhile professional learning experiences for teachers would enhance their understanding of career development as a cohesive journey for students, as opposed to a series of discrete and disjointed experiences. Teachers understand their role in helping students develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for effective lifelong career self-management. Professional learning opportunities for administrators would be designed to enhance their understanding of the role of career education within their broader purview and their particular role in fostering a career development culture. School staff might benefit from collaborative inquiry into strategies for effectively embedding career development in their curricular and extracurricular programs, school-wide activities, and student activities in the community. The *Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners*² is a useful resource to address the specialized training and competencies needed by career educators (including those teaching career development courses, co-operative education, and apprenticeship) and guidance counsellors.

Goal 7: Ensure access to timely, reliable, and relevant career and labour market information.

Elaboration:

The intent is that students, parents, and educators have easy access to current, accurate, unbiased, comprehensive, evidence-based career and labour market information, tools, and resources that can be used effectively to support students' career development. An increasingly dynamic and competitive global workforce means that the ability to understand labour markets is more important than ever before. It is critical that students develop the ability to access, interpret, personalize, and make practical use of ICT-based career, education/training, and labour market information, and that educators know how to support them in this regard. Young people want and need to be well-informed when making career decisions. The decisions they make should be grounded in knowledge of the full range of post-secondary options and labour market realities and requirements associated with occupations of interest. The challenge is to transform this information into usable and user-friendly learning resources, tailored to students' needs so that they know where and how to access reliable information and can make career and personal sense of it. An important consideration is to provide access when, where, and in ways students *want* to access it—including through social media, the internet, and alternative media. Promising initiatives include collaboration among government departments and their partners to

² The [Canadian Standards & Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners](http://career-dev-guidelines.org/career_dev/) (2012) are used extensively in Canada in shaping professional training and development programs. http://career-dev-guidelines.org/career_dev/

enhance student, parent, and educator access to the career and labour market information, tools, and resources they need.

Accountability

Implementation

Each province has committed to developing an implementation and evaluation plan that sets out how and when they intend to achieve the goals of this framework. Provinces may choose to draw from the environmental scan and the analysis completed as part of *Career Education in Atlantic Canada: Research and Recommendations* to map their current career development programs, services and supports against the goals articulated in this framework. Best practice research and key recommendations will be considered in order to move toward the framework's goals. Provinces who identify a common interest should work collaboratively through CAMET.

Evaluation

The Atlantic ministers recognize the critical role of evaluation in supporting implementation of this framework and in promoting quality and continuous improvement of career development programs, services and supports in public education. It is anticipated that the provinces will integrate evaluation into their implementation plans and report their progress annually through CAMET as a means of sharing promising/best practices, encouraging inter-provincial collaboration and advancing the framework.

The data collected as a result of this framework can be used to monitor progress, mitigate barriers to equitable access to service, and inform the refinement of provincial implementation plans.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Atlantic ministers are ultimately accountable for the framework, the achievement of the goals and reporting of evaluative data. Career development programming, staffing and training is the responsibility of each individual province. Articulation of roles and responsibilities will also be the purview of the provinces.