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# Strategic Plan 2022-2025

Apprenticeship and  
Occupational Certification  
Board 2022-2025



# **Strategic Plan**

## **2022-2025**

New Brunswick Department of Health Government of  
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# Message from the Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Board Chair

On behalf of the New Brunswick Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Board (Board), I am pleased to present the Board's 2022-2025 Strategic Plan.

Starting in 2012, when the new Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Act (Act) came into effect, New Brunswick's system has been undergoing a period of modernization. A key change in the Act that helped make this possible was changing the nature of the Board from a recommendation-making body to a more responsive decision-making body and providing for greater industry and training provider participation. The Board has used its authority to make orders to effect changes that work better for apprentices, skilled tradespeople and employers. Service policies and guidelines have been adopted for the Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Program (Program), and the Board established a standard operating procedure for designating a compulsory occupation. In addition, 76 occupations are now designated in New Brunswick, 47 of which are apprenticeable and 12, are compulsory. Fifty one are interprovincial Red Seal occupations, which allows certified workers to work anywhere in Canada where their occupation is designated.

I would like to draw attention to a number of key accomplishments of the Program over the past decade upon which this strategic plan will be built:

- A successful partnership with the New Brunswick Teen Apprentice Program (NBTAP), Skills Canada New Brunswick, and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development that promotes trades training in Grade 10 and Grade 11;
- Hosted the Skills Canada National Competition in 2016;
- In terms of mobility and harmonization, occupations have been aligned with 80 percent of the national Red Seal occupations, and mobility agreements are in development for all skilled tradespeople;
- Developed the highly successful Virtual Learning Strategy model, which assists apprentices with learning gaps, and expanded it to four other jurisdictions in Canada by means of technology and a grant from the Federal Government. The overall impact is reflected in provincial pass rates that continue to outperform the national average by more than 20 percent;
- Working with Indigenous communities to promote careers in the skilled trades through a specifically dedicated liaison officer has doubled the number of registered Indigenous apprentices (74 in 2020-21);
- The creation of innovative newcomer programs in a New Brunswick-led multi-jurisdiction project such as Bricklaying for Syrian Refugees, which built trade-specific language acquisition into the training;
- Supporting the New Brunswick Mentor Apprentice Program (NB-MAP) of the New Brunswick Building Trades Unions to promote the development of workplace learning cultures that support ongoing training, and
- The New Boots program – Progressing Women in Trades, which is a partnership with industry that promotes, supports and mentors women in non-traditional skilled trades sectors.

This Strategy is particularly timely since it identifies objectives that will contribute positively to the province's equitable recovery from the pandemic. The Program is subject to the same economic and public health challenges as the rest of New Brunswick. COVID-19 has had a necessary impact on apprentice registrations and certifications. Trades training had to be suspended in March 2020 due to COVID-19. However, it resumed at the end of summer 2020 in a highly successful blended learning format, which resulted in New Brunswick's program not experiencing a significant drop in participation and having the strongest recovery in the country. This kind of flexibility will support provincial recovery from the effects of the pandemic in the current year and coming years.

This strategic plan attends to government priorities for growing the provincial labour force in alignment with labour market needs. The five strategic objectives address long-standing and particular concerns for apprenticeship and occupational certification in the areas of mobility and harmonization, diversity and inclusion, compliance, training quality and standards, and marketing and promotions. The underlying values respond to the needs of industry, apprentices

and skilled tradespeople, and to maintaining strong partnerships with training and industry partners. I am confident that the Board's approach in these areas is directly relevant to provincial priorities such as meeting the demand for affordable housing, and ensuring that a new and diverse generation of tradespeople is coming up to fill the boots of the province's aging workforce.



**DEBRA LEE ROMERO**  
APPRENTICESHIP AND OCCUPATIONAL  
CERTIFICATION BOARD CHAIR

# Background: New Brunswick's Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification System

**The provincial system is designed to ensure that New Brunswick's skilled trades workforce has the up-to-date skills and knowledge necessary to function effectively in the 21st century labour market. The Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Act (Act) provides the framework for governance, linguistic equality and industry engagement in the provincial Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Program (Program).**

High quality apprenticeship learning, life long skill development and certification opportunities are available in designated occupations that are standardized, current and relevant to the needs of industry and its workforce. Apprenticeship training is offered in 47 occupations, and certification services are provided for 76 designated occupations. Fifty-one of the designated occupations are Interprovincial Red Seal occupations, which allows certified workers to work anywhere in Canada where their occupation is designated.

Twelve of the designated occupations are prescribed in regulation as compulsory, which means that to work in one of these occupations, one must meet one of the following requirements:

- Hold either a relevant Certificate of Qualification, a Certificate of Qualification Without Written Examination, or a Diploma of Apprenticeship issued under the Act; or
- Hold a work permit or improver card issued under the Act; or
- Be registered as an apprentice or pre-apprentice under the Act, or
- Be registered as an apprentice in the compulsory occupation in another province or territory and be working in New Brunswick for a period of six (6) months or less.

## APPRENTICESHIP AND OCCUPATIONAL CERTIFICATION BOARD (BOARD)

**Under the Act, the Board is an independent body of stakeholders appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council to have oversight of the Program.**

**It is empowered to ensure that:**

- The Program provides participants with training, assessments and recognized certification in accordance with provincial and national standards;
- New Brunswick's continued participation in the Interprovincial Standards Red Seal Program, and
- The Program is accessible, relevant and responsive to the needs of New Brunswickers through collaboration with industry, training providers and government.

**In meeting this mandate, the Board is responsible to government and to the general public for:**

- Stakeholder engagement and promotion;
- Establishing standards through Board Orders, and monitoring the quality and outcomes of the Program;
- Issuing apprenticeship diplomas and other credentials to qualified candidates, and
- Strategic planning and annual reports.

The Board is made up of a chair and 16 to 18 members who are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. Members are knowledgeable about skilled trades occupations, training requirements and labour market needs. Equal representation of employers and employees, along with representatives from the training sector, the Standing Committee and government, ensures a balanced Board.

## STANDING COMMITTEE

To ensure linguistic balance and to help meet New Brunswick's constitutional obligations, the Act also establishes a Standing Committee of eight members appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. The Standing Committee advises the Minister and the Board on how to ensure francophone equality in the apprenticeship and occupational certification system and monitors responses.

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## APPRENTICESHIP AND OCCUPATIONAL CERTIFICATION BRANCH (BRANCH)

Through its ten regional offices, the Branch serves thousands of skilled trade apprentices and tradespeople by scheduling level-training opportunities, validating curriculum and ensuring those performing work in the various sectors have the proper qualifications. The Branch works closely with employers and training providers to ensure the success of the Program.

## PROGRAM STATISTICS 2017-18 TO 2020-22

Prior to the pandemic, the numbers of new apprentice registrations and certifications were trending upwards. Modest progress was being made in increasing the numbers of women and Indigenous apprentices, and overall certification. In March 2020, trades training was suspended due to COVID-19. The Branch partnered with the community colleges to resume trades training in August 2020. A blended learning format is being used that includes a digital literacy assessment and connection to learning technology requirements for all apprentices who attended training.

OBJECTIVE	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
New apprentice registrations	1,180	1,282	1,115	713	1,238
Total active apprentices	4,393	4,656	4,703	4,563	4,884
Certificates issued to apprentices and trade qualifiers	1,301	1,308	914	675	878

# Strategic Plan 2022-2025

## VISION

An inclusive Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Program producing highly-skilled, expertly-trained tradespeople who meet the needs of industry and New Brunswick communities.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES



### Mobility and Harmonization

Reduce barriers for apprentices and skilled tradespeople to move, stay and work in New Brunswick over the long term.

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### Diversity and Inclusion

Increase the opportunities for successful participation of under-represented and barriered individuals and groups.

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### Compliance

Increase compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements.

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### Training Quality and Standards

Improve the quality of training and standards to meet the evolving needs of apprentices, journeypersons and industry.

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### Marketing and Promotions

Increase opportunities to promote the trades in New Brunswick.



# Key Actions and Measures of Success

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## MOBILITY AND HARMONIZATION

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**Objective: Reduce barriers for apprentices and skilled tradespeople to move, stay and work in New Brunswick over the long term.**

The reality is that many New Brunswickers participate in a nationally mobile workforce in which people often live in one province and work in another. For over 60 years, Canadian jurisdictions have supported the mobility of apprentices and skilled tradespeople by adopting national standards and examinations for occupations through the Interprovincial Red Seal Program. As the passport to mobility across Canada, Red Seal is a robust system that reduces inefficiencies in interprovincial credential recognition. It also supports more nimble responses to the ebb and flow of labour

market demand that feed mobility. New Brunswick currently provides training and certification in 51 Red Seal occupations.

Addressing mobility and harmonization is also critical to addressing New Brunswick's population growth challenges. Obstacles to domestic and foreign credential recognition contribute to out migration of skilled New Brunswickers and newcomers alike. In turn, this impacts the provincial tax base, and our ability to sustain and develop the labour market and social infrastructure upon which all New Brunswickers rely. Reducing barriers to credential recognition will contribute positively to New Brunswick's ability to attract and retain more of the skilled workers we need.

**An important element of harmonization is the continued Atlantic cooperation on the delivery of training blocks through centres of excellence and the implementation of a common database: the Apprenticeship Management System.**

An important element of harmonization is the continued Atlantic cooperation on the delivery of training blocks through centres of excellence and the implementation of a common database: the Apprenticeship Management System. This reduces program costs and improves the experience of apprentices and other partners in the system.

Considering the longevity of the Red Seal Program, reducing barriers to mobility is a long-term objective that exceeds the three-year timeframe of this strategy. Measures of success will narrow to address short term effects. Long term trends in harmonization, certification, employment and interprovincial migration will be tracked over the course of successive strategic plans in conjunction with other provincial initiatives.

## Action Items

- a. Continue to work with partners on the National and Atlantic harmonization of training requirements for 31 National harmonized occupations and 23 Atlantic harmonized occupations;
- b. Implement the common Apprenticeship Management System by 2024-25, and
- c. Work with partners on an assessment system for domestic and foreign qualification recognition.

### Success will be measured based on:

Increasing the percentage of harmonized levels implemented according to National and Atlantic harmonization.

OBJECTIVE	MEASURE	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Mobility & Harmonization	Increasing in the percentage of harmonized levels implemented according to:				
	National Harmonization	57%	66%	75%	84%
	Atlantic Harmonization	61%	72%	82%	91%

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## DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

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**Objective: Increase the opportunities for successful participation of under represented and barriered individuals and groups.**

Ninety four percent of New Brunswick's skilled tradespeople are white men. This means that a very large segment of the provincial population is not gaining access to good well paying jobs. It also demonstrates that employers in general are not tapping into the province's potential labour supply. We need to ensure that New Brunswick's apprenticeship and occupational certification system is inclusive and that it provides equitable opportunities for under-represented and barriered people to train successfully, to become certified tradespeople, and to have good careers here in the province.

An under represented group is a small subset of a given population. In apprenticeship and the skilled trades, under represented groups include women, Indigenous people, LGBTQ2S+, persons with disabilities, newcomers and visible minorities. Along with factors such as language, access to childcare and socioeconomic status, these groups and individuals face barriers to participation and opportunity in the skilled trades that can be unique to their circumstances. However, discrimination is a common issue for all of them.

There is overwhelming evidence for the persistent underemployment of women and other under represented groups as well as their concentration in lower paid occupations and minimum wage

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employment. For example, the Labour Market Information Council reported in 2021 that:

- Women are a minority among trade certificate holders, and they tend to be in trades with lower earnings, and
- The highest median earnings of trade certificate holders are in male dominated, heavy duty trades (e.g., steamfitter pipefitter, industrial electrician, etc.), while the lowest median earnings are in female dominated trades (e.g., hairstylist and educational assistant).

Addressing discrimination and other barriers to successful participation is critical to ensuring equitable access to training opportunities for underrepresented groups. This entails strategic investments in childcare, accessibility supports and language training, and providing services that have not traditionally been part of trades training. It also necessitates raising awareness among all system partners – apprentices, training providers, mentor-journeypersons, industry and employers – about both the individual and collective harms of discrimination, and the common socio economic benefits that come with a more diverse and inclusive labour force.

## Action Items

- a. Work with employers, training providers and community partners to identify and address barriers to participation and successful completion for underrepresented and barriered individuals or groups;
- b. Identify and work with model stakeholders to conduct ten or more Skilled Trade Exploration Programs annually to target underrepresented and barriered individuals or groups;
- c. Work with training partners to include diversity and inclusion as a required component of apprenticeship training, and
- d. Support the aims of “New Brunswick’s Disability Action Plan for Persons with a Disability – Accountable Path Forward to an Equal Opportunity!” by working with employers and community partners to identify and address barriers to persons with disabilities.

### Success will be measured based on:

- Increasing the percentage of registered apprentices from underrepresented groups, and
- Increase the number of programs for under-represented groups by offering ten or more targeted programs annually and by increasing the number of participants.

OBJECTIVE	MEASURE	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Diversity & Inclusion	Increase the percentage of registered apprentices from underrepresented groups:				
	Women	6%	7%	8%	9%
	Indigenous LGBTG2+, Person with Disabilities, Newcomers & Visible minorities	1.9%	2%	2.1%	2.2%
		TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
	Increase the number of targeted Skilled Trades Exploration Programs offered to underrepresented groups	8	10	10	10
	Increase the number of participants in Skilled Trades Exploration Programs	55	90	100	100

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## COMPLIANCE

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### **Objective: Increase compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements.**

Consumer protection is the primary objective for compliance. At the front end, during training and certification, enhanced compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements improves the experiences of apprentices, trades qualifiers, journeypersons and employers throughout New Brunswick. In turn, this enhances the outcomes for the consumers of trades services, who rely on quality work to keep everyone safe.

Industry and government have agreed on the importance of designating certain trades as compulsory due to public safety considerations. Considering that an average of 121.4 fires in New Brunswick were caused by short circuits between 2010 and 2019, it is essential to ensure compliance with occupational health and safety requirements, and the National Building Code and other standards.

Examples of non compliance issues in New Brunswick include:

- Working with fraudulent trade certificates;
- Working in a compulsory occupation without the proper credentials;
- Failure to provide direct supervision to an apprentice, and
- Failure to maintain a proper ratio of journeyperson to apprentice.

These kinds of issues compromise everyone's safety and create reputational risks for employers and workers alike.

Improving compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements through strengthened education and enforcement activities would help improve overall participation rates by levelling the playing field and enhancing the experience of employers, apprentices and journeypersons. It would also instill confidence in the marketplace and improve consumer protection through enhanced quality of work and safety.

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## Action Items

- a. Educate stakeholders on legislative and regulatory requirements;
- b. Employ one Education and Compliance Officer, and
- c. Work with partners to review apprenticeship inclusion in provincial government tender and standing offer policies.

Success will be measured based on:

increasing the number of documented complaints and infractions investigated.

OBJECTIVE	MEASURE	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Mobility & Harmonization	Increase the number of documented complaints and infractions investigated.	N/A	5	40	25



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## TRAINING QUALITY AND STANDARDS

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**Objective: Improve the quality of training and standards to meet the evolving needs of apprentices, journeypersons, and industry.**

Certain elements of the Program are highly successful. Since we can build upon them, they should be maintained. New Brunswick's apprenticeship pass rates for Red Seal exams is 78 percent, which is 20 percent ahead of the Canadian national average. This is attributable in large part to the quality of the instruction apprentices receive in community college classrooms, and the work done by employers and journeypersons to ensure the coverage and scope in on-the-job training. A critical contribution to this success are the Program's learning strategists, who ensures that apprenticeship learning is supported and that challenges are addressed appropriately.

However, there is room for improvement, starting with understanding why New Brunswick has a 22 percent failure rate on Red Seal exams that is concentrated in certain trades.

An important priority is working with training providers to bring teaching and learning resources up to date with changing technology. This will ensure that the evolving needs of industry are met, that safety is addressed, and that apprentices and journeypersons can compete in a changing labour market. Priority areas for New Brunswick in this respect include infection control risk assessment, which is required in the construction of long term care and hospital facilities, and green energy technology such as the installation of solar roofing shingles, which impacts the knowledge requirements for electricians and other tradespeople.

**We need to ensure that New Brunswick's apprenticeship and occupational certification system is inclusive and providing equitable opportunities for under-represented and barriered people to successfully train, become certified tradespeople, and have good careers here in the province.**

Similar to Gold Seal certification in the construction industry, there are opportunities to support journeypersons to advance in their careers through post certification training in entrepreneurship, human resources, project management and other business competencies. The Program will assess the needs of journeypersons, and will explore best practices and opportunities for partnership that develop expertise and promote opportunities for tradespeople to advance in New Brunswick.

The Program will also work with other responsibility areas across government to identify opportunities to rationalize the approach to occupational training and certification. This would support the establishment of new and emerging industries in the province in a timely and cost effective manner.

## Action Items

- a. Work with training providers to enhance teaching and learning resources and ensure that instruction maintains currency with changing technology;
- b. Review and revise standards development processes to maintain their currency with industry demands and adaptations;
- c. Identify journeypersons' needs and implement post-certification training to enhance their employability and opportunities for advancement, and
- d. Determine whether there are government certification programs that should be transferred to the Program.

### Success will be measured based on:

- Increasing graduate, apprentice and employer satisfaction;
- Increasing the number of certificates issued, and
- Maintaining or increasing Red Seal pass rates above the national average.

OBJECTIVE	MEASURE	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Training Quality & Standards	Increase Graduate Satisfaction	N/A	TBD	TBD	TBD
	Increase Apprentice Satisfaction	N/A	TBD	TBD	TBD
	Increase Employer Satisfaction	N/A	TBD	TBD	TBD
	Increase the number of Certificates Issues (Apprentices) <sup>1</sup>	535	412	237	481
	Increase the number of Certificates Issues (Trade qualifiers)	343	420	420	TBD
	Maintain Red Seal Pass Rate above National average (Apprentices)	76%	76%	76%	76%

1. A goal of the NB Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Boardd is to increase tradesperson certification over the next 3 years;

NOTE: The targets are lower than baseline due to the lower than normal apprentice registration and delays in progression due to COVID-19.



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## MARKETING AND PROMOTIONS

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**Objective: Increase opportunities to promote the trades in New Brunswick.**

Apprenticeship and the skilled trades are a rewarding, well-paid career path that is one of the best-kept secrets of post-secondary education and training. If more people knew this, there would be more people working in the trades.

Marketing and promotion are enablers to other priority areas. An effective provincial marketing and promotions strategy would get this message out to diverse youth, the under-employed, people not engaging with the labour market and those wanting to make a career change. It would tackle the incorrect perception that trades occupations are not well paying rewarding careers; promote information about the

demand for smart, motivated, skilled tradespeople; and spread the word that apprenticeship means “earning while you learn,” and that at end of their apprenticeships, people have valuable employment experience, a trade, a well-paying job and no debt.

The fact is that New Brunswick’s trades labour force is nearing retirement age and that the demand for skilled trades people continues to grow. The strategy would get the word out to employers that hiring apprentices is a smart, profitable investment in the next generation of tradespeople and in building their workforces. It would also inform New Brunswickers of the public safety benefits of employing certified tradespeople.

**Apprenticeship and the skilled trades are a rewarding, well-paid career path that is one of the best-kept secrets of post- secondary education and training.**

## Action Items

The Board will work with partners and stakeholders to develop and implement a marketing and promotional strategy that includes the following elements:

- a. Develop a Kindergarten to Grade 12 outreach strategy to address opportunities in schools for promoting trades occupations;
- b. Promote the benefits of certification to employers;
- c. Support provincial efforts to repatriate New Brunswick tradespeople and to attract newcomers from other parts of the world;
- d. Promote apprenticeship employment in the Government of New Brunswick, and
- e. Promote the consumer protection and public safety value of certification to the general public, municipalities and government.

### Success will be measured based on:

- Increasing in the number of registered apprentices and employers;
- Reducing the average age of apprentices, and
- Reducing the average age of apprentice at registration.

OBJECTIVE	MEASURE	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Marketing and Promotions	Increase in number of registered apprentices <sup>2</sup>	4884	5128	5385	5654
	Increase in number of employers with registered apprentices.	1524	1539	TBD	TBD
	Reduce the average age of apprentices	30	29	28	27
	Reduce the average age of apprentices at registration	26	25	24	23

2. A goal of the NB Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Boardd is to increase Apprentice registration. Increased apprentice registrations is a predictor of an increase in future tradesperson certifications.

# Evaluation

The evaluation framework for this strategic plan is designed to measure progress in achieving the five strategic objectives and implementation of the associated action items. Since this plan spans just three years and an apprentice's training program generally takes about four years to complete, it will be necessary to evaluate progress as an ongoing process that will continue well into subsequent strategic planning periods. The Board anticipates that there will be a degree of continuity from one plan to the next in terms of identified objectives. For example, Canadian jurisdictions have collaborated on trades harmonization and mobility as a common priority for several decades, and this work will continue into the future. Similarly, the priority of addressing barriers for underrepresented groups and improving their participations rates is

a long-term project due to the systemic nature of discrimination. This means that progress will be measured over time.

Evaluation will address several questions that are relevant to interpreting indicators and changes over time based on established benchmarks and to future phases of strategic planning. Benchmarks, where possible, and measurable indicators have been established for each of the objectives along with a schedule for frequency of measurement and sources of data. The primary source of data is program administrative data collected in the Apprenticeship Management System (AMS). Other sources include surveys to assess graduate, apprentice and employer satisfaction with training.

**The available sources of occupation specific labour market information present challenges that should be identified here for benchmarking and for developing indicators to assess the impact of apprenticeship and certification programs:**

- Labour Market Survey (LFS) – Due to sample sizes and confidentiality rules, information about specific trade occupations is not available in Statistics Canada's monthly LFS, which is used to calculate employment and unemployment rates. It may be used to track employment in broad occupational categories such as the "industrial electrical and construction trades;"
- 2021 Census – Occupation specific data is scheduled to be released in October 2023. Normally we would expect to be able to use this data to set benchmarks and track changes over the long term. However, the effects of the pandemic on employment and the labour market in general means that a caveat will be attached to this release;
- Registered Apprenticeship Information System (RAIS) – This is Statistics Canada's annual compilation of provincial and territorial program data on registered apprentices and the certifications of apprentices and trade qualifiers. It covers Red Seal and non-Red Seal, and compulsory and voluntary occupations. The primary value of RAIS is for comparison, although it currently has 2016 data available. Alternatives are under consideration, and
- Apprenticeship Client Information System (ACIS) – There is some backdating of data that may affect data, and not all underrepresented groups are captured currently.

Information about the progress of the Strategic Plan will be made available periodically as relevant information becomes available.