

New Brunswick's Employment Action Plan for Persons with a Disability

2012-2017

Progress Report
June 1, 2015



New Brunswick
Nouveau Brunswick



Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons

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Overview

This is the second annual progress report on *An Employment Action Plan for Persons with a Disability in New Brunswick 2012-2017*.

The employment action plan (referred to as EAP) is in the fourth year of its five-year implementation period. Sixty-four of its 65 recommended actions (98 per cent) are in various stages of progress or have been completed.

Background

In 2011, a steering committee comprising government and non-government members started work on a new action plan to help persons with a disability find employment.

After consulting and working with stakeholders, the committee produced *An Employment Action Plan for Persons with a Disability in New Brunswick 2012-2017*, which built on a previous plan that had expired several years ago.

The EAP was launched in the spring of 2012 during Disability Awareness Week. It makes 38 general recommendations comprising 65 specific actions responding to the issues identified during the consultation and engagement process.

The EAP is ambitious, requiring shifts in thinking, policies, programs and services in New Brunswick that will improve literacy, training, education, and employment supports for persons with a disability.

A number of initiatives have been quickly accomplished within existing resources, while others take longer to implement and require new investments.

Many of the 38 recommendations are inter-connected and touch on the following themes:

- Preparing youth with a disability for employment;
- Accessing post-secondary education and training;
- Providing pre-employment supports;
- Removing barriers to employment;
- Strengthening community supports;
- Encouraging employers;
- Facilitating self-employment; and
- Enhancing public awareness.

Role of the provincial government

In late 2012, the former Department of Healthy and Inclusive Communities was assigned three tasks in relation to the EAP:

- leading the implementation;
- co-ordinating; and
- monitoring

On April 1, 2015, the Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons assumed responsibility for leading and monitoring the EAP.

Three departments have established sub-committees involving many active community stakeholders to guide implementation in their respective areas of responsibility. Those stakeholders have included the New Brunswick Disability Executives Network.

At the Social Development subcommittee, stakeholders have provided input about social assistance reforms that will affect persons with a disability, including any changes to the service delivery model and the eligibility criteria for the Disability Income program.

The subcommittee at the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour has discussed how to improve access to post-secondary education for persons with a disability; the Training and Employment Support Services (TESS) program; and the establishment of a provincial network of community employment agencies serving persons with a disability.

The subcommittee at the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has focused on developing guidelines to support students as they transition from high school, with a particular focus on youth with disability as well as other EAP recommendations led by the department.

The departments of Human Resources and Health as well as the Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat the Executive Council Office have also been involved in implementing the EAP.

Role of the Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons

The Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons took over responsibility for co-ordinating the EAP on April 1, 2015. The Council had been involved in developing and implementing the EAP from the beginning.

Created by the provincial government in September 1982, the Council has several responsibilities, including:

- consulting with and engaging stakeholders;
- conducting research and study;
- sharing information about issues related the status of persons with disabilities in the province;
- advising the provincial government about disability issues and policies; and
- encouraging and monitoring provincial government compliance with the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.

The Council's partnerships within the provincial government and with the not-for-profit sector are key factors as they collectively work to improve the supports and outcomes for persons with disabilities, and their families.

Structure

The Council consists of a chairperson and 12 members appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council (cabinet).

Mandate

Under the *Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons Legislative Act*, the Council is required to (shall):

- advise the Minister on matters relating to the status of persons with a disability;
- bring before the government and the public matters of interest and concern to persons with a disability;
- promote the prevention of disabling conditions;
- promote employment opportunities of persons with a disability; and
- promote access by persons with a disability to all services offered to the citizens of New Brunswick.

In addition, the Council may:

- receive and hear requests and suggestions from individuals and groups concerning the status of persons with a disability;
- undertake research on matters relevant to the status of persons with a disability and recommend research areas that can be studied by governments, voluntary associations, private business and universities;
- recommend programs concerning the status of persons with a disability;
- make referrals to, and consult and collaborate with, government agencies; voluntary associations, private business, universities and individuals on matters which affect the status of persons with a disability;
- appoint committees consisting of members and other persons who are not members of the Council;
- propose legislation, policies and practices to improve the status of persons with a disability; and
- publish the reports, studies and recommendations that the Council considers necessary.

The Council also produces a number of information directories including:

- *Directory of Services Offered to Persons with Disabilities in New Brunswick* http://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/pcsd-p-cpmcph/pdf/directories/DS_PersonswithDisabilities.pdf
- *Transportation / Vehicle Retrofit and Mobility Access Programs* <http://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/pcsd-p-cpmcph/pdf/directories/TransportationServices.pdf>
- *Career Counselling, Job Placement and Training Opportunities* <http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/pcsd/employment.html>
- *Directory of Financial Aid for Persons with Disabilities in New Brunswick* <http://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/pcsd-p-cpmcph/pdf/directories/DirectoryofFinancialAid2014En.pdf>; and
- *Directory of Sports, Recreation and Leisure Resources* <http://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/pcsd-p-cpmcph/pdf/directories/RecDirectory2013En.pdf>.

Summary

Status of Recommendations

Glossary

CCNB	Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick
DGS	Department of Government Services
DHR	Department of Human Resources
ECO	Executive Council Office
EECD	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
ESIC	Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation
GNB	Government of New Brunswick
HIC	Department of Healthy and Inclusive Communities (ended April 1, 2015)
NBCC	New Brunswick Community College
PCSDP	Premier’s Council on the Status of Disabled Persons
PETL	Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour
PO	Office of the Premier
SD	Department of Social Development

Completed, 23	In progress, 41	Not started, 1
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#	Recommendation	Lead	Status
1	GNB adopt and implement a government-wide “Employment First” policy.	DHR, PCSDP	In progress
2	GNB appoint a point of responsibility within GNB for overseeing development, implementation and co-ordination of all employment oriented policies for persons with a disability.	PCSDP	Completed
3	GNB, in consultation with key stakeholders, develop, adopt and begin to implement a provincial policy on transition from high school for youth with a disability.	EECD	In progress
4	Develop and implement formal partnerships with community organizations that support persons with a disability to achieve transition and employment goals.	EECD	In progress
5	Review and make necessary changes to experiential workplace programs.	EECD	In progress
6	Develop and provide high school students with a disability, who have completed Grade 11, with structured summer “intern” work opportunities.	EECD	In progress
7	GNB commit to increasing participation of persons with a disability in post-secondary education by:		
7.a	Establishing benchmark data on the number of students with a disability currently attending post-secondary institutions and establishing targets for increasing participation rates over the next five years.	PETL	Completed

#	Recommendation	Lead	Status
7.b	Establishing a consultation process to develop clear guidelines for requirement of a psycho-educational assessment.	EECD	In progress
7.c	Establish consistent guidelines for providing complete and consistent documentation required for students to apply for entrance into post-secondary institutions.	EECD	Completed
7.d.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing the number of students admitted to NBCC/CCNB through special admissions processes so that a minimum of 40 students are participating in NBCC and CCNB programs by 2015 	PETL	Completed
7.d	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that special admissions are available to all students with a disability who have had a modified high school program and who cannot apply through the regular admissions process 	PETL	In progress
7.d	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing access to NBCC and CCNB programs for working age adults with a disability who are out of high school 	PETL	In progress
7.d	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing the number of seats per program 	PETL	Completed
7.d	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring adequate navigational supports for youth with a disability who apply to NBCC/CCNB to have success in their college program. 	PETL	In progress
7.e	Modify the TESS program to allow for 'bridge funding" for disabled students awaiting student loan approvals; and an increase in the amount of extra time afforded disabled students to complete their programs, from 30 per cent to 50 per cent.	PETL	Completed
7.f	<p>Improve the Canada Study Grant approval process by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing a 10 working day standard for approving applications for student financial aid. 	PETL	Completed
7.f	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should CSG funding be approved but not be in place at the beginning of the academic year/term, providing provisional support funding through post-secondary institutions subject to repayment once the CSG funding is received. 	PETL	In progress
7.g	Developing and implementing an education/professional development program aimed at post-secondary education administrators on the requirements to provide reasonable accommodations, Universal Design, for learning strategies and inclusive practices.	PETL	In progress
8	For students with a disability attending post-secondary education review existing supports, research models of support in other jurisdictions, identify current gaps in support in New Brunswick and establish a plan for addressing any support gaps.	PETL	In progress
9	GNB, in partnership with private, public sector, and community stakeholders, design, develop and implement a structured intern program for persons with a disability.	PETL	In progress
10	An ad hoc government/community working group be established to review existing pre-employment services and recommend one or more department(s) to take the lead for "pre-employment services" for persons with a disability.	PETL	In progress

#	Recommendation	Lead	Status
11	GNB adopt a person-centred pre-employment model for persons with a disability.	SD	In progress
12	A multi-faceted program of awareness and promotion be developed to inform persons with a disability of employment supports available and how to access them.	PCSDP	Completed
13	GNB ensure that new social assistance policies and programs for persons with a disability actively support the belief that people are employable and:		
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide for wage exemptions that will encourage people to work and retain more income from employment closer to recognized poverty levels; 	SD	Completed
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow persons with a disability to retain access to health related benefits if they are employed and leave social assistance. 	SD	Completed
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that people's needs for pre-employment supports (including transportation) are addressed through active employment planning and integration of pre-employment support programs and funding; 	SD	In progress
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training for GNB employees to better understand the goals, policies, benefits and communication strategy for effectively accessing community service providers; 	SD	In progress
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide for a new approach for addressing the needs of youth with a disability who are still in high school; 	SD	In progress
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop new service delivery model for proactive pre-employment and employment planning. 	SD	In progress
14	Establish a joint government/community working group to develop a strategy to ensure that accessible and affordable transportation is available throughout New Brunswick.	ESIC	In progress
15	Prior to a new contract management framework for Employment Assistance Services (EAS) for persons with a disability, hold consultations with stakeholders to develop an appropriate employment service delivery and funding model for persons with a disability.	PETL	Completed
16	Review current EAS for persons with a disability with a focus on underserved populations and geographic disparities.	PETL	Completed
17	As part of the new contract management framework for EAS for persons with a disability, initiate a longer term (minimum three-year) contracting process.	PETL	Completed
18	Develop and implement access to professional development opportunities for staff that provide services under EAS contracts.	PETL	In progress
19	Improve the provision of job coach/mentor supports by:		
19.a	Developing and implementing a provincial job coach/mentor training program.	PETL	In progress

#	Recommendation	Lead	Status
19.b	With NBCC and CCNB modify curriculum within human services programs to ensure the inclusion of a learning module(s) on job coaching/mentoring strategies.	PETL	In progress
19.c	Establishing a salary standard range for job coaches who have successfully completed a training program in job coaching.	PETL	In progress
20	Establish an active formal network of employment agencies serving persons with a disability.	PETL	In progress
21	In consultation with stakeholders, undertake a comprehensive review of the Adult Development Activities, Programs and Training (ADAPT) program.	SD	In progress
22	Review and reform the Training and Employment Support Services (TESS) program and guidelines.	PETL	Completed
23	Revise the Disability Support Program so that adults under age 65 with more significant disabilities who require longer term disability-related supports for training and employment can receive funding after they have exhausted TESS funding.	SD	In progress
24	Recruit, mentor and retain an additional six qualified interpreters so that the number of available qualified interpreters increases from six to 12 within three years.	PETL	In progress
25	Adopt a 10-day approval standard for equipment and technical aid applications under the Health Services Program.	SD	In progress
26	GNB take measures to increase the number and percentage of persons with a disability in the provincial public service by:		
26.a	Developing and enacting provincial employment equity legislation;	DHR	Completed
26.b	Establishing a provincial public service diversity and inclusion policy and recruitment strategy to increase the representation of persons with a disability; and	DHR	In progress
26.c	Reforming the Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO) program to provide more participation of persons with a disability in the public service.	DHR	Completed
27	Review and revise the New Brunswick Opportunities Network (NBON) tendering process for bidders on provincial contracts to demonstrate how persons with a disability are included in their workforce and measures they will take to hire persons with a disability if they are successful in their bid.	DGS	Completed
28	Conduct a review of the New Brunswick Employer Support Service and develop a renewal plan.	PETL	In progress
29	Institute incentive measures for private sector employers to hire persons with a disability by:		
29.a	Instituting incentive measures for private sector employers to hire persons with a disability by Developing and implementing a provincial tax credit (similar to the U.S. Work Opportunity Tax Credit);	PETL	In progress

#	Recommendation	Lead	Status
29.b	Providing wage subsidies and supports for employers that participate in the proposed Intern Program for Persons with a disability;	PETL	In progress
29.c	Providing “rebate grants” to employers that hire persons with a disability to cover the cost of Mandatory Employment Related Costs; and	PETL	Not started
29.d	Institute incentive measures for private sector employers to hire persons with a disability by developing a communication strategy to build awareness among employers of incentives and a simplified application process.	PETL	In progress
30	Establish a self-employment initiative for persons with a disability that will include:		
30.a	A short-term research project on current best practices for supporting self-employment for persons with a disability.	PETL	In progress
30.b	A review of how the current network of enterprise agencies can support persons with a disability and their self-employment options.	PETL	In progress
30.c	An investigation of the provision of financial support to persons with a disability interested in self-employment, including the use of current programs (e.g., Workforce Expansion).	PETL	In progress
30.d	A review of current social assistance policies so they can be improved to support persons with a disability who want to undertake self-employment opportunities.	PETL	In progress
31	Develop and implement a new communications plan to improve the visibility of the Premier’s Council on the Status of Disabled Persons as a central resource for people seeking assistance with employment goals.	PCSDP	In progress
32	Hold a Premier’s Forum every two years on employment for persons with a disability to: better engage employers; generate interest in hiring; and promote awareness and interest in the Employment Action Plan.	PSCDP	Completed
33	Hold an annual provincial conference on employment for persons with a disability to share knowledge and best practices.	PETL	Completed
34.a	Hold discussions between stakeholders on research into policy and best practices for employment of persons with a disability.	PCSDP	Completed
34.b	Establish a research agenda into policy and best practices for employment for persons with a disability.	PCSDP	In progress
35	Establish baseline data for all recommendations to allow for measurement of progress.	PCSDP	In progress
36	An Employment Action Plan Implementation and Monitoring Group be established to oversee the action plan.	PCSDP	Completed
37	An annual report on the implementation of the Employment Action Plan prepared and released publicly during Disability Awareness Week.	PCSDP	Completed
38	An annual meeting between community partners, ministers, key deputy ministers and the Premier be held to discuss progress, issues and challenges.	PO	Completed

Detailed information on implementation

Recommendation 1

The Government of New Brunswick adopt and implement a government-wide “Employment First” policy that:

- *Reflects that every working aged New Brunswicker with a disability is presumed to be employable;*
- *Provides that the first objective of government policies and programs will be to support persons with a disability to work to their fullest potential;*
- *Acknowledges that persons with a disability have opportunities to plan careers and enjoy employment opportunities beyond entry level types of occupations; and*
- *Acknowledges that persons with a disability may still need access to disability-related supports for goals and activities that fall outside of employment.*

In progress

HIC, in collaboration with disability stakeholders, was working to identify a mechanism to ensure a government-wide “Employment First” approach is adopted regarding the employability of persons with a disability. The Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) program is the key access point to implement improved hiring for persons with a disability in GNB. PCSDS will work to ensure that this recommendation is addressed.

Recommendation 2

The Government of New Brunswick appoint a key point of responsibility within government for overseeing the development, implementation and co-ordination of all employment-oriented policies for persons with a disability.

Completed

HIC originally led implementation of the EAP. PCSDS assumed this role on April 1, 2015.

Recommendation 3

The Government of New Brunswick, in consultation with other governments, private sector and community partners, develop, adopt and begin implementation of a provincial policy on transition from high school for youth with a disability, with a particular focus on assisting youth make a successful transition from school to employment or post-secondary education or training. This policy must address:

- *Standards of practice for New Brunswick schools and school districts, such as standards of practice relating to transition planning that should start no later than Grade 8;*
- *The need for transition programs and practices to be guided by an “Employment First” approach;*
- *The roles of Guidance programs in supporting students with a disability and requirements for ratios of guidance counselors to students using ratios supported by current best practice research (research suggests an optimal ratio of 1:350);*
- *The roles of schools and school districts in supporting students with a disability to apply for and access post-secondary education and training;*
- *Follow up surveys with students with a disability two years after leaving high school to determine their participation in post-secondary education or training and employment; and*
- *A clear description of the partnership between government departments and community organizations and the respective roles and responsibilities.*

In progress

EECD has established a subcommittee that includes both linguistic sectors and disability stakeholders. This subcommittee has completed an environmental scan of transition policy across Canada, and it has identified the essential elements of a new provincial policy on transition from high school. Work is continuing on the development of a provincial policy that establishes guidelines to support students as they transition from high school, with a particular focus on youth with disability.

Recommendation 4

Develop and implement formal partnerships (including funding partnerships) with community organizations that have experience with supporting persons with a disability to achieve transition and employment goals. Such partnerships may be designed to provide assistance with career exploration, transition to work planning and work preparation strategies.

In progress

Such partnerships with community organizations have informally existed for many years. EECD will affirm the status of these partnerships in a transition policy under development.

Recommendation 5

Review and make necessary changes to experiential workplace programs (such as Co-Operative Education in the anglophone sector or Education co-operative in the francophone sector) to ensure that:

- *All students with a disability have access to community workplace learning opportunities in regular workplaces (and baseline data and rates of participation in these opportunities are determined and kept);*
- *Community workplace learning opportunities match student strengths and career/employment goals;*
- *Appropriate workplace supports and accommodations are provided;*
- *Job coaching and mentoring support is provided by people who have been trained in providing this support;*
- *Transportation needs to community workplaces are addressed; and*
- *Specific learning and skill development goals are developed and employers are engaged as partners in the evaluation of experiential workplace learning.*

In progress

EECD is implementing a career development strategy that addresses this recommendation and supports inclusive practice within experiential workplace settings. Additionally, EECD is examining Co-operative Education to ensure that it is inclusive of all students, including those with disabilities.

Recommendation 6

Develop and provide high school students with a disability, who have completed Grade 11, with structured summer "intern" work opportunities (see Recommendation 9 for further details).

In progress

EECD and PETL have met to start discussions for proceeding with a summer work access program for students with disabilities. PETL will examine what programs are applicable to these students, what orientation they require, and who might oversee this initiative during the summer. Stakeholders will be involved in launching this initiative for summer 2016.

Recommendation 7

The Government of New Brunswick commit to increasing participation of persons with a disability in post-secondary education by undertaking the following measures:

- a) *Establishing benchmark data on the number of students with a disability currently attending post-secondary institutions and then establishing targets for increasing participation rates over the next five years.*

Completed

PETL will collect data in June of each year. All universities annually submit the number of the students with a disability who are attending them. NBCC and CCNB will continue to provide this data through their annual reports, released each June.

- b) *Establishing a consultation process to develop clear guidelines for requirement of a psycho-educational assessment (e.g., who requires one, who is responsible for coordination and payment).*

In progress

EECD and PETL are working to develop clear guidelines for the requirement of a psycho-educational assessment as a requirement for Canada Study Grants. This work is complicated by rigid federal guidelines for this program as well as resource allocation challenges related to the timing of psycho-educational assessments completed within the public school system.

- c) *Following a review of the current process for New Brunswick school districts, establish consistent guidelines for providing complete documentation required for students to apply for entrance into post-secondary institutions. This should include psycho-educational assessments for students with a learning disability and documentation of accommodations that a student received during high school and establishing consistent guidelines for documentation. This requirement should be included in the proposed policy on transition for students with a disability (see Recommendation 3).*

Completed

EECD has met with post-secondary institutions in New Brunswick to establish and update guidelines for transition for students with disabilities.

- d) *Working with NBCC and CCNB to review and expand special admissions processes for students who do not meet the regular entrance criteria. This expansion should be aimed at:*
- *Increasing the number of students admitted to NBCC/CCNB through special admissions processes so that a minimum of 40 students are participating in NBCC and CCNB programs by 2015 (currently admissions are between 25 and 30 per year).*

Completed

In the fall 2013, there were 43 students admitted to NBCC/CCNB through special admissions.

- *Ensuring that special admissions are available to all students with disability who have had a modified high school program and who cannot apply through the regular admissions process.*
- *Providing access to NBCC and CCNB programs for working age adults with a disability who are out of high school*

In progress

A working group involving PETL staff, disability stakeholders and community college representatives is working on determining an equitable process for all students with a disability with regard to special admissions. This includes discussions on modified transcripts, meeting the needs of working age adults and setting the number of seats per program.

- *Increasing the number of seats per program;*

Completed

PETL meets regularly with NBCC and CCNB to evaluate the need for more seats.

- *Ensuring that adequate navigational and planning supports are in place to assist youth with a disability to apply to NBCC and CCNB and to have success within their chosen college program.*

In progress

PETL funds several initiatives intended to attract, support and retain students in post-secondary education, including students with disabilities. Funding also supports the accessibility centres at NBCC, CCNB and the universities. Funds have also been provided for additional support positions at NBCC and CCNB and for the purchase of assistive technology to help students with a disability enjoy greater success in their chosen college program.

e) *Modifying the Training and Employment Support Services (TESS) program guidelines to allow for:*

- *“Bridge funding” for students who enter post-secondary education on a modified program but who later transfer to a regular education program. Funding should be maintained until applications for student loans and grants have been completed and approved; and*
- *An increase in the additional time allowed to complete a program from the current 30% to 50% to better support students who have been accommodated through a reduced course load or extended program length.*

Completed

TESS has been reviewed, with changes reflected in updated guidelines that PETL launched in December 2014. Support and services will be given to students who enter post-secondary education on a modified program who later transfer to a regular education program. TESS also provides supports for persons needing the extended training benefits periods.

f) *Improving the Canada Study Grant (CSG) approval process as follows:*

- *Establishing a 10 working day standard for approving applications for student financial aid so that needed supports are in place for students with a disability at the beginning of the post-secondary program; and*

Completed

The Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour established a new system in 2012 to improve approval times for the Canada Study Grants program. With these changes, 14 days has been established as the standard for approving applications under this recommendation once an applicant provides complete information on an application.

- *Should CSG funding be approved but not be in place at the beginning of the academic year/term, providing provisional support funding through post-secondary institutions subject to repayment once the CSG funding is received*

In progress

Most post-secondary educational institutions provide support services for students with disabilities while the CSG approvals are being processed. Note-taking and tutors are available and some universities offer accessibility centres equipped with adapted technologies. However, to date, post-secondary educational institutions do not advance grant funding to students who are waiting for a CSG application to be processed.

g) *Developing and implementing an education/professional development program aimed at post-secondary education administrators and instructors on the requirements to provide reasonable accommodations, Universal Design for learning strategies and inclusive practices.*

In progress

PETL provided funding in 2015 to l'Université de Moncton and CCNB to update the professional development program for their professors and instructors.

The French-language online course/resource for professors, instructors and support staff provides practical tools for general use and by disability type, video testimonials by instructors and students, scenarios and related resources. It is organized for quick and easy access as well as for in-depth study. The English-language site was launched June 2014.

PETL funded a symposium on Universal Design in November 2014 for university and community college staff members.

Recommendation 8

Review the current support provided to students with a disability attending post-secondary education to engage in and complete career exploration and decision making activities. Through the review, conduct research on models of support in other jurisdictions, identify any current gaps in support in New Brunswick and establish a plan for addressing these gaps.

In progress

The Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour is evaluating a research proposal. This proposal is for conducting research into models of support in other jurisdictions, specifically including an assessment of how students with a disability attending post-secondary education can best be engaged to support improved career exploration and decision making.

Recommendation 9

The Government of New Brunswick, in partnership with private and public sector employers and community stakeholders, design, develop and implement a structured intern program for persons with a disability that would have the following features:

- *The development of a concrete and time limited skill development and learning plan for interns with a disability;*
- *The use of current Work Ability Program funding to provide a participation salary to interns to allow for a maximum of a six-month paid internship;*
- *The involvement of employers in the design and evaluation of the intern's skill development and learning plan;*
- *The provision of job coach/mentor or other necessary supports and accommodations through the TESS program;*
- *The provision of a certificate of participation for interns with an accompanying skills profile for interns who complete the program;*
- *The active promotion of the Intern program to persons with a disability and New Brunswick employers; and*
- *The provision of support and information to employers to successfully hire an intern.*

In progress

PETL has approved a research project for an intern program from the Canadian Deaf-Blind Association on behalf of the New Brunswick Disability Executives Network. This project will be conducted on provincial, national and international levels. The final report is expected in April 2016.

Recommendation 10

An ad hoc government/community working group be established as quickly as possible to:

- a) *Conduct a short-term review of existing pre-employment services, identify gaps in services and develop a plan to address the gaps; and*
- b) *Make a recommendation to the Government of New Brunswick regarding the designation of one or more department(s) that will take the lead for the development, coordination and funding of the following “pre-employment services” for persons with a disability:*
 - *Literacy education and training, including deaf literacy;*
 - *Social and independent living skills training and support (including skills to address workplace stress, anger management, and empowerment);*
 - *Work preparation learning on employer expectations, interviewing, and proper behaviour within the workplace;*
 - *Mental health and resiliency;*
 - *Discovering and determining personal interests and skills to support job matching;*
 - *Support for volunteer activities;*
 - *Computer skills training;*
 - *GED training;*
 - *First Aid & CPR training;*
 - *Career exploration assistance (including job shadowing);*
 - *Workplace Essential Skills training such as writing, numeracy, communication skills, and working with others; and*
 - *Complementary support (such as attendant support, transportation and childcare).*

In progress

This recommendation involves establishing an ad hoc group to look at a number of actions related to pre-employment, identifying existing services and gap identification. This recommendation is also linked to the new service delivery model being developed at SD. PETL has not yet established this ad hoc committee and is seeking government direction on how best to proceed.

Recommendation 11

The Government of New Brunswick adopt a person-centred pre-employment model that will include a protocol and template for developing an individualized pre-employment plan to guide planning and decision making. The protocol should at the very minimum:

- *Establish who can provide planning assistance;*
- *Require the provision of information about prior learning;*
- *Require that specific pre-employment services and benefits be identified;*
- *Require information to demonstrate how pre-employment activities and services will support general or specific employment goals and outcomes;*
- *Require the establishment of a time-frame for pre-employment services as well as a plan to “exit” pre-employment and move to employment search and employment; and,*
- *Require that the proposed cost of pre-employment services be identified.*

In progress

SD and PETL have collaborated on preliminary work on development of a new service delivery model for person-centred pre-employment services that would apply to all persons, including persons with a disability.

This recommendation will be given consideration in the context of the broader review and analysis being completed under Strategic Program Review.

Recommendation 12

A program of awareness and promotion be developed that will inform persons with a disability of all employment supports that are available and how these can be applied for and accessed. This promotion should be multi-faceted and be provided in a variety of accessible formats.

Completed

PCSDP launched its new website in December 2013 and it now includes an employment and training section. An existing career counseling and job placement directory is being modernized to become a web-based “Employment/Training Resource” accessible via the new website. Government departments have been asked to include the link to this new website on their home pages. PCSDP will also establish an awareness and promotion program as part of the development of a new strategic plan.

Recommendation 13

As part of its social assistance reform initiative, the Government of New Brunswick will ensure that new social assistance policies and programs for persons with a disability reflect and actively support the belief that people are employable and:

- *Provide for wage exemptions that will encourage people to work and retain income from employment such that people are able to have incomes that more closely approximate recognized poverty measures;*

Completed

SD changed the wage exemption policy on Oct. 1, 2013, for all clients, including persons with a disability. Clients with a disability were able to retain a flat amount of \$250 of their monthly earnings with no impact on their social assistance while also keeping 30 per cent of each additional \$1 of earnings.

On Oct. 1, 2014, this policy was enhanced so that clients with a disability can now retain \$500 of their monthly earnings with no impact on their social assistance while keeping 30 per cent of each additional \$1 of earnings.

A number of additional changes to the provincial social assistance system were also implemented on Oct. 1, 2014, and will support persons with a disability, including:

- The disability supplement increased by an additional five percent for an overall increase of 20 per cent
- Life insurance policies and prepaid funerals for clients and applicants are no longer restricted, allowing clients to qualify for social assistance without needing to liquidate these assets;
- Self-employed clients or applicants are able to have their business assets exempt for up to 12 months;
- Single clients with a disability and families are now able to retain liquid assets of \$10,000, which is an increase from the previous amount of \$3,000 for single disabled clients and \$4,000 for families;
- An exemption of \$50,000 in RRSPs is also now offered to persons with a disability to allow those requiring social assistance to qualify without liquidating accumulated assets and incurring a penalty.
- *Allow for persons with a disability to retain access to health related benefits even if they are employed and leave social assistance (if they do not have access to employer sponsored health benefits and if their incomes fall below a determined yearly amount);*

Completed

In January 2010, SD extended access to the health card for up to three years for persons who are exiting social assistance. The intent is to extend health card coverage pending further information on the New Brunswick Prescription Drug Program.

- *Ensure that people's needs for pre-employment supports (including support for transportation) are addressed through active employment planning and the integration of pre-employment support programs and funding;*
- *Provide training for government employees to ensure that there is adequate understanding of the goals, policies and benefits of the new program as well as strategies for effectively communicating eligibility for benefits and how people can access community service providers;*
- *Provide for a new approach for addressing the needs of youth with a disability who are still in high school*
- *Develop a new service delivery model for proactive pre-employment and employment planning.*

In progress

These recommendations will be considered as part of the Strategic Program Review.

Recommendation 14

No later than the fall of 2012, establish a joint government/community working group to develop a strategy to ensure that accessible and affordable transportation is available throughout New Brunswick, with a focus on ensuring access to transportation for persons with a disability for the purposes of pre-employment activities, as well as post-secondary education, training and employment. The transportation strategy will address:

- *The possible creation and subsidization of accessible transportation services in rural areas of the province;*
- *Access to funding support for transportation for people to access pre-employment activities, as well as post-secondary education and training opportunities;*
- *Access to funding support for transportation for people to participate in employment opportunities where public forms of transportation are not available or are not accessible, suitable or affordable for specific persons with a disability.*

In progress

ESIC, PCSDP, HIC, the departments of Transportation and Infrastructure as well as Environment and Local Government and the New Brunswick Social Policy Research Network have done some initial work to address this recommendation. Within the Strategic Program Review, these stakeholder organizations are awaiting direction from government on how best to proceed in addressing the transportation challenges faced by many New Brunswickers, including those with disabilities.

Recommendation 15

Prior to the implementation of a new contract management framework for Employment Assistance Services (EAS) for persons with a disability, hold immediate consultations with community stakeholders to develop an appropriate employment service delivery and funding model for persons with a disability. As part of this proposed consultation, the following issues need to be addressed:

- *Ensuring equal access to EAS services for people with all types of disability;*
- *Ensuring equal access to EAS services within all geographical areas of the province; and*
- *The corresponding competency of contracting agencies to address a variety of disabilities, varying needs for support, and communication, linguistic and cultural requirements.*

Completed

In January 2014, PETL obtained a GNB decision on the method of procuring all employment-related services offered under EAS. To ensure a transparent and competitive process, GNB has determined that the appropriate method of negotiating EAS contracts for all clients, including persons with a disability, is through the tendering process.

To ensure recognition of the competency of disability-specific organizations participating in the tendering process mentioned above, after consulting with New Brunswick Disability Executives' Network and other disability stakeholders, PETL has obtained permission from DGS to amend the tendering process to allow greater emphasis be placed on identifying organizations with disability expertise when awarding contracts. All PETL regional offices also now have the option of establishing contracts with external third parties through this tendering process.

Recommendation 16

Review current Employment Assistance Services for persons with a disability with a focus on identified underserved populations and geographic disparities with the goal of:

- a) *Identifying regions where additional services are required to assist such persons to transition to employment; and*
- b) *Establishing additional services that may be required.*

Completed

PETL has reviewed the EAS for persons with a disability program and will continue to work with clients, other departments, and service providers to identify and address employment-related client needs.

All PETL regional offices have the option of establishing contracts with external third parties through the tendering process.

Recommendation 17

As part of the new contract management framework for Employment Assistance Services for serving persons with a disability, initiate a longer term (minimum three-year) contracting process to assist agencies to:

- a) *Hire and retain qualified and experienced staff;*
- b) *Engage in longer term planning; and*
- c) *Provide consistent quality services for persons with a disability.*

Completed

In January 2014, after consulting with New Brunswick Disability Executives' Network and other disability stakeholders, PETL obtained a decision from Government about the method of procuring all employment-related services offered under EAS. To ensure a transparent and competitive process, it has been determined that the appropriate method of negotiating EAS contracts for all clients, including persons with a disability, is through the tendering process. Tendering entails the awarding of one-year contracts that include the option of annual renewal for up to an additional two years, thus securing three-year contracts based on performance.

Recommendation 18

To ensure on-going education on achieving successful employment outcomes for working age persons with a disability, develop and implement a mechanism for funding, providing and coordinating access to professional development opportunities for staff who provide services under EAS contracts.

In progress

PETL looks for opportunities to support training that increases community capacity to provide services to their target client groups, including persons with disabilities. Most recently, PETL funded a series of professional development sessions for service providers under the EAS contracts, which included financial support to the New Brunswick Career Development Action Group (NBCDAG) in 2013 and 2014.

Recommendation 19

Improve the provision of job coach/mentor supports throughout New Brunswick by:

- a) *Initiating a Request for Proposals to develop and implement a provincial Job Coach/Mentor Training Program. The training program should run initially for a minimum of three years, include an evaluation component, and be renewed thereafter based on further identified training needs.*
- b) *Undertaking discussions with NBCC and CCNB on modifying curriculum within human services programs to ensure the inclusion of a learning module(s) on job coaching/mentoring strategies.*

In progress

PETL, in collaboration with disability stakeholders, are working to identify what a provincial job coach/mentor training program would include. PETL has received approval for a new research project to establish a provincial "Job Coach" program, which will be led by the Neil Squire Society.

- c) *Establishing a salary standard range for Job Coaches who have successfully completed a training program in job coaching.*

In progress

While the provision of job coach/mentor supports and salary levels is a sector responsibility, PETL will evaluate the possibility of setting a salary range standard for job coaches through TESS and with EAS providers. A jurisdictional review will be undertaken to look at how best to improve the provision of job coach/mentor supports and to help determine a possible salary range for job coaches.

Recommendation 20

Establish an active formal network of employment agencies serving persons with a disability to share knowledge and collaborate on training, promotion and addressing barriers faced by persons with a disability.

In progress

PETL supports the sharing of best practices and knowledge among services providers and advocacy groups. In April 2015, a two-day workshop involving the employment agencies that serve persons with a disability was held in Fredericton. This workshop will help establish an active formal network of service providers and advocacy groups in New Brunswick.

Recommendation 21

In consultation with community partners, program participants and their families, undertake a comprehensive review of the Adult Development Activities, Programs and Training (ADAPT) program with the goal of building capacity within program agencies to facilitate community employment outcomes for people being served by the program. The review must include:

- a) *An update of program standards and standards of practice consistent with current evidence on best practices for supporting people to make the transition to paid employment in the community;*
- b) *The development and implementation of a training initiative for agencies and their staff on effective practices and strategies for transition to work planning, employment counselling and job coaching;*

- c) *A review of the requirements necessary for ADAPT program agencies to develop and submit TESS funding applications for the people they serve, and how these requirements will be addressed and met; and*
- d) *The development of a demonstration initiative with a small number of willing agencies to test the implementation of identified strategies and supports to assist people obtain paid employment in the community*

In progress

SD and PETL have partnered with stakeholders to form a steering committee leading work on the ADAPT project. Stakeholder members include PCSDP, the New Brunswick Association for Community Living, the New Brunswick Association for Supported Services and Key Industries.

The goal is to develop, test and evaluate a change process and a service delivery model for ADAPT agencies that will include, as a key component, features that lead to greater community employment outcomes for real wages for adults served by agencies, including adults with an intellectual disability.

Recommendation 22

Review and reform the Training and Employment Support Services (TESS) Program and guidelines with a particular focus on:

- a) *Through a phasing in process, increasing the hours of support available from the current maximum of 600 hours over 52 weeks to a minimum of 1200 hours over 52 weeks within 4 years;*
- b) *Providing enhanced training for TESS Co-ordinators on:*
 - *The potential of persons with a disability to work and help address current and future labour market needs;*
 - *The types of supports needed by persons with a disability to successfully move to sustainable long term employment;*
 - *The supports needed by persons with a disability to participate in post- secondary education and training, and why the supports are necessary; and*
 - *How to review and interpret documentation, including assessments.*
- c) *Providing access to support funding for more than one degree program;*
- d) *Providing access to support funding when an individual changes jobs and requires support to be successful in the new job;*
- e) *Providing access to support funding for required continuing education or accreditation maintenance when funding for disability supports is not provided by the employer or if a person's disability requires new or additional supports (e.g., technical aids);*
- f) *Providing clear criteria and an application process for agencies supporting individuals with TESS applications; and*
- g) *Establishing a reasonable timeline for approving TESS funding applications (for example, five working days).*

Completed

TESS has been reviewed, with changes reflected in updated guidelines launched in December 2014. These new guidelines include:

- *A newly established appeal process;*
- *A communication process has been established for stakeholders and partners on any program changes, and to better ensure that all the users have the most-up-date information on TESS;*
- *Access to support funding for more than one degree program has been made available; and*
- *The number of hours of support and services have been increased from 600 to 1,200.*

Recommendation 23

Review and revise policies and criteria for the Disability Support Program (DSP) so that adults under age 65 with more significant disabilities who require longer term disability-related supports for training and employment (e.g. an attendant or support worker) can apply for and receive funding for such supports after they have exhausted available TESS funding.

In progress

Under the current policy for DSP, services include personal supports within and outside the home. Stakeholders have been consulted on the possible expansion of these personal supports to include training and employment once an individual has reached the TESS funding limit.

Recommendation 24

Recruit, mentor and retain an additional six qualified interpreters so that the number of available qualified interpreters increases from six to twelve within three years. Additional interpreters must meet the requirements to provide services on behalf of the Departments of Social Development and Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour as well as employers.

In progress

PETL is working with the Saint John Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, Inc. and the South-East Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, to develop and implement a mentorship program for interpreters for the deaf and hard of hearing.

The “NB Stages NB” mentorship program will increase the number of qualified sign language interpreters in the province. “NB Stages NB” is based on the framework of the American Sign Language – English interpretation.

“NB Stages NB” is in the last phase of the project and the completion of Phase 4 will lead to the implementation of a fully sustainable interpreter mentorship program by the end of 2017.

Recommendation 25

Adopt a ten-day approval standard for equipment and technical aid applications under the Health Services Program (HSP) to ensure more timely disability-related supports for persons with a disability to transition to training and employment opportunities.

In progress

A comprehensive review of HSP was completed by an external consultant; external stakeholders, suppliers and service providers were consulted as part of this review. The analysis has shown that a target of 15 working days could be met for most non-urgent requests within the existing financial and human resource allocation for the program.

Recommendation 26

The Government of New Brunswick take concrete measures to increase the number and percentage of persons with a disability in the provincial public service by:

- a) *Developing and enacting provincial employment equity legislation;*

Completed

DHR has conducted research to analyze the feasibility of enacting provincial employment equity legislation. This research has established that there is existing legislative authority under the *Civil Service Act* to strengthen employment equity in the existing GNB hiring process.

DHR has developed supporting policy and processes to address this recommendation and disability stakeholders have been consulted on these changes.

- b) *Establishing a provincial public service diversity and inclusion policy and a public service human resource recruitment strategy aimed at increasing the representation of persons with a disability; and*

In progress

DHR, in consultation with stakeholders, has developed a *Workplace Equity and Diversity Policy* that includes persons with a disability. This policy establishes a common direction for the public service and the necessary framework to remove barriers to employment.

Changes to the *GNB Staffing Policy Manual* have been completed to support representation of the three target groups of the Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO) program, which includes persons with a disability.

DHR is seeking approval to establish a diversity fund that allows departments and school districts to better cover the costs of accommodations in the workplace.

- c) *Reforming the Equal Employment Opportunities program to provide more effective support for facilitating participation of persons with a disability in the public service*

Completed

DHR consulted stakeholders on this recommendation and has confirmed that the scope of EEO will continue on as before. EEO will continue to include its three current target groups, including persons with a disability. DHR is looking for ways to improve the utility of EEO for GNB departments and agencies.

Recommendation 27

Review and revise the New Brunswick Opportunities Network (NBON) bidding and tendering process with the goal of implementing requirements for bidders on provincial contracts to demonstrate a) How they currently include persons with a disability in their workforce; and b) What measures they will take to hire persons with a disability if they are a successful bidder.

Completed

DGS has reviewed this recommendation and indicated that the procurement process needs to remain fair, open and objective. In some instances, trade agreements prevent government from imposing requirements on bidders of provincial contracts. While the NBON bidding and tendering process is reviewed regularly to ensure it meets the needs of the bidders, no requirements will be imposed on vendors that are not strictly related to the good or services which government is seeking to purchase. Bids will continue to be evaluated based on the pricing offered and whether the product or service meets the requirements of the tender.

Recommendation 28

Conduct a review of the New Brunswick Employer Support Service (NBESS) and develop a renewal plan for the service that will include:

- a) *An enhanced communications strategy to highlight the employability of persons with a disability and to recognize “champion” employers;*
- b) *Enhanced awareness activities highlighting the services and supports available to employers; and*
- c) *Assistance to employers for determining and enhancing their capacity to be “disability confident” employers (research models such as the U.K. Employers’ Forum on Disability).*

In progress

PETL retained a consultant to review the service being provided by NBESS. This review will examine possible improvements to the supports given to employers who hire persons with a disability. This review will also include interviews with key informants and a focus group with disability stakeholders and employers.

Recommendation 29

Institute incentive measures for private sector employers to hire persons with a disability by:

- a) *Developing and implementing a provincial tax credit (similar to the U.S. Work Opportunity Tax Credit);*

In progress

In collaboration with the Department of Finance, PETL is studying the feasibility of developing and implementing a provincial tax credit for private sector employers to hire persons with a disability. This analysis is expected to be completed by March 31, 2016.

- b) *Providing wage subsidies and supports for employers that participate in the proposed Intern Program for Persons with a disability (see Recommendation 9);*

In progress

PETL will continue to provide incentives to employers such as enhanced wage subsidies to hire persons with a disability. PETL will also continue to communicate with employers about the programs and services available through the department. This recommendation will also be addressed through Recommendation 9, which is looking into the creation of an Intern program for persons with a disability.

- c) *Providing "rebate grants" to employers that hire persons with a disability to cover the cost of Mandatory Employment Related Costs; and*

Not started

PETL will start in 2015-16 to examine "mandatory employment related costs" to determine what additional supports can be provided to employers within existing funding structures. This is also part of the work being done to create an intern program in Recommendation 9.

- d) *Developing an effective communication strategy to build awareness amongst employers of the incentives and to simplify the application process.*

In progress

PETL, in collaboration with stakeholders, regularly reviews the effectiveness of NBESS. The department will purchase this service in the future, as required. The work to develop an effective communication strategy commenced in April 2015.

Recommendation 30

Establish a self-employment development initiative for persons with a disability that will include:

- a) *A short-term research project on current Canadian and international best practices for supporting self-employment opportunities for persons with a disability;*

In progress

PETL, in collaboration with stakeholders, is interested in supporting a short-term research project on best practices for supporting self-employment opportunities for persons with a disability. PETL is expecting to receive a proposal to conduct this research project in the coming weeks.

- b) *A review of ways in which the current network of enterprise agencies can support persons with a disability in developing and implementing self-employment options. This will include requirement for training for Community Economic Development agencies (Enterprise Network) on the unique needs of persons with a disability;*
- c) *An investigation on how financial support can be provided to persons with a disability who are interested in self-employment, including the use of current programs such as Workforce Expansion;*

In progress

PETL continues to fund the Self-Employment Benefit program, which provides financial support and mentoring to all eligible clients starting businesses, including persons with a disability. The community business development corporations deliver self-employment initiatives on behalf PETL.

d) *A review of current Social Assistance policies and how they may be improved to support persons with a disability who want to explore and undertake self-employment opportunities.*

In progress

PETL will continue to work with SD to develop a more seamless process to identify opportunities for common clients to access programs and services offered by PETL.

These two departments have consulted with New Brunswick Disability Executives Network and ESIC to develop a high-level preliminary design of a new service delivery model for persons with disability that will be presented for government consideration in the coming months.

Recommendation 31

Develop and implement a new communications plan to improve the visibility of the Premier’s Council as a central information and referral resource for people seeking services and assistance with employment goals.

In progress

PCSDP is developing a communications plan to improve the visibility of the organization as a central information and resource centre for persons with a disability as part of its new strategic plan .

Recommendation 32

Hold a Premier’s Forum on Employment for Persons with a disability with a particular focus on engaging employers in order to generate interest in hiring people and to promote awareness of and interest in the Employment Action Plan. Consideration should be given to holding a follow up forum every two years to review progress and renew interest and motivation for achieving employment outcomes for persons with a disability.

Completed

PCSDP and PETL organized the first Premier’s Round Table on Employment for Persons with a Disability, held in May 2014. Consideration will be given to holding follow-up forums of this nature every two years.

Recommendation 33

Hold an annual provincial conference on employment for persons with a disability to share knowledge and best practices. The conference could be held in conjunction with another key event (e.g., enterprise support network event, Disability Awareness Week). The conference should be a learning opportunity for people who work within the education, training and employment sector who also support employment goals for persons with a disability. It should also have some capacity to bring in experts from the field from outside of New Brunswick.

Completed

PETL organized the first annual provincial conference on employment for persons with a disability, held on May 12-13, 2014, in Fredericton as part of the provincial Jobs Summit. The summit was followed by a Job Fair on May 14, 2014. These two events provided an opportunity for engaging employers and generating interest in hiring people with disabilities, and promoting awareness of the EAP.

PETL has also collaborated with PCSDP and regional EAS to engage employers on hiring people with a disability through awareness events such as job fairs and employer breakfasts in Moncton, Campbellton and Miramichi, as well as via the Premier's Round Table on Employment for Persons with a Disability, mentioned in Recommendation 32.

Recommendation 34

- a) *Hold discussions between university representatives, government representatives and community stakeholders on creating interest and capacity with the New Brunswick academic and research community to conduct research on policy and best practices for employment of persons with a disability;*

Completed

- b) *Establish a research agenda and a plan for addressing the research needs identified.*

In progress

HIC did some initial work with PCSDP and disability stakeholders to identify research needs related to persons with a disability with a focus on employment issues. An initial research priority list was prepared in 2014 for the New Brunswick Social Policy Research Network (NBSPRN). PCSDP will work to ensure that this recommendation is addressed.

Recommendation 35

Establish baseline data, including record-keeping mechanisms, for all recommendations to allow for measurement of progress.

In progress

HIC did some initial work with partner departments, PCSDP and disability stakeholders to establish baseline data to measure progress on the implementation of the EAP. PCSDP will work to ensure that this recommendation is addressed.

Recommendation 36

An Employment Action Plan Implementation and Monitoring Group be established to oversee the on-going implementation and monitoring of the Action Plan. A chairperson must be designated for the implementation group and membership should include senior civil servants of lead Government Departments as well as appointed community partners, including representation from First Nations communities, and a private sector employer. The Group shall meet on a predetermined schedule and will be responsible for the following:

- *Establishing time frames for implementing the Action Plan recommendations and identifying first steps;*
- *Establishing committees/working groups identified in the Action Plan to undertake and implement specific recommendations;*
- *Overseeing research required by the Action Plan;*
- *Undertaking reviews of policies as needed to ensure compliance with the Action Plan recommendations;*
- *Overseeing the collection of data and other information to measure results consistent with the key indicators outlined in the Action Plan; and*
- *Providing progress updates to the Premier's.*

Completed

HIC established an implementation and monitoring group in 2013 to oversee the implementation of the EAP. This group comprised representatives of HIC, PETL, EECD, SD, DHR, PCSDP, the Department of Health, the Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat, the New Brunswick Disability Executives Network, New Brunswick Employer Support Services and the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work.

Recommendation 37

An annual report on the implementation of the Employment Action Plan, including information on the impact of the plan, be prepared and released publicly during Disability Awareness Week.

Completed

HIC originally led the development of the annual progress report on the implementation of the EAP and this responsibility moved to PCSDP as of April 1, 2015.

Recommendation 38

An annual meeting between community partners, Ministers and deputy ministers of lead departments, and the Premier be held to discuss progress, issues and challenges.

Completed

PCSDP works with the PO to determine an appropriate forum for holding an annual meeting as described in this recommendation.

Next steps

The Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons will continue to follow up with each provincial government departments to hold them collectively accountable for progress on these recommendations.

The Council will report annually to the public on the *Employment Action Plan for Persons with a Disability in New Brunswick 2012-2017* as well as review and update it on an ongoing basis.

Government and individual departments continue to show leadership and to make significant efforts to act in a co-ordinated and complementary way in their program decisions and the allocation of resources that specifically affect persons with a disability

Lead departments and agencies are invited to include specific descriptions of any investment, programs and services that have been made available to advance the action plan and to support employment for persons with a disability in New Brunswick in their annual reports.

The Council will work closely with the Office of the Premier, departments and stakeholders on the renewal of the action plan as the current version approaches its end on March 31, 2017.

Conclusion

New Brunswick has made significant strides in addressing the employment needs of persons with disabilities. Many individuals, communities, agencies and departments have provided leadership and worked tirelessly on this issue over several decades.

Much remains to be done, however. Disability issues are complex, touching the lives of nearly each New Brunswicker as consumers, through family members or through friends.

Truly effective solutions require co-ordinated, trusting partnerships of each stakeholder within the different economic, social and political sectors of the province.

It is important to remember that disability issues will continue to emerge as we in NB collectively age, requiring access for more of us to the disability supports we are building now.

Working together, we will create a province and a system of disability supports that helps ensure true inclusion for each of us.

