

Careers Nova Scotia

Frequently Asked

Questions

Department of Labour and Advanced Education

Tuesday, March 24, 2015

The following questions and answers arose during the first round of consultation sessions with leaders of Career Nova Scotia Centres between February 23rd and March 5th, 2015.

Q: Why is all this change necessary?

A: While a number of service providers are providing first-rate service to their clients, the system overall is not meeting the needs of job-seekers or employers. There is duplication and overlap in some places and gaps in others; there is no consistency in services from one center to another and there are no common, professional standards. We want to make sure that high quality services are more consistently available to the individuals and businesses who need them throughout the province.

Q: What is the net goal of this transition – is it to save money?

A: The goal is to use the resources we have to provide better, more consistent and recognizable services to our individual and employer clients right across the province. Remember that the money that funds these employment and workforce services comes largely from federal sources (particularly Employment Insurance premiums) and is earmarked for this work. We couldn't redirect this money to other provincial priorities even if we wanted to.

Q: Have you given any thought to the name: Careers Nova Scotia? Some people just want a job, or an employee, and might not relate to "careers."

A: Yes we have. In fact, we've hired a branding expert to develop a brand and one of the things he'll be looking at is the name. We'll be reaching out to some of you for input into the branding discussion. The name could very well change.

Q: We have been hearing a lot over the past two years about consistency in service delivery, standards, and branding for CNSC's. Will CNSC's all look alike and be branded the same?

A: Careers Nova Scotia Centers (or whatever we end up calling them) will have a common system of branding so that citizens and employers will know that they can count on certain services delivered to reliable standards. We also want to leave some room for flexibility, though, so that you're able to respond to local or regional needs.

So: same brand, same basic suite of services, same standards, but not necessarily identical in every way.

Q: Why is this taking so long?

A: The scope of the initiative has expanded significantly, from one centered on one division of the department – Employment Nova Scotia – to one that includes the public school system, a more explicit role for business and other government departments. The policy context has changed, too, with new government priorities, new funding agreements with the federal government and the One Nova Scotia Coalition. This expanded scope is going to lead to a much stronger career and workforce development system.

Q: What is the timing for all of this?

A: We hope to have a decision on the new model and RFP by late spring. If we are directed to proceed with a Request for Proposals (and that decision has yet to be made), we would hope to have a draft RFP by the summer and an RFP – or an alternative process – by the fall. Our target for transition would be June 2016, but that is not a fixed deadline.

Q: Would an RFP be open to everyone?

A: If we do proceed with an RFP, that's something we'll need to determine. There is a huge amount of talent, knowledge and commitment within the career service community now, though, and we will want to make sure that existing service providers are positioned for success.

Q: Won't an RFP disadvantage (smaller) community organizations in favour of large groups that have lots of experience in writing RFPs?

A: We are aware of that potential and we would work very hard to make sure that doesn't happen. If government directs us to proceed with an RFP, we will engage with you again with a draft RFP and provide lots of opportunity for feedback and revision. We will also provide training support where that is appropriate.

Q: If an RFP proceeds, will there be opportunities for existing CNSC staff to have priority for positions in other organizations that get the service agreements?

A: Whether there is an RFP or some other process, we will look for every prospective service provider to demonstrate their ability to serve their entire service region and the varied needs of the populations within those regions – and they're going to need enough competent staff to do that. We would expect service providers to take advantage of the best available expertise.

Q: What are the alternatives to an RFP?

A: Government needs to have a way of selecting organizations to provide services to specified client groups within defined areas. One alternative to an RFP would be for government to negotiate with service providers that are effectively serving those specific clients within those geographic areas. Another suggestion that came up in our consultations is to facilitate discussions among service providers within an operating zone to see if they could join forces to meet the requirements.

Q: How will you make sure that the unique needs of smaller communities aren't lost as you force standard services everywhere?

A: We believe that all communities, large and small, will benefit from consistent service and quality standards, and that we can achieve that without sacrificing the ability to respond to specific local needs.

Q: Is this about reducing physical space or having different, or fewer organizations?

A: We would expect to see fewer agreements – so fewer service provider organizations looking after case management – and less organizational overlap in where there are a lot of centres serving a relatively small population. But we would also expect to see service being extended to areas where there are now gaps for a stronger system overall.

Q: Are service providers going to be left on their own to pursue partnerships with each other?

A: We would encourage service providers to start thinking about different ways of joining forces to better serve our clients.

Q: Isn't there a risk that consolidation will further marginalize the marginalized (such as persons with disabilities)?

A: We believe that we have the opportunity to improve service to clients in under-represented groups or who face other barriers to employment. Careers Centers that hope to provide service to specialized clients will need to demonstrate how they are going to meet those client needs. Specialized services can't be secondary or an add-on – they will need to be built into the core business.

Q: There have been several collaborative pilot projects involving the Department of Community Services and ENS as well as DCS, ENS and Community Learning Organizations. Does this mean that we should expect a change with respect to the client groups we are serving?

A: We want to see the best service provided to clients, provided in the most seamless, efficient manner possible. Collaboration with DCS, both at the policy and program development level and in the field, is essential. We will be working toward better integration with schools and adult learning organizations as well.

Q: Will certification be mandatory for CNSC staff in the future?

A: We have heard from service providers that professional standards and certification, particularly for career practitioners, is important. We will continue to work with the Nova Scotia Career Development Association to find the best way to implement and sustain a certification system.