

**“71% of NSW employees
ranked their job satisfaction
as 4/5 or 5/5.”**

State of the Profession

Overview from **State of the Profession Research Study**

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The Nova Scotia Career Development Association is the leader and advocate of the career development profession in Nova Scotia, with 500 members working in Nova Scotia Works centres, Indigenous groups, the post-secondary education sector, non-for-profit organizations, and the private sector.

The NSCDA is the primary navigator, promoter, marketer, educator, thought leader and champion of professional career development in Nova Scotia; as such, this study identifies the NSCDA as the organization most suited to the role of developing the profession.

The profession has been evolving quickly over the past 19 years and there is neither a universally accepted definition nor a common understanding of the current state of the profession in this province. There appears to be little awareness of the NSCDA and career development as a profession, even by those who work within it, representing significant opportunity for membership growth.

The NSCDA commissioned this study to establish a baseline status of career development and to map out a pathway for developing the sector over the next five to 10 years.

An online survey sent to members and a small number of other practitioners in the field garnered:

- 139 responses.
- 60% of responses were Nova Scotia Works (NSW) employees and 30 percent were from those who identified as working in the not-for-profit sector, with some overlap between the two.
- 3 focus groups were held with 23 participants in total, 14 of whom were NSW executive directors.
- 5 one-on-one interviews were conducted with recruiters, Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC), and universities
- 2 written submissions were received from NSW executive directors, one of whom also participated in a focus group.

Findings:

- There is very little diversity in the sector.
- Career development professionals tend to be highly educated, predominantly female, middle-aged and white.
- Overwhelmingly, survey respondents indicated they were not either an Indigenous Canadian or a member of a visible minority. Seven respondents identified as Indigenous and 13 identified as visible minorities.
- When asked about languages, three respondents indicated they speak American Sign Language, nine indicated they speak French, and eight

indicated that they speak other languages including: Afrikaans, Braille, German, Gujrati, Malayalam and Spanish. No respondents indicated that they spoke Mi'kmaq.

- Salaries and benefits in the NSW system and in other NGOs are lower by some margin than in government, post-secondary institutions or the private sector. Overwhelmingly, survey respondents identified better salary and benefits as the primary reason they moved to another job.
- Career development practitioners are highly satisfied with and tend to stay in their profession, however, that is to some extent dependent on their geographic location, background and the nature of their employment relationship.

Nova Scotia Trends:

- The workforce is becoming more diverse both from an ethno-cultural and an age perspective.
- Millennials are interested in early career advancement and more than just a job. They have a desire for purposeful work and are discerning about the type of organization they sign on to.
- While there are an increasing number of available job opportunities and international students have a desire to stay in Nova Scotia, employers appear to be somewhat reluctant to embrace this talent pool.

Awareness of the Profession

We learned through the focus groups and interviews that many in the profession do not identify with it. For example, the two recruiters we spoke with acknowledged that their work is indeed in career development, but they were not aware that there was such a profession and that there is certification. Similarly, an educator and leadership coach who participated in one of the focus groups did not identify with the profession, but acknowledged that the discussion among the group helped them understand the relationship. However, they too were attracted to their professions and remain in them for many of the same reasons identified above.

Respondents to the survey, when asked about how to create greater awareness of the profession overwhelming pointed to promotion and marketing, educational campaigns, and social media. Other opportunities, particularly to create awareness and attract young people into the profession included:

- Meetings and presentations to schools and community groups.
- Presence at schools and job fairs.

- Job shadowing opportunities in high school.
- Linkages to universities, private career colleges and the NSCC Human Services program.
- Mentorships and internships during summers or upon graduation.

Moving the Sector Forward:


Technology and Artificial Intelligence: It is essential for the profession to understand the impact of the coming technology and to position itself to embrace it proactively.

Professionalization of the Profession: The CCDP designation has gone a long way to professionalize the profession in Nova Scotia. This certification program is considered a best practice across the country and is being considered for national adoption.

Defining and Promoting the Profession: The profession would benefit from a clear, catchy brand identity and should mount an education, awareness and marketing campaign.

Moving the NSCDA Forward:

- Developing a clear, identifiable brand and a sustained marketing campaign to generate awareness and recognition to grow its membership base.
- Establishing a more diversified revenue base, which would allow the Association greater leverage in speaking on behalf of the profession, growing its membership and in the work it chooses to embrace in the future.
- There are opportunities to enhance the exam preparation offerings, and specializations such as working with clients who face barriers; and increased awareness and promotion of the value of certification, particularly if procurement and hiring policies establish it as a requirement for engaging a recruitment firm or hiring a career practitioner.



Chris Hornberger is a partner with Halifax Global Inc. and a management consultant with a wealth of experience in the career development industry. Chris is helping the NSCDA understand the state of the profession of career development in Nova Scotia. The ongoing research is providing valuable insight into the development of strategic goals and objectives.