

GUIDING ADULT LEARNERS TO FIND THEIR PATH



the LEARNINGEXCHANGE

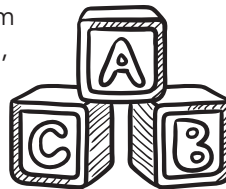
educate • innovate • empower



OUR STORY

For over 35 years, the Learning Exchange has guided adult learners with a personalized approach that combines education, soft skills development, on-the-job training and employment. Our approach is focused on long-term outcomes. Getting a job is one thing, keeping it can be quite another, so our transition to employment supports are key to the long-term success of our learners.

The adults that come through our doors – about 300 each year – are highly motivated and open minded, but face many barriers. Growing up in poverty, the stigma of receiving income assistance, a criminal record, a learning challenge, finding affordable childcare, and less than ideal memories of school are all challenges our learners face on a daily basis. We learn together – and we have fun. Our program facilitators and coaches come from diverse backgrounds bringing their world views, education and experience to all programs.



OUR APPROACH



We do things differently here. And it's working. At the Learning Exchange, our learners set goals and get paid, every two weeks. This is how the working world works so we think ours should too. **You earn it. You keep it.**

Our programs are tailored to our learners' needs. That means we have:

- flexible hours
- small classes
- one-on-one coaching
- continuous enrollment.



All of our programs are free. We're focused on goal-setting and we value people, work and outcomes. **You set goals. You achieve them. You get paid.**



did you know

That any money earned by our learners doesn't impact income assistance payments?



BARRIERS OUR LEARNERS FACE

On average our learners are dealing with at least two of the following:

- Criminal record
- Access to reliable transportation/No driver's licence
- Access to reliable/flexible childcare
- Mental and physical health challenges
- Gaps in employment/patterns of short-term employment
- Lack of digital literacy skills or technology access
- Food insecurity and inadequate or unstable housing



LEARNER SPOTLIGHT: Crystal

I didn't finish high school but worked for three years until 2016. I was laid off unexpectedly, but decided to look at it positively. I thought, 'This is my chance. I have to do something.'

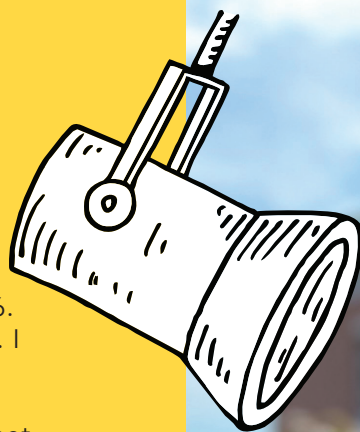
I had many barriers, including an anxiety disorder. But then I met with Dale. I felt so comfortable. I had spent so much time on EI. You feel the system is against you. But Dale was just a real person. He wanted to know what I wanted. I started the classes and the flexibility really worked for me. I could pick when and how much I attended.

I loved the small classes and the personalized approach. Everyone was at different stages. I didn't feel judged. I was listening to peoples' stories. In other situations, especially in school, I had always felt like an outsider. I'm the new kid – but at the Learning Exchange, everyone was the new kid. There can be a lot of shame. Shame from not completing school. They don't want you to feel that at the Learning Exchange, though. They want to you get away from that. To move on.

I took my GED and it was tough. But we had worked on a plan. If I didn't pass, we would know immediately, and we would work together on that.

Once I met Janelle, applying to post-secondary became a conversation. The New Brunswick College of Craft and Design was having some classes at the Saint John campus for a new one-year program. When I applied, I didn't have my GED, it was a condition. Janelle was totally supportive – we took the leap together. Once the wheels were turning to apply for college, it was my focus. A future was possible, a career was possible. I began to build my confidence. And I got in.

Once I was there, everything was new again. But I had my experience at the Learning Exchange to draw upon. Even just the ability to reach out to my teachers and ask for help. I graduated and was accepted to study Photography at NBCCD in Fredericton. I've signed a lease. I'm ready to go. My experience at the Learning Exchange taught me that my dreams were actually tangible. Thinking about the future feels real for the first time.



WHAT WE OFFER



WorkLinks: Transition-to-Work

WHO IT'S FOR: 16+ looking for support to find and maintain employment.

This is all about finding the right job to fit the life and employment goals of our learners. We know that a big hurdle for job seekers is finding the right job that they will keep and enjoy long-term, this is what WorkLinks helps them do.

- Help with resumes and cover letters
- Job search techniques and networking
- Interview preparation including practice interviews
- Job finding information
- 1:1 coaching support before and after finding work
- Connections to local employers – all sectors

Growing Occupational Academic & Life Skills (G.O.A.L.S.)

WHO IT'S FOR: 16-25 looking for high school credits to achieve their Adult High School Diploma in an alternate setting.

- Achieve high school credits including English, Math, Art, Outdoor Pursuits, Environmental Science, and more
- A schedule that allows you to work
- Focus on one subject at a time

It's a competitive job market out there. We know our learners are interviewing alongside other adults with diplomas, degrees, and other experience. We give them the edge they need, and the skills employers want."

Christina Fowler,
Executive Director, Saint John Learning Exchange



Community Adult Learning Program (C.A.L.P)

WHO IT'S FOR: 18+ who want to work on their reading, writing, and math skills, as well as prepare for the GED.

- Individual learning plans
- Connect to community partners, resources, and training opportunities to support post-secondary and employment goals

WESLinks: Workplace Essential Skills

WHO IT'S FOR: 18+ who want to build and enhance employability skills. No high school diploma or GED is required.

- Project based learning
- Development of soft skills
- Computer literacy skills
- Career exploration
- Workplace literacy and numeracy skills



The only reason I'm not panicking when I started at NBCC is because of the soft skills and coping skills I learned through the Learning Exchange. We were split up into groups for an assignment and everyone started panicking, but I knew it would all work out."

Kelsey,
with the Learning Exchange for 3 years; has recently started post-secondary

Basic Education & Skills Training (B.E.S.T)

WHO IT'S FOR: 18+ who want to set education and employment goals while preparing for the GED.

- Build the skills that employers want
- Certification opportunities (Occupational Health & Safety, First Aid/CPR, Digital Literacy, Money Matters)
- Explore post-secondary and/or employment options
- Connect to community partners and resources to support personal challenges

Social Enterprises

WHO IT'S FOR: People eligible to work in Canada who have completed or are enrolled in one of our programs and want to build their skills in a supportive work environment.

- 100% of Social Enterprise Staff are former SJLE learners
- Apply skills in paid work environment
- Build confidence in the work place

Companies we work with who have hired our learners

- Delta
- Dowd Roofing
- Krown Saint John
- CAA
- Nordia
- GDI
- Crosby's Molasses
- J.D. Irving, Limited
- Integrated Staffing
- City Saint John / Develop SJ / Saint John Land Bank
- Winners / HomeSense
- Loch Lomond Villa
- Britt's Pub & Eatery
- Staples
- Moosehead Breweries
- OSCO Construction Group
- Irving Oil
- Irving Business Services
- Coast Tire
- Manpower
- Service Master
- Wyndham
- United Way

Soft Skills Training

WHO IT'S FOR: 16+ who want to build the skills to help them succeed and that employers want.

- Strengthen your self-awareness as you participate in these engaging workshops
- Get the competitive edge you need to compete on the job market
- Take 1 Soft Skill module or all 9



Time Management, Communication, Professionalism, Stress Management, Feedback, Collaboration, Problem Solving, Confidence, Conflict Resolution



LEARNER SPOTLIGHT: AI

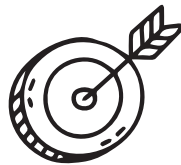
When I came to the Learning Exchange, I knew I was looking for something different. I had experienced the traditional path – creating a resume, then reworking it, sending it around and was getting no response. I had come from a high-paying job in Nova Scotia and had a lot of experience but the feedback I was getting was that I was overqualified – or seemed to be. Someone had recommended the Learning Exchange and I made the call.

When I met with Erin, she looked beyond my resume and saw me as a person. That meeting changed my outlook on what kind of job I wanted. Erin and her team made me feel welcome from the beginning. They followed my progress including any rejections. We looked at them not as failure, but as a chance to discuss what happened, why and what we could do next to change that outcome.

At other agencies I felt like a number. I went to the meetings. I followed a plan. The Learning Exchange was the complete opposite of that. Erin knew from our conversations that I would be good dealing with the public. She saw an opportunity open up at CAA and put two and two together that this would be a great fit. She saw it before I did.

And now I have a job that's right for me. I love getting up every day.

In my experience, it felt like the team at the Learning Exchange wouldn't feel successful if I wasn't successful. If my path hadn't crossed with Erin and the Learning Exchange I don't know where I would be today.



EMPLOYER SPOTLIGHT: Bryan *AI's first boss at CAA*

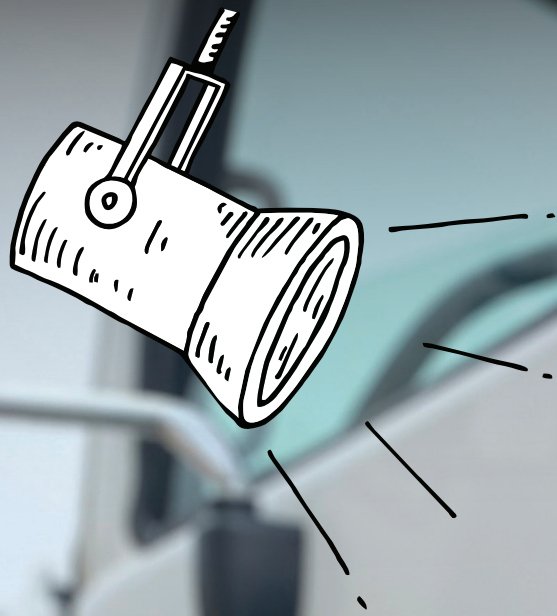
I saw real value in this different approach. It's the opposite of how some other agencies manage recruitment. We had tried the typical channels. Drivers are hard to come by. What the Learning Exchange does best is helps you recognize that different skill sets are applicable to what you are looking for. They act as the bridge.



AI was not typical of what we would look for, but he had an abundance of transferable skills – a good fit, great personality and then it clicks. Employers who are searching can get tunnel vision – this job requires this specific background. We need to look beyond the resume. It's so necessary in Saint John. I hear all the time that there is a long list of skilled people that can't line up with opportunity.

The Learning Exchange offered me a different perspective and qualified referral – which is worth a lot. It took someone else to recognize that AI and I should meet, that the potential was there. I needed someone who would be calm in stressful situations and customer focused. We can train drivers on how to do the mechanical parts of the job, but it's more difficult to train for the customer service part. Some people just have "it" and AI is one of those people.

What the Learning Exchange does best is helps you recognize that different skill sets are applicable to what you are looking for. **They act as the bridge.**



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*When I met with Erin, she
looked beyond my resume
and saw me as a person.*

- Al



Our Results

From 2015-2020



192

trained in
Social Enterprises

31

employed in
Social Enterprises

81

individuals with criminal records secured
employment and were able to start participating in
the workforce much faster than if they needed to
get a pardon.

75%



of job seekers who complete
our programming find work
in their selected field



60%

retain their position



50%

find a job with one of
our more than 300
employer partners



433

learners employed

100%

of learners who attend our G.O.A.L.S.
program regularly achieve 1 or more credits
toward an Adult High School Diploma



91%

of learners
have increased
their technical
and soft skills.

80%

of graduates from our
WESLinks program move
on to employment or
post-secondary



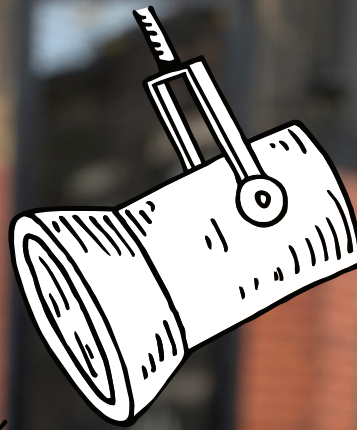
WHERE OUR LEARNERS FOUND WORK:

Administrative/Office Work: **54**
Labour (skilled & unskilled): **91**
Cleaning/Maintenance: **91**
Retail: **76**
Food: **93**
Business Service Centres
(variety of roles): **82**
Childcare: **9**
Driving/Delivery: **4**
Healthcare/Homecare: **11**
Other: **75**



** some individuals secured more
than one job from 2015-2020*





LEARNER SPOTLIGHT: Alshaimaa

I learned about the WES program when I was looking for care for my son because it was offered where he went after school. I liked the soft skills. In Egypt we don't learn how to talk about our feelings. At times it was very hard. I didn't feel my English was good but the Learning Exchange was always there for me.

Then they helped me with something I didn't think was possible. In Egypt I worked for the government as a civil planner. I have a master's degree in planning. The Learning Exchange connected me with Develop Saint John and I am doing an internship there. This is the most exciting thing that has happened to me since I've been in Saint John. To be able to build my resume, work with Canadians to better understand the culture and apply my skills has been wonderful. I'm working in my field. I love it.

The Learning Exchange continues to help me. I am setting my education and career goals. I feel like I always have someone to turn to when I am making big decisions.

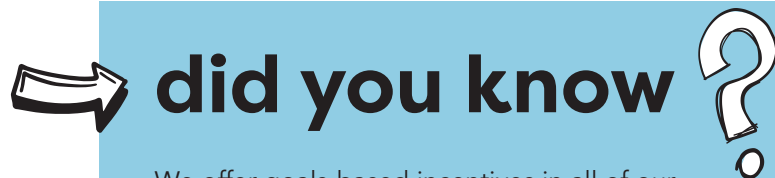
I want to apply to UNB to take Engineering and get my PhD. I continue to practice my English. I'm even starting French lessons because my son is in French Immersion. We want to be part of this community. We want to stay.

Leaders in Non-Profit Innovation

Innovation is at the core of everything we do. That's why we are championing transformative systems renewal in social services and incentivising individuals on Social Assistance. A somewhat radical idea – but it's working.

In partnership with the New Brunswick Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour and utilizing the expertise of MaRS Discovery District (leaders in social finance modeling) we are embarking on a new outcomes-based funding model. This model will be the first of its kind in the province of New Brunswick and is an important step in defining how complex issues are measured and outcomes valued.

This new model will reflect the true cost of moving the needle for individuals living in generational poverty and transitioning into sustainable employment. It takes into account the barriers, skills gaps and the length of time it actually takes someone to move along the continuum to achieve success. What is especially unique about this approach is that community and government are working together to find a creative approach for changes in funding and accountability.



We offer goals-based incentives in all of our programs. Our learners set goals, achieve them and are paid – anything from getting their driver's licence or taking CPR to achieving program attendance goals to developing life and employment skills.

Social Return on Investment (SROI)

The investment in our learners demonstrates real results: They overcome barriers, such as a criminal record, by creating connections with the right employers, which helps lead to employment.

The cost to government and the taxpayer is reduced because that individual is no longer relying on income assistance. The value created by our soft skills workshops is equivalent to attending a counseling session, meeting with a life coach, or taking a course in time management/organization skills.

We believe it's important to measure ourselves based on true impact. That's why we have spent a considerable amount of effort evaluating and measuring our SROI.

We undertook a five-year study to demonstrate the value created by investing into a person-centered, wrap-around approach to employment preparedness.

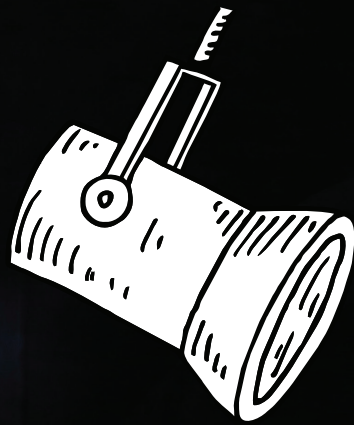


What we discovered:

On average, every dollar invested in The Learning Exchange has generated **an average of \$7.50** in social and economic value. (2015- 2018)



Over the past 5 years, by helping secure employment for over 443 individuals, the savings to government in income assistance payments alone is over \$3M.



LEARNER SPOTLIGHT: Madalynn



I first became aware of the Learning Exchange through the UYES! (Urban Youth Employment/Education Services) program. Everyone there was so supportive and understanding. The atmosphere was welcoming and I didn't feel the daily pressure I felt in traditional high school. As a mom, I found the class

schedule very flexible. It was built around what I needed. Once I got my Adult High School diploma, we started to talk about the next step. I looked at welding at NBCC. I was good with my hands and the trades are in my family. Now I get to use all the skills I learned at the Learning Exchange at college every day.

LEARNER SPOTLIGHT: Dawn



I was aging out of the school system, so my husband's social worker suggested I go to the Learning Exchange because they could help me get my GED. I went more than once to see what would work for me and that never seemed to matter. In 2019, I went back to WorkLinks because I got tired of living on the system. I took all nine workshops of the soft skills training. They also helped me find an internship with the United Way.

I was originally supposed to be there for one month, but they ended up keeping me for an additional month because it was so busy. I learned so much; how to do reports, typing and time management. I also learned that the earlier you show up, the better it looks. So, show up early and be ready.



That's how I have figured out what I want to do now. I always liked the idea of working in an office. Now my goal is to finish my GED, go to college to get the education to become a receptionist and then work.

I tell everyone – if you need help – go see them. The staff is really caring and they don't judge. It's amazing there. I'm pretty much part of the family now.



EMPLOYER SPOTLIGHT: Alexya *Executive Director of the United Way*

We have five funding principles, and the Learning Exchange exemplifies them all; particularly their flexibility and their innovation. The mandate is solid. They examine what's working, what's not and when things don't work, they change to make them work. An example is their transition to a rolling admission from twice a year. They see the rules and want to break them.

Dawn was a great member of the team and fit in quite seamlessly.

They question the status quo. We know the success rate of the GED is low, but that was the tool that's been used for years. They were molding people into the tool to make it work. But they stopped and re-evaluated and then their thinking became, 'We need to change the tool'.

The idea of a different kind of internship had been percolating at the United Way. What we thought would be incredibly impactful would be to have our intern be comfortable enough to share their personal story.



Dawn was a great member of the team and fit in quite seamlessly. To watch her grow over the course of over 40 presentations was quite remarkable. Her confidence got stronger and stronger and to have our donors see first-hand how their gift is making a difference was invaluable.



“

I tell everyone – if you need help – go see them. The staff is really caring and they don't judge. It's amazing there. I'm pretty much part of the family now.

- Dawn

Our Social Enterprises



Social enterprises are community-based businesses that sell goods or services in the marketplace to achieve a social, cultural, and/or environmental purpose; they reinvest their profits to maximize their social mission.

Source: Social Enterprise Council of Canada

What is a
Social
Enterprise?

A New Approach to Skills Training & Employment

Employment is the goal of many learners who walk through our doors, but lack the skills they need to compete in the job market. We wanted to help them build their skills in order to meet employment outcomes. Our philosophy is that the best way to do this is through intensive soft skill development and by providing other training opportunities in an authentic workplace setting.

How did we do this?

We created our own businesses.

Our businesses employ learners while competing in the market place alongside traditional employers while also serving our social mission. The profits generated by our social enterprises are reinvested in their teams to help further their professional and personal development. Employees of social enterprises have gone on to secure affordable housing, transition away from social assistance, complete their GED and purchase vehicles and homes, among other important milestones.

Since establishing our first social enterprise, **Stone Soup Café & Catering**, in 2011, we have become a leader in social enterprise activity and development in New Brunswick. Our social enterprises are sustainable businesses whose revenues help reduce barriers to employment and education. Operating a social enterprise is not for the faint of heart. We have had to adapt and modify our small businesses to meet the ever-changing needs of our community while producing high-quality products and services in an extremely competitive environment.

We blend revenue and mission by investing resources to support our learners in achieving their long-term employment goals.

What Do We Do? You Name It.



STONE SOUP – a café and catering company and our original social enterprise. Stone Soup is located in the Social Enterprise Hub at 139 Prince Edward Street. It is the only independent café in the neighbourhood.



VOILA – a residential and commercial cleaning service. Voila was also the incubator for the development of a line of environmentally-friendly cleaning products, which are used in clients' homes and sold to customers.



IMPACT MARKET – a retailer located inside the Stone Soup Cafe and online that sells goods (focusing on local-first products) with a social, environmental or cultural purpose.



CREATIVE SQUIRREL – a communications company focusing on storytelling, marketing and design.

→ did you know ?

Our social enterprises help fund our work and provide on-the-job training for our learners. You can support us by hiring us to clean your home or business, cater your next function or create your next marketing plan.

All the social enterprise staff have completed one or more of our programs at the Learning Exchange. Here are a few major milestones the staff have achieved during their time as an employee or trainee:

- ✓ Continued with personal and professional development
- ✓ Transitioned to a secure job that aligns with their capabilities and professional goals
- ✓ Transitioned off of social assistance
- ✓ Secured affordable housing
- ✓ Completed GED
- ✓ Attained driver's license
- ✓ Purchased vehicle(s) with low interest rate
- ✓ Attained passport
- ✓ Purchased first home
- ✓ Enrolled or completed postsecondary
- ✓ Traveled the province, took vacations
- ✓ Invested in savings





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