

HALIFAX CONNECTOR PROGRAM

ANNUAL REPORT



— 2022-2023 —

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

The Connector Program was born in Halifax, Nova Scotia in 2009. Originally created to help immigrants build their professional networks and better connect to employers and their community, the program was later expanded to include retain new graduates starting their careers. Together, we've helped businesses find the talent they need and kept talented professionals right here in Halifax and Nova Scotia.

The program uses a simple and highly effective **MATCH. CONNECT. REFER.** professional networking model.



MATCH

Community and business leaders who volunteer to be Connectors are matched with and introduced to pre-qualified recent international and local graduates and internationally trained professionals (called Connectees) based on their skills, sectors, and industries of interest and experience.



CONNECT

The Connector and Connectee meet to discuss industry trends, skills and areas of expertise, related news, current market demands, and hidden job opportunities in the local market.



REFER

The Connector then refers the Connectee to a minimum of three people in their network. Through these direct referrals, Connectees can rapidly grow their business network which increases their likelihood of finding a job and staying in their community.

Through these introductions, Connectees rapidly build their professional network and gain insight into the local labour market, which increases their likelihood of finding jobs and staying in Halifax.

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MEET THE HALIFAX CONNECTOR TEAM

Robyn Webb, Director, Labour Market Development

Robyn leads Halifax Partnership's talent attraction and retention initiatives and teams, including the award-winning Connector Program and the Atlantic Immigration Program. With strong business acumen and considerable sales and recruitment experience, Robyn actively engages with all levels of decision makers and builds productive relationships with our diverse client base. With the expansion of the Connector Program concept, Robyn serves as the Executive Director of the National Connector Program where she partners with and supports Canadian communities and industry associations interested in launching their own Connector Program.



Program Manager, Connector Program

Nathan manages the day-to-day operations of the Partnership's award-winning Connector Program. With almost 15 years working with Fortune 500 firms in business development and management roles, matched with his experience managing a recruiting company and being involved in hundreds of interviews, Nathan is able to provide real world tips to the program's Connectees to improve their job search efforts.

Our Program Coordinators connect recent and local graduates, immigrants, and newcomers (Connectees) with businesses and community leaders (Connectors) in their industry of interest to help build professional networks and connect to opportunities.

Celia Deer, Program Coordinator

Celia uses her 19 years of customer service experience with the Bank of Nova Scotia to connect with people and form meaningful relationships. Her personal mantra is “to be the best part of somebody’s day,” and she is passionate about helping and being of service to others.



**Lindsay Morley,
Program Coordinator & Employer Engagement Specialist**

Lindsay brings over 20 years of experience in business development and recruiting to her role and is passionate about collaboration, consultation, and networking.



Thomas Martin, Program Coordinator

As a soon-to-be graduate from the MTEI program at Saint Mary’s University, Thomas leverages his experience in project management and business development to help students and newcomers uncover the wealth of opportunities Halifax offers.



Angelina Simmonds, Program Coordinator

Angelina is a recent graduate from the Bachelor of Sociology and Women’s Studies program at Mount Saint Vincent University and has valuable work experience in the non-profit sector and community development. She is passionate about helping others, particularly young graduates from African Nova Scotian communities.





A MESSAGE FROM

The Director of Labour Market Development

It is my pleasure to introduce the 2022-2023 Annual Report for the Halifax Connector Program. Attracting and retaining talent is a key pillar in *People. Planet. Prosperity. Halifax's Inclusive Economic Strategy 2022-27.*

At Halifax Partnership, we hear from businesses all the time that attracting, hiring, and retaining skilled talent is their most pressing challenge, and the global competition for talent is fierce! Now is the time to be more open-minded and inclusive in our search for talent, both in Canada and abroad.

Halifax Partnership has risen to this challenge and has helped hundreds of employers find the skilled talent they need through the simple, yet effective Connector Program. More and more businesses are approaching the Halifax Connector Program to ask for assistance finding exceptional talent that their recruiting processes may have previously missed.

There are so many opportunities to ensure newcomers, local and international graduates are finding the jobs that are right for them and that put their skills, education, and experience to best use. Not only does this help newcomers and recent grads settle into Halifax and thrive, but it also benefits the Nova Scotian economy. As we get ready to celebrate 13 years of Connector Program success, we are so excited to continue this work that creates opportunities for growth.

Thanks to everyone for a great year, and we look forward to the next!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robyn Webb". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Robyn Webb

Director, Labour Market Development
Halifax Partnership



PRESENTING SPONSOR, RBC

Regional President, Atlantic Provinces

Young people are Canada's future talent and the future leaders. Prosperity for all Canadians is directly linked to our ability to prepare them to succeed in a fast-changing global economy.

At RBC, we are guided by our purpose of helping clients thrive and communities prosper. We believe that by helping new professionals unlock their potential and launch their careers, we can assist them with building a stronger future for themselves and a more prosperous Canada for us all.

That's why we're committed to helping identify solutions to the unique challenges facing new graduates and newcomers in their search for meaningful work.

Our goal is to ensure that youth and newcomers are more confident, better prepared and better equipped. We are actively working with educational institutions and partners in the private and public sectors on events and programs like the Halifax Partnership's Connector Program to co-create and provide access to long-term solutions to address these gaps.

The Connector Program has an admirable track record of success in helping job-seekers build their network and accelerating their transition to the workforce. I am really proud that RBC has many employees who volunteer as Connectors, living our values and supporting the program's impact.

This effort is an investment in our collective future—one which is meaningfully supporting future leaders to successfully transition to post-secondary education, training, or employment.

I'd like to offer the Halifax Partnership and Connector Program team a sincere congratulations on yet another successful year.

Chris Ronald
Regional President,
Atlantic Provinces
RBC



GOALS & OBJECTIVES

STRATEGIC GOAL:

Use the Connector Program to support the achievement of the goals set out in *People. Planet. Prosperity. Halifax's Inclusive Economic Strategy for 2022-27* to increase Halifax's population to 525,000 and to grow Halifax's labour force to 310,000 by 2027.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- 1 Sign up **100 new Connectors** annually
- 2 Sign up **400 new Connectees** annually
- 3 Ensure at least **100 Connectees find full-time work** in their field annually



I would encourage anyone immigrating to Halifax or seeking support for their job search to use the service. They can help you understand different industries, the Canadian work culture and how best you can fit in.

CREATING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS:

CONNECTOR PROGRAM HELPS NEWCOMERS BUILD NETWORKS AND FIND JOBS

In 2021, Oluymi Olaniyi, 48, moved to Halifax from Nigeria with his wife and two children aged 11 and 13-years old. He's one example of an educated and skilled professional with business experience who used the Connector Program to help him learn about and prepare for a successful career in Canada.

[Learn more about how the Connector Program helped Oluymi build his network and find work in Halifax.](#)

2022-23 RESULTS

Since the inception of the program 13 years ago, more than 1,646 Connectors have worked with over 4,855 Connectees. Over 2,065 jobs have been found within six months of Connectees participating in the Connector Program.

During the 2022-23 fiscal year, the Connector Program:

- 1 Signed up **55 new Connectors**
- 2 Signed up **440 new Connectees**
- 3 **205 Connectees** found full-time work in their field

During the 2022-23 fiscal year, **27 new participants** joined the African Nova Scotian (ANS) Connector Program, designed to help retain talented ANS post-secondary and college graduates, and skilled trades workers, and increase the representation of African Nova Scotians in the workforce. This program is a key pillar within the community-led *ANS Road to Economic Prosperity* five-year plan.

WE ARE PLEASED TO PROVIDE PROGRAM RESULTS FOR 2022-23.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD
New Participants	93	117	107	123	440
Immigrants	46	65	58	66	
International Grads	38	34	32	40	
Young Emerging Professionals	8	14	14	10	
Ukrainian Refugees	1	4	2	2	
Inter-Canadian Repatriate	0	0	1	5	
New Connectors	14	16	7	18	55
Jobs Found*	84	46	37	38	205
Immigrants	31	17	24	21	
International Grads	44	27	7	11	
Young Emerging Professionals	9	1	6	4	
Ukrainian Refugees	0	0	0	1	
Inter-Canadian Repatriate	0	1	0	1	

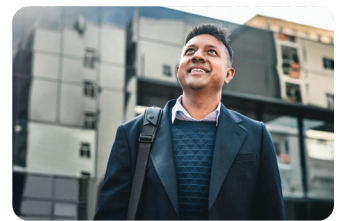
*For "Job" to be counted, the position must be related to participants' background, interest or experience level and located in Nova Scotia. Remote positions outside of Nova Scotia are not counted.

2009-23 CONNECTOR PROGRAM CUMULATIVE TOTAL

CONNECTEES	4,855
CONNECTORS	1,646
JOBS FOUND	2,065

I want to deeply thank you for all the support, guidance and motivation that you have given me during this tough time. Halifax Partnership played a great role in shaping me and expanding my professional connections. I always share my experience and story with my friends. I will still continue to be a part of this community so that I can learn, connect and guide more.
Thank you for all the connections and referrals.

**Vysak Nair, Connectee, on securing a new position
with the help of the Connector Program**



ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

ENGAGEMENT WITH CONNECTORS AND EMPLOYERS

Employers across Halifax Regional Municipality understand the value of participating in the Halifax Connector Program; Connectors appreciate the great opportunity to tap into new talent and expand their own professional networks as they meet with Connectees.

Our annual **Connector Appreciation Event**, held on December 7, 2022, brought us together to reflect on the impact this program has in our communities, and celebrates the Connectors who volunteer their time, expertise and willingly share their networks, year after year. Together we've helped businesses find the talent they need, and we've kept talented professionals right here in Halifax and Nova Scotia.

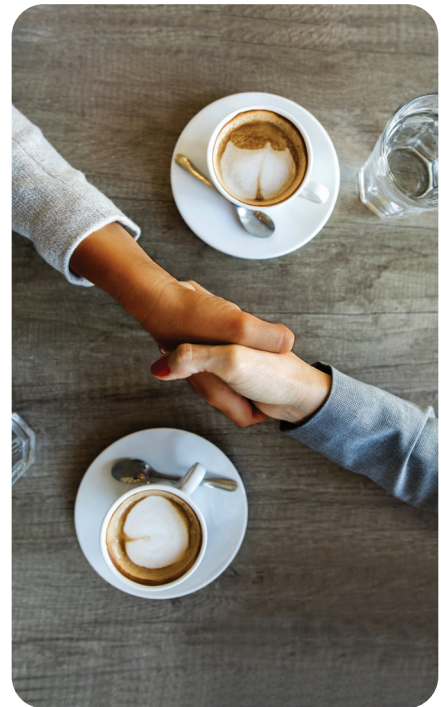
Connector of the Year Award recipients:

Nick Misener, Partner IT Recruitment, Venor

Heather Gojanovich, Director of Transformation & Innovation, RBC

Tanya Sieliakus, Founder & CEO, HR Pros

Wisdom Akpokighe received the **Connectee to Connector Award**



Heather Gojanovich, Nathan Laird, Wisdom Akpokighe, Nick Misener

Being a Connector is a simple ask. I meet with great people who want to build their lives here in Halifax and try to point them in the right direction. More often than not, I learn just as much, if not more, from them.

Nick Misener, Connector

RECRUITMENT AND ENGAGEMENT WITH CONNECTEES

Targeted recruitment efforts to attract newcomers and post-secondary students are key to retaining talent in our city. During the 2022-23 fiscal year, the Halifax Connector Team engaged in networking events to promote amazing opportunities for careers in Halifax and the importance of professional networking to connect to the key growth sectors in Nova Scotia.

- Canadian Immigrant Career Fair at Pier 21
- Career fair hosted for recently arrived Ukrainian refugees
- Digital Nova Scotia's Skills for Hire program
- Saint Mary's University Finance & Accounting Career Fair
- BIPOC Career Fair
- Halifax University Career Fair
- "Rowe Recess" at Dalhousie University in partnership with the Dal Commerce Society
- RBC IBM Innovation Challenge at SMU
- Acadia University Connector Networking Presentation in collaboration with Annapolis Valley Connector Program
- Partnered with RBC to facilitate two in-person presentations at SMU for MBA & MTEI students on networking, personal branding, and the Connector Program
- SHIFT Conference at Mount Saint Vincent University
- "Green Jobs for All" event held at Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC)
- NSCC IT Job Fair on the Leeds campus

The Halifax Connector Program provides Connectees with valuable development opportunities to help with job readiness, including confidence building, job searching tips, and training in the art of professional networking.

Here are a few highlights:

- Hosted job search events in partnership with Gerald Walsh Associates featuring presentations and discussions on job searching, resumes, interviewing, networking, and negotiating offers.
- Partnered with EduNova to present Halifax Connector Program Networking workshop to international students.
- Presentation for the Immigrant Settlement Association of Nova Scotia's (ISANS) Engineer Bridging Program on networking for engineers and the Connector Program. Halifax Connector has been presenting to each cohort of internationally educated engineers for the past five years.
- Presented to NSCC Business students on networking and the Connector Program, including effective networking techniques with these classes.



I really appreciate all the exposure, the search tips, recommendations, and the connections that the program was able to offer with your immense efforts of course.

Anass El Knalloufi, Connectee

COLLABORATION WITH PARTNERS

- RBC has been the presenting sponsor of the Connector Program since its inception. Their support and partnership are pivotal to the program's success. During the 2022-2023 fiscal year, we engaged in several activities with RBC including a joint presentation at the 2023 Metropolis Conference in Ottawa with RBC's Director of Digital Innovation, Heather Gojanovich. The presentation highlighted the success of the ongoing partnership between RBC and the Connector Program as a best-in-class example to follow.
- ACCES Employment from Toronto worked with the Connector Program to facilitate Connecting Canada events in Halifax, including information sessions, hiring events, and virtual networking events. Connecting Canada is a project focused on increasing immigration to smaller centers across Canada, showcasing opportunities for new immigrants to settle and thrive in areas outside of Toronto, Calgary, and Vancouver. All participants in the project are Permanent Residency holders who have not yet moved to Canada or have landed within the past two months.
- Collaborations with ISANS to support Ukrainian refugees looking to build their professional networks.
- Co-hosted an in-person networking event and panel discussion with the Canadian International Council at Saint Mary's University. This is a unique event in Halifax as it focuses on global careers such as international relations, international development and working with non-governmental organizations.
- Partnered with CPA Atlantic to host an in-person networking event and panel discussion for aspiring accountants. This was the continuation of a multi-year partnership and the event featured representatives from the Canada Revenue Agency, MNP, Grant Thornton and the Office of the Auditor General.
- The BEST Conference (Building Employability Skills for a Successful Transition) is held in Halifax each year for international students about to graduate, and who wish to stay in Nova Scotia. The Halifax Connector Program, along with the four other Nova Scotian Connector Programs participated in a presentation to 250 international students looking to expand their professional network and find meaningful employment in their communities.



Learn more about how the Connector Program has helped recruitment in the technology side of RBC's business.

CONNECTOR PROGRAM AND RBC HELP TALENT GROW THEIR NETWORKS

In a mid-size city like Halifax, connections are everything and when you are first starting your career or moving to a new country it can be tricky to know where to start – that's where the Connector Program comes in. In addition to funding the program, RBC employees have participated in the program as Connectors, which has helped the company recruit employees.

Halifax Connector Program

LEVERAGING THE PROGRAM

Atlantic Immigration Program

A big opportunity for our region, the Atlantic Immigration Program (AIP) provides employers with a more efficient process to hire foreign workers and international graduates. It speeds up processing at the federal level and gives candidates a work permit while waiting for permanent residency. AIP gives employers access to permanent intermediate-skilled labour, as well as highly skilled workers. Working with participants in our Connector Program, international students from local universities can also be hired right out of school, allowing employers to demonstrate to those students their commitment to supporting their permanent residency status. There is strong collaboration among the Halifax Partnership's AIP and Connector teams to connect businesses to local international graduates and immigrants.

International Recruitment Fairs

Halifax Partnership accompanied the Minister, Deputy Minister, and representatives from Nova Scotia's Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration and Regional Enterprise Networks throughout Nova Scotia to Destination Canada recruitments fairs in November. The events were held in Rabat, Morocco and Paris, France. The goal was to attract internationally trained professionals to consider Nova Scotia when looking to immigrate to Canada. Halifax Partnership had 85 job postings for this event.

International Cities Partnership Program with Fuenlabrada, Spain

Halifax Partnership participated in the International Cities Partnership Program a European Union program matching cities with similar challenges to share learning and progress. Halifax was paired with Fuenlabrada, Spain as both cities are focused on supporting newcomers. A key component of this information exchange was to outline the Halifax Connector Program and its proven model of intentional networking, plus illustrating the ways it can be customized to fit local needs.



In late June 2022 a delegation from Fuenlabrada visited Halifax, including Mayor Javier Ayala and several senior bureaucrats. The Halifax team hosted a Connector Program luncheon featuring current and former Connectees, Connectors, partners and sponsors to discuss the impact of the program. The Fuenlabrada team also had the opportunity to visit partners at ISANS and HRM's African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office (ANSAIO) to learn best practices.

In September 2022, a team from Halifax Partnership, including Mayor Mike Savage, travelled to Fuenlabrada to learn more about their labour market programs to support youth and newcomers.

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Javier Ayala Ortega, Fuenlabrada Mayor; Mike Savage, Halifax Mayor; Nancy Phillips, Vice President, Investment & International Partnerships, Halifax Partnership; Nathan Laird, Program Manager, Connector Program, Halifax Partnership; and Robyn Webb, Director Labour Market Development, Halifax Partnership

Entrepreneurship and Experiential Learning Working Group

Halifax Partnership continues its engagement with this provincial stakeholder table. We engage with universities and community colleges across Nova Scotia to focus efforts to increase the attraction and retention of international students and provide meaningful experiential learning opportunities to those interested.

National Connector Program

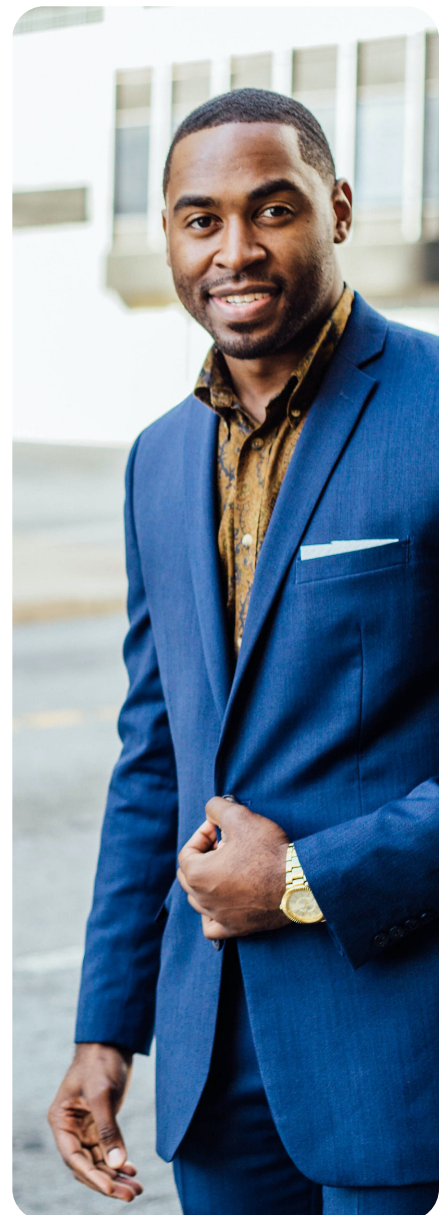
Hosted virtual and in-person meetings with Nova Scotia Connector Programs to provide continuous improvement of training, toolkits, tracking system, and access to the National Connector Program resource hub.

A Partnership and Sharing Agreement has been signed with Western Manitoba which will work with the Winnipeg Connector Program to cover the province of Manitoba. Moncton and Fredericton also joined the National Connector Program this year. Halifax Partnership now leads 31 Connector Programs across Canada.



I don't think I could have had this job opportunity without all of the work you put in to help me, thank you so much for everything!

Jacob White, Connectee



PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

Thank you to our many partners for their contribution to the success of the Halifax Connector Program in 2022-23:

- Access Employment Services
- Canadian International Council
- Construction Association of Nova Scotia
- Centre for Ocean Ventures & Entrepreneurship (COVE)
- CPA Atlantic
- Dalhousie University
- Digital Nova Scotia
- EduNova
- Fusion Halifax
- Gerald Walsh & Associates
- Halifax Chamber of Commerce
- Halifax Local Immigration Partnership
- Halifax Regional Municipality
- HR Pros
- Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS)
- Invest Nova Scotia
- Irving Shipyard
- Job Junction
- Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre
- Mount Saint Vincent University
- Nova Scotia Community College
- Nova Scotia's Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration
- NPower Canada
- NSCAD
- NS Works
- Pier 21 (Welcome Home to Canada Program)
- RBC
- Saint Mary's University
- YMCA



Thank you for the invaluable support and effort you have provided me through the Halifax Partnership Connector Program. I really appreciate your dedication to meet with me to get to know my background and understand my goals, in order to facilitate meaningful connections. Your commitment to assisting newcomers to navigate the job market is truly valuable, and I am grateful for the positive impact it has had on my career. I look forward to staying connected and hope that I can give back and contribute to the program's success in the future.

Carine Atmeh, Connectee

Connector Program

BEST PRACTICES

Halifax Partnership continually monitors and reviews the Halifax Connector Program's performance metrics and consistently seeks to improve the program. Here is an overview of best practices learned in 2022-2023:

- Efficiently and strategically sending vetted Connectee resumes to interested employers has been key to the success rate of jobs found.
- Halifax Partnership's Connector Program Manager and Coordinators developed a strong following on social media, particularly on LinkedIn. This provides further opportunities to share job postings, event updates, and labour market information and significantly increases word-of-mouth promotion of the Connector Program.
- Celebrating Connectors' contributions and passion for the program through recognition and networking events and social media increases engagement and recruitment of volunteer Connectors.
- Invite immigrants met during the Destination Canada recruitment fairs to become a Connectee when they are preparing to arrive in Halifax.
- Target in-person recruitment of Connectors and Connectees to support the needs of Halifax's key growth sectors.

LOOKING FORWARD

With continued funding support from the Province of Nova Scotia and with the investment of our presenting sponsor RBC Future Launch, the Halifax Connector Program will continue to connect immigrants and local and international graduates with opportunities to settle in Halifax, enrich the talent pool in our city, and play a key role in maintaining and enhancing Halifax's reputation as a welcoming city and a destination of choice for talent.

In 2023-2024 we look forward to implementing our annual plan with greater emphasis on the following:

- Celebrating the 15th anniversary of the Halifax Connector Program.
- Expanding the number of industry-specific job search events offered for Connectees.
- Utilizing technology to enhance communications with Connectors and improve engagement.
- Engaging more Connectors from diverse industries and backgrounds to better improve opportunities for the Connectees.
- Expanding relationships with local post-secondary institutions by supporting their initiatives and presenting to students on campus to raise awareness of the Halifax Connector Program.
- Development of a strong following on social media, particularly on LinkedIn among the Halifax Partnership Connector team.
- Conducting speed interviews and networking events with targeted partners and Halifax Partnership Investors.
- Leveraging the Partnership's other labour market and business growth programs and initiatives.

THANK YOU TO OUR
PRESENTING SPONSOR:



THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDER:



LEARN MORE

To learn more about the program, scan the QR code or contact Nathan Laird:



Nathan Laird

Manager, Connector Program
Halifax Partnership

nlaird@halifaxpartnership.com