

Call for Expression of Interest for Project Evaluation: Atlantic Autism Support Employment Network

Deadline: August 2nd, 2022

The Atlantic Autism Support Employment Network (AASEN) is seeking external evaluators for an iterative review of the activities, operations, and participant impact during the project's duration (April 2021 – March 2023). The purpose of this evaluation is to summarize key learnings from the program into two reports; an interim report (covering April 2021-May 2022) that can inform some shifts and changes to the delivery and structure of AASEN; the second will be a summative report (to be completed by March 31st, 2023) that will offer key learnings and insights, as well as an overview of the impact of the programs and key activities.

The successful proponent will receive \$8,000 (all applicable taxes included) to gather and validate data and develop the above noted reports for this project. They will be asked to develop some tools for data collection, while others are already in use tracking various program and outcome dimensions. Applicants are asked to submit a clear statement of interest and basic timeline to meet the deliverables they outline in their expression of interest.

About AASEN / The Project:

AASEN is funded by the Future Skills Canada (FSC) CoVid-19 Grant. The project was launched in April 2021 and is funded until March 2023.

The AASEN was established as a network of employment supports engineered to help individuals, agencies, and employers adapt and change to build a more inclusive and shock-proofed labor market in response to the disproportionate impact the pandemic has had on autistic job seekers.

The main aims of the project are

- (i) To support autistic individuals, specifically from underserved areas, in accessing employment opportunities. The AASEN was set to focus on skill development needed for a more resilient labor market after COVID-19, including but not limited to:
 - Working from home
 - Computer literacy

- Safety protocols including masks, sanitization, and social distancing
 - New social communication rules
 - Adjusting to change of routine
- (ii) To make sure the re-construction of the labor market, in the COVID-recovery, is inclusive and mindful of the need of resilient support structures for people with autism, and which can more easily withstand future economic shocks
- (iii) To create new partnerships and strengthen existing ones by improving coordination between provinces, address challenges of skills development and employment at each of the community-based autism partners.

The network is an expansion of Autism Nova Scotia's existing employment supports. Autism Nova Scotia is the coordinating partner, with the following provincial delivery partners:

- Autism Connections (Fredericton, NB)
- Stars for Life (Charlottetown, PE)
- Autism Nova Scotia Cape Breton Chapter (Sydney, NS)
- Autism Society of Newfoundland (St. Johns, NL)

The project runs an online job-searching/ skills development group named Career Quest (CQ), and an Employment Support Group (ESG). Facilitators also bridge participants into local employment support, creating more resilient support network for autistic job seekers and building a more inclusive labor market for all.

Deliverables:

The evaluator will engage in data collection and validation activities with AASEN's four previously named partner sites, the project partner coordinator, and the program's past and current participants.

The evaluator's deliverables are as follows:

- (i) To conduct data collection and evaluation with AASEN partners, facilitators, coordinator, and participants (end-users) as outlined in the project's logic model breakdown
- (ii) To create anonymized summary documents of your findings
- (iii) To create an interim report outlining learnings from the first 12 months that can inform some shifts and changes to the delivery and structure of AASEN
- (iv) To create a final report that addresses (a) stakeholders and evaluation goals, (b) learning-focused background and project description, (c) logic model hypothesis, (d)



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evaluation questions, data sources, and indicators, (e) evaluation results, and (f)

*discussion and implications.

* Discussion and implications are not limited to, but should touch on FSC's five interested areas of learning:

Dimensions	Key Questions
Expansion	Is there a need to expand the program or project to reach new population groups or different geographies? Why or why not?
Adoption	Are there opportunities for other organizations serving the populations in question to adopt elements of what was being explored here? Why or why not? What factors are critical here and in what context?
Investment or Partnership (actual or potential)	Did the project in question attract additional investment or partnerships support over the course of the FSC engagement? If so, what factors might have contributed?
Lessons for service delivery	What larger lessons for service delivery did the project provide?
Lessons for policy	What larger lessons for policies at various levels of government should be discussed?

Submission:

The expression of interest should be no longer than four pages in length. Your expression of interest should include the following components:

- 1.) A description of your organization including mission and activities
- 2.) A description of why you believe you are a good fit for evaluating AASEN
- 3.) An outline of any notable work you have completed that is relevant to this project
- 4.) A brief description of any methodology and approaches you plan to use
- 5.) A brief proposed timeline and plan for deliverables

Selection Criteria:

All proponents will be evaluated for selection on the criteria:

- Knowledge

- Experience
- Approach & methodologies
- Capability
- Capacity

Please note:

Experience conducting research with a disability-focused lens will be considered an asset.

Knowledge in the following areas is considered an asset:

- Atlantic Canada employment supports landscape
- Economic and social barriers facing Autistic job seekers
- The impact of CoVid-19 on Autistic job seekers

Deadline:

Please submit an expression of interest to avanos@autismns.ca by August 2nd, 2022.