



Atlantic Provinces Community
College Consortium

Consortium des collèges
communautaires des
provinces de l'Atlantique

Atlantic Provinces Community College Consortium (APCCC)

Roundtable on Improving Competitiveness and Productivity In Atlantic Canada

Final Report

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1. Executive Summary

Atlantic Canada's public community colleges are instrumental to the social, cultural and economic development of the Atlantic region. These institutions have a key role to play in improving the region's competitiveness and productivity.

The Atlantic Provinces Community College Consortium (APCCC) is a network of colleges including College of the North Atlantic, Holland College, New Brunswick Community College/Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick, Nova Scotia Community College and the following four provincial government departments responsible for community colleges: the Department of Training and Development of the Province of New Brunswick and the Departments of Education of each of the Provinces of Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia. As such, the APCCC provides a framework for enhanced interprovincial collaboration and cooperation among community colleges in the Atlantic region.

The Issue: Competitiveness and Productivity in Atlantic Canada

The APCCC recognized that there were a number of issues that impacted competitiveness and productivity in the Atlantic region. In concert with Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA), the APCCC proposed to identify practical approaches to improving Atlantic Canada's economy.

Key Action Areas

It is the view of the APCCC that the competitiveness and productivity of business and industry is impacted by a number of issues including, but not limited to:

- **Literacy/under-education**
- **Seasonal workers/demographic changes**
- **Aboriginal needs**
- **Applied research/innovation; technology adaptation/adoption; and commercialization**
- **Immigration needs and constraints**

APCCC recognized that the extent to which these issues impact the economic landscape of Atlantic Canada was not readily available to decision makers and post-secondary institutions. It is the belief of the APCCC; however, that inherent in each of these issues are opportunities to improve the lives of Atlantic Canadians within the context of a vibrant economy.

The Roundtable on Improving Competitiveness and Productivity explored these issues through a review of the literature, a series of interviews conducted with key informants, and roundtable discussions held with approximately forty participants from provincial and federal departments and agencies and the four Atlantic colleges, as is further detailed in the following report. It provided a venue for key stakeholders to explore opportunities that could enhance the contribution colleges make to improving Atlantic Canada's competitiveness and productivity.

The Opportunities: Four Projects for Near-Term Implementation

Four clear projects emerged as having the full support of the group. They offer an opportunity for APCCC members across Atlantic Canada to work collaboratively and with other partners to take action while using these projects as templates for further collective work. Specifically, the project concepts focused on:

- Providing opportunities for community college staff, in all four provinces, to engage with local businesses in applied research and innovation projects that have potential for commercialization.
- Using the community colleges as a vehicle for an Atlantic Canada labour market research project.
- Engaging Atlantic Canada's business and industry leaders through an Atlantic Canada Employers' Forum to address information gaps related to employer skills requirements.

- Addressing under-employment in Atlantic Canada through including the under-educated and under-prepared in processes leading to improved opportunities for engagement in the workforce.

Participants at the Roundtable concluded that these projects, if implemented, will help to establish new partnerships, gather new data and develop new methods for collective work on improving competitiveness and productivity in Atlantic Canada. As always, continued dialogue, partnership and cooperation are imperative to ensuring such initiatives are met with success.

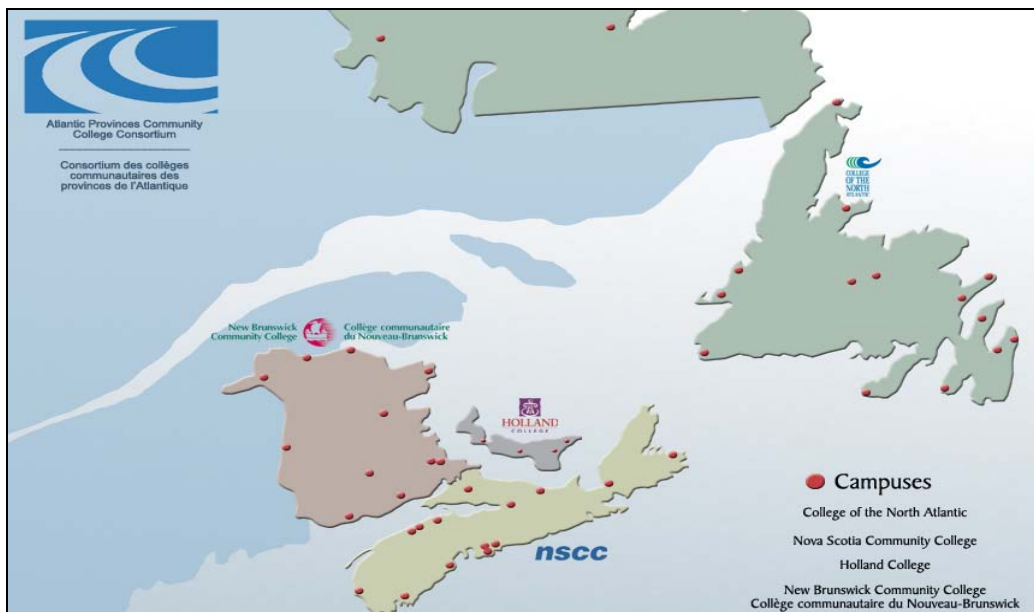
2. Introduction

Atlantic Canada's public community colleges are instrumental to the social, cultural and economic development of the Atlantic region. As such, these institutions are critical to improving the region's competitiveness and productivity. Members of this important network include the College of the North Atlantic, Holland College, the New Brunswick Community College/Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick and the Nova Scotia Community College. These institutions offer a combined fifty campuses and additional learning centres spread throughout the Atlantic Provinces, including many rural locations impacted by issues of competitiveness and productivity.

Atlantic community colleges make a significant contribution to preparing the future workforce for Atlantic-based business and industry. By engaging in applied research and innovation activities, retraining existing employees and providing lifelong learning opportunities for the general population, these institutions further stimulate the region's competitiveness and productivity.

Key contributions of Atlantic Canada's public community colleges include:

- Providing programs and services to 25,000 full-time students and 60,000 part-time students on an annual basis.
- Contributing \$228 million directly into the economy, with indirect contributions of a further \$1.5 billion.
- Providing practical solutions to labour force requirements. Statistics show that 112,100 of the net 178,400 jobs created between 1991 and 2001 required community college credentials.



Role of the Atlantic Provinces Community College Consortium (APCCC)

Recognizing the significant contributions made by community colleges, the Council of Atlantic Premiers (CAP) determined that these contributions could be enhanced through collaboration at a regional level. To achieve this objective, the Atlantic Provinces Community College Consortium (APCCC) was formed. The APCCC provides a framework for enhanced interprovincial collaboration and cooperation among the Atlantic public community colleges. Its members, as previously mentioned, include the four public colleges in Atlantic Canada and the four provincial government departments responsible for community colleges. The APCCC reports annually on its activities to the Council of Atlantic Premiers through the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training (CAMET).

Roundtable on Competitiveness and Productivity

To continue evolving their role in social and economic development, colleges must understand and embrace the new and emerging realities facing Atlantic Canadians and seek innovative responses to ensure the region remains competitive and productivity levels are high. With this backdrop, the APCCC recognized there were a number of issues that impacted competitiveness and productivity in the region where colleges had the potential to make a positive difference. Hence, the APCCC entered into discussions with the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) to explore how the agencies' complementary mandates could be combined to identify practical approaches to improving Atlantic Canada's economy.

The result was a partnership resulting in a "Roundtable on Improving Competitiveness and Productivity in Atlantic Canada". This report provides an overview of the processes leading to the roundtable and the outcomes for action.

The Issue: Competitiveness and Productivity in Atlantic Canada

It is the view of the APCCC that the competitiveness and productivity of business and industry is impacted by a number of issues including, but not limited to the five Key Action Areas identified below. As they represent issues of current concern to a range of partners active in economic development in Atlantic Canada, the five Key Action Areas were identified as a focus for this project. The ultimate intent of the project was to identify specific projects that could impact some or all of these areas:

Key Action Areas

- **Literacy / Under-Education**
- **Aboriginal Needs**
- **Seasonal Workers / Demographic Changes**
- **Immigration Needs and Constraints**
- **Applied Research / Innovation; Technology Adaptation / Adoption; and Commercialization**

Use of this Document

This document is a compilation of information and opinions gathered from key informants and participants at the roundtable; it is not a research document or definitive study. Competitiveness and productivity issues are a focus of many departments of government, associations and other organizations. This document will serve as a departure point for launching projects and research into these issues.

The scope of competitiveness and productivity issues is vast - an early challenge was to find a common definition of the issues in order to focus discussions. Different provinces have different economic and demographic circumstances and community colleges must strive to address provincial needs first and foremost. Nevertheless, a clear consensus emerged around near-term project priorities.

The literature review provides a sample of references to the issues and was used to stimulate discussion. It is not a definitive list of all references nor was a comprehensive analysis done of the studies.

Who was Involved in the Project?

The project was guided by a Steering Committee which included the Executive Director of the APCCC and senior staff members of the four Atlantic community colleges. In accordance with a project methodology outlined in Appendix I, key informant interviews were conducted to include stakeholders from the member colleges, local agencies and the region's provincial governments.

At the college level, interviews were conducted with senior administrators including the Presidents of Nova Scotia Community College and Holland College and the CEO of the New Brunswick Community College. Staff members in business development, program development, research, adult/community education, programs, and workplace learning were also interviewed.

Key informant interviews also engaged specialists from ACOA, the policy group at Industry Canada, and policy staff at Service Canada regarding innovation, aboriginal issues, rural issues, research and policy, and intergovernmental affairs. At the provincial government level, interviews were held with specialists in research and development and innovation, business development, education, training and immigration.

3. The Literature Review

The following is a high-level review of issues and information related to the five above-mentioned Key Action Areas, as identified through the literature review. For more detailed information and a complete list of the studies surveyed, please see Appendix IV to this report.

The literature review findings are organized under the following headings within each of the five Key Action Areas:

- Key Issues
- Key opportunities

1) Literacy / Under-Education

The research on literacy confirmed that this issue is a prime concern to the community college system. The impact of students with low literacy skills on the classroom environment has been documented. Additionally, young adults with lower literacy skills will be less likely to enter the community college system and therefore less able to positively impact the economy.

Key Issues

- Adults with lower literacy skills read less and participate less in the economy.
- Illiterate students put added pressure on the community college system.
- Unemployment, under-employment and literacy issues are related.
- Employers are not yet encouraging employees to enhance their literacy and other basic workplace skills. Many employers lack awareness of existing programs and suppliers of training.
- Teachers may have very little understanding of the challenges families face regarding literacy issues.
- Demand for skilled workers cannot be filled unless we improve the literacy of older workers.

Key Opportunities

- Improved curricula, instructional and assessment methods for adult literacy.
- Investigate the literacy requirements of specific industrial sectors.

- When training, use learning contexts, tasks, materials, and procedures taken from the future situation (employment) in which the learner will be functioning.
- Explore alternative delivery modes for literacy development using advanced learning technologies.
- Program evaluation. Numerous literacy initiatives have been introduced, but they do not appear to have been evaluated on a pan-Atlantic basis.
- Assess prior learning and experience.
- Awareness initiatives around literacy - its cost for managers and employees.

2) Aboriginal Education

Aboriginal education issues touch many areas of concern including under-education and seasonal workers. The literature indicates that there are many provincial and federal initiatives which are attempting to address these issues, some of which may provide specific opportunities for community colleges to partner with or support lead agencies and departments.

Key Issues

- The health and vitality of First Nation communities is directly linked to the overall educational successes of its members, including culture and language competencies.
- Some adults need transition programs to help them to move towards their career goals.
- Barriers include:
 - Lack of preparation for university or college
 - Feelings of social discrimination, isolation, and loneliness at postsecondary institutions
 - Difficulty meeting financial obligations of postsecondary education
 - Lack of respect for Aboriginal culture and cultural differences at the postsecondary level
 - Family demands imposing financial and time restraints on postsecondary education
 - Lack of understanding of Aboriginal issues by managers/employers
- Little research has been devoted to the problems of day-care, housing, and relocation costs for Aboriginal postsecondary students.
- Challenges often stem from the need for personal and academic support networks.
- Advanced education is usually located in urban areas, which requires leaving the aboriginal community.

Key Opportunities

- Develop/enhance programs designed to prepare students for the transition from community living to that of a postsecondary student.
- Increase the presence of Aboriginal staff and faculty.
- Leverage partnerships between Aboriginal organizations, academia and government that could identify the skills gaps between industry demand and Aboriginal supply. On-the-job training could be used to help fill those gaps.

3) Seasonal Workers / Demographic Changes

Seasonal employment was found to be a common Atlantic Canadian issue, especially among young adults. There is considerable literature identifying demographic challenges that relate to this issue which are a concern to all four provincial governments and the federal government. It is clear that Atlantic Canada has particular challenges in this area.

Key Issues

- Atlantic Canada's economy is much more seasonal than the rest of Canada – a 12% seasonal variation in employment compared with a 5% variation nationally.

- Seasonal employment in Atlantic Canada is mostly rural.
- High seasonality in Atlantic Canada may be policy induced. Policies to increase tourism, protect the fishing industry, etcetera, may have the effect of increasing seasonality in Atlantic Canada.
- Many seasonal workers regard the EI program as a requisite form of income support.
- Seasonal workers are much more likely to have lower levels of education. A lack of education can also preclude these workers from gaining alternative employment in other industries.
- The fish and fish processing sector accounts for the largest proportion of the estimated 122,000 seasonal employees in the Atlantic region. Tourism related industries – accommodation and food services and culture and recreation – form the second largest sector.
- A low birth rate means the number of young people in the Atlantic region will continue to *decline*, shrinking supply for seasonal industries, especially in rural areas.

Key Opportunities

- Recommend changes to federal policies that would enable access to funding for those not attached to the Employment Insurance Program to support their enrolment in approved training and education programs.
- The literature review uncovered a variety of references to apparent opportunities perceived to be part of the mandate of the community college system. Career counseling, literacy training were two areas noted.

4) Immigration Needs and Constraints

Immigration is viewed by some governments as one way to address the forecasted worker shortages of the future. Available literature indicates that most industries, *even traditionally seasonal industries*, are forecasting shortages. The challenge will be to define an appropriate role for community colleges, likely linked to the general opportunities defined as gap training.

Key Issues

- Nationally, immigration will play an ever-increasing role in Canadian labour force growth.
- Between 1995 and 2003 the numbers of arrivals to Atlantic Canada dropped.
- Research shows that immigrants prefer to settle in urban centres.
- Immigrants face barriers regarding recognition of their qualifications and international work experience.
- Demographic projections forecast falling worker counts for Atlantic Canada. Most industries, including the fishery, are forecasting significant challenges finding workers in the near future.
- Some provinces like Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and New Brunswick operate extensive immigration websites and employ staff who perform marketing functions.
- Immigrants have the opportunity to take initial language assessments and classes through English as a Second Language programs (ESL). However, the minimum requirement for success in a community college program would be at least a Level 8 ESL.
- Immigrants often lack the basic literacy skills needed for college-level studies. Many of these students will learn English best within the context of technical education.
- Gaps in service exist with regard to occupation-specific, sector-specific, and employment-specific language training; these gaps are limiting employment prospects.

Key Opportunities

- Target international students for immigration because they are here and know our communities.
- Colleges can:
 - Collaborate with education and research institutions such as the Atlantic Metropolis Centre/Centre Metropolis Atlantique, the Atlantic Institute for Market Studies, and the

Atlantic Provinces Economic Council to undertake required research that is responsive and suits the needs of government and partners.

- With the assistance of research institutions, develop research capacity to learn more about why immigrants stay or move on.

5) Applied Research /Innovation, Technology Adaptation /Adoption, and Commercialization

The community college system is already involved in applied research. The literature indicates that there are further opportunities in this area that are well aligned with community college capabilities. A major challenge is that the current research funding mechanisms appear to favour universities. The literature also indicates that opportunities exist for a pan-Atlantic approach to research in the community college system.

Key issues

- Gaps in innovation capabilities presently outweigh strengths and assets. In terms of the most important asset - people - there are many challenges. There is a need to foster a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship in the population at large.
- Atlantic Canada does not have critical mass in many of its research and innovation systems infrastructures. There is a need for an Atlantic Canada innovation strategy and sustained investment.
- Atlantic Canada companies invest less in research and development than the national average. There is a need to build greater industry capacity to undertake applied research and development and to increase industry's receptor capacity for the innovations resulting from applied research and development in the region.
- Agencies and researchers have scarce resources and compete with each other for limited financial resources. There is a lack of access to long-term research funding.
- Entrenched bias exists – socially and politically – towards a resource-based economy.

Key Opportunities

- Investigate opportunities for research, development and innovation within emerging sectors in Atlantic Canada, including: aquaculture, biotechnology/pharmaceutical and medical technologies and products, environmental industries, ocean technology, oil and gas, and information and communications technologies.
- Capitalize on a variety of basic and applied research opportunities in Atlantic Canada in areas like software, neuroscience and genomics, functional foods, networked supercomputers, wireless systems labs, occupational health and safety, research into climate change and soil remediation, for example.
- Capitalize on existing physical and intellectual assets. Can federal laboratories assist with commercialization on behalf of industry? Pilots could involve labs at RCMP, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, National Research Council Military, Health Canada, Agriculture, others. Can colleges facilitate these broader partnerships?
- Develop university/community college system research partnerships and joint ventures.
- Work with university based commercialization initiatives like Springboard.
- Undertake pilots that more fully engage community college staff with business in specific applied research projects.
- Broaden the pan-Atlantic agenda with industry partners with reference to research and development.
- Develop a common vision for a culture of innovation in the community college system.

The Literature Review - Emerging Themes

The challenge for all participants was to consider the approximately fifty studies, strategies and reports when defining the opportunities that address competitiveness and productivity in the context of each college's unique circumstances. In this context, there were clear emerging themes:

- Community colleges are at a disadvantage relative to present applied research funding formulas. There appear to be many partnerships active in the applied research area and some could align with a broader community college approach to research and development.
- Community colleges must be prepared to work in extended partnerships. There are numerous partners active in competitiveness and productivity initiatives; the community college system can help address gaps because of their linkages to industry.
- Under-employment is a well documented challenge which community colleges are addressing now through pilots. These could be leveraged at a pan-Atlantic level.
- Community colleges are having an impact on the innovation agenda although this is not widely known. There has been limited pan-Atlantic focus so far.
- Community colleges have a role to play in addressing Aboriginal issues; however, this role has not been clearly defined. Any role undertaken by community colleges must include input from the Aboriginal community to ensure that these efforts are responsive to their unique needs. Community colleges should look for opportunities to support the programs and initiatives of governments and other agencies that have specific mandates in the area.

4. Key Informant Input

Key informants were interviewed via telephone and in person over the course of two weeks in September, 2005. Many of the interviews were face-to-face meetings on site at the colleges. Interview guides were developed to ensure that the input captured was specific and consistent, so as to ensure its capacity to further discussed at the roundtable. Project ideas were discussed in the context of what was practical and would support the overall intent of addressing issues of competitiveness and productivity.

The input from key informants was gathered under the following topic areas:

- The community college opportunity
- Mandate issues for colleges and partners
- Partnership issues

Key Informants

Key informants helped to refine the understanding of issues and craft the content of the Roundtable Backgrounder which was put in circulation prior to the roundtable. In all, more than twenty-five people participated in the interview process. Staff from the following organizations provided their helpful advice and input:

- College of the North Atlantic
- Holland College
- New Brunswick Community College/Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick
- Nova Scotia Community College
- Nova Scotia Department of Business Development and Innovation
- Prince Edward Island Business Development
- Nova Scotia Advisory Board on Colleges and Universities
- Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Innovation, Trade and Rural Development

- Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs
- Business New Brunswick - Immigration
- Business New Brunswick - R&D and Innovation
- Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency
- Service Canada
- Industry Canada
- Atlantic Provinces Chambers of Commerce
- Atlantic Provinces Economic Council

Key Informant Observations

Discussion occurred on a variety of issues and interviewees took the time to provide detailed ideas. Following are the key observations that emerged from this process, in that they are seen to be issues that must be considered as the APCCC and its members move to implement specific projects:

The Community College Opportunity

- Play to community college strengths by defining and collaborating on new models that connect with industry in closing the skill requirement gap.
- The critical value that the community college system delivers is a *relationship with industry*. Observers outside the college system uniformly recognized this and suggested that the bigger opportunity would be to leverage these relationships further.
- Too often discussions on innovation overlook the community college system. There is a need to elevate understanding of the role colleges play in impacting our economy.
- Stay focused on the demand side of the market - what do employers want? Do we have enough data?
- Focus on building relationships across the community college system over time.
- Businesses sometimes feel they need more responsive research partners than universities. Examples of very effective applied research partnerships in Alberta include both the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology and Southern Alberta Institute of Technology).
- There was sense that some of the projects listed for discussion in the Literature Review would appear to have funding potential.

Mandate Issues for Colleges and Partners

- Keep project ideas practical and on mandate. Contacts inside and outside the college system suggested that the competitiveness and productivity theme could provide needed focus.
- Be aware that mandate and policy issues make it difficult for the four provinces to work together on some common projects.
- Challenges may exist with addressing First Nation's issues on a pan-Atlantic level. What can member colleges do individually to enhance existing programs and initiatives designed to support the unique needs and issues experienced by aboriginals in their communities? What can they do that is not currently being done?

Partnership Issues

- Community colleges need to develop and enhance partnership opportunities with universities in the area of applied research and innovation. A number of key informants noted that community colleges have strong relationships with industry. Opportunities for increased partnerships with universities could lead to research and innovation projects with greater opportunities for commercialization. Expanded collaborative activity in applied research projects was seen to be a genuine opportunity.

- Key informants in various provincial and federal departments felt that funding would likely be available for some of the types of projects that were listed in the Literature review document. ACOA staff suggested that a broad engagement of partners around project opportunities would increase the chances of funding success. There were suggestions that APCCC and its members should begin immediately to define and formalize broad partnerships before submitting proposals for funding.
- ACOA can play the role of facilitator on both specific projects and larger more general partnerships – we need to create multiple entry points for ACOA to be most effective.

5. Roundtable Summary

**APCCC Roundtable October 17 and 18, 2005
Memramcook, NB**

The Setting

The Memramcook Institute provided a central location and appropriate rural retreat for these deliberations. Over the course of a day and a half the delegates met new people, exchanged ideas and reached consensus on an appropriate direction regarding competitiveness and productivity issues, to be undertaken under APCCC leadership.

The Attendees

Attendees included representatives of the four Atlantic community colleges, namely the College of the North Atlantic (CNA), Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC), Holland College, the New Brunswick Community College (NBCC), Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick (CCNB), the four Provincial Governments, ACOA, Industry Canada, Service Canada and the Atlantic Provinces Chamber of Commerce. A complete list of attendees can be found in Appendix II.

The Challenge

The challenge for this group was to consider whether issues of competitiveness and productivity could be addressed effectively by the APCCC and its members, and if so, what sort of collective action could be taken through project work?

Issues of competitiveness and productivity are the focus of many governments at this time. There are many different mandates impacting them and many different activities underway. Issues considered included:

- How can the APCCC and its members take action that is appropriate?
- Do we know all the players and what they are doing?
- Is there a role that we can agree upon, given this busy landscape?
- Can the APCCC and its members realistically impact these issues?

It was uncertain at the outset whether or not the group would reach agreement. They worked very hard to explore the issues. In the end the group did agree upon areas of focus and specific projects with a clear role for APCCC and its members. These focus areas and specific projects are further outlined in section five of this document.

The Roundtable Process

The Roundtable event was the culmination of a project that took place over a period of four months. A literature review was undertaken which provided background on the issues under consideration. Interviews with key informants then helped refine this information, add more context and specific ideas about potential projects. This helped support and enhance participants' contributions at the Roundtable. Facilitated discussions and breakout work were used to define areas of interest and specific projects that met criteria for selection.

Documents developed to support the roundtable process

Two discussion documents were developed and distributed prior to the roundtable. The first comprised a literature review that presented an overview of information gathered from a review of approximately fifty studies and documents and included a comprehensive list of ideas designed to trigger discussion. The second was a Roundtable Backgrounder that provided a summary of discussions which took place during field visits to the colleges, details of key informant input, and a refined list of project ideas that had been developed among partners. These documents inform the key components of Appendices II and III, respectively.

Roundtable Discussions

The facilitator led the group through a series of presentations each of which was followed by a breakout session. The intent was to begin with a high level discussion of the issues leading gradually to a definition of focus for the community college system. The group was briefed on the overall Roundtable project work plan, highlights of the literature review, key informant input and the list of projects that had been developed with the input of college staff and partners.

The group was broken into teams. Each team was asked to begin the roundtable by engaging in a general discussion question. In the context of competitiveness and productivity, teams were asked to consider the following five areas of interest in their discussions:

FIVE PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACTION
Literacy / Under-Education
Aboriginal Needs
Seasonal Workers / Demographic Changes
Immigration Needs and Constraints
Applied Research / Innovation; Technology Adaptation / Adoption; and Commercialization

Breakout Discussions Results

Following is a summary of the breakout discussion themes and results. Key areas for action have been identified for each of the breakout discussions. The discussion results served to develop and eventually shape four specific project areas to be undertaken collaboratively by participants in the near-term. These projects are further defined in Section 5 of this report.

Breakout Discussion 1

DISCUSSION THEME	CAN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM IMPACT COMPETITIVENESS AND PRODUCTIVITY ISSUES?
SUMMARY	Many discussion points were explored and specific and general ideas developed. After the team presentations, the plenary group was asked to identify any clear messages emerging with reference to action the community college system could take to impact competitiveness and productivity. The consensus was that community colleges should become change agents.

Results of Breakout Discussion 1

KEY AREAS FOR ACTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Position the community college system in the centre of a partnership continuum including universities and industry.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lobby for access to funds for research and development and innovation with departments of education and other levels of government. Tell the ROI (return on investment) story and profile the legitimate momentum that exists in applied research within the community college system.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define how we can engage the next generation of students.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop better liaisons and projects with industry in training and research and development partnerships - expand and leverage the links we have with industry.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate on labour market research. Available demographic data is very dated. Colleges can play a role in data collection and analysis.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show our communities that the community college system can offer research information that helps them with their economic planning.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Center the literacy issue on the underemployed where specific action can be taken, particularly in concert with industry partners.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work in broader partnerships including labour and communities as well as industry.

Breakout Discussion 2

DISCUSSION THEME	PRIORITIZING THE IDENTIFIED PROJECT IDEAS
SUMMARY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This session reviewed the comprehensive list of project ideas outlined in the literature review. Groups were asked to generate a long list of project ideas and then shortlist them into: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “A” List – a “must do” list - the opportunities are compelling; partners are present and there is a sense of urgency “B” List - good ideas that have merit but are not actionable at present Existing ideas were debated and new ideas were explored. All ideas were reviewed with the plenary group and a clear set of groupings appeared. It was felt that the community college system could be an agent for change by focusing on the following general areas:

Results of Breakout Discussion 2

KEY AREAS FOR ACTION
“A” List: Project areas of near-term priority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applied research and innovation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding labour market needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy/Under-education
“B” List: Project areas of longer term priority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immigration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographics

Breakout Discussion 3

DISCUSSION THEME	IDENTIFICATION OF SPECIFIC PROJECT AREAS FOR COLLABORATIVE ACTION (NEAR TERM)
SUMMARY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The final breakout session built on the previous discussions and focused on developing selected project areas. The group was asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Focus on the project areas as outlined above ◦ Use the background materials and discussions to scope project ideas outlining potential partners, time frames and work plan steps • Consensus was reached on specific project areas (presented in Section 5) for collective work. All were felt to be areas where community colleges had collective power and could make a significant difference by <i>working together and with partners</i>.

Results of Breakout Discussion 3

KEY AREAS FOR ACTION
The following specific project areas were identified for collaborative action in the near-term. These areas are further detailed in Section 5 of this report.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for community college staff in all four provinces to engage with local businesses in applied research projects that have potential for commercialization
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atlantic Canada Labour Market Research Project
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atlantic Canada Employer’ Forum
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement – Addressing Under-Employment in Atlantic Canada

6. Four Projects for Near-Term Implementation

Four clear projects emerged as having the full support of the group. They offer an opportunity for APCCC members across Atlantic Canada to work with other partners to take action while using these projects as templates for further collective work.

1) Opportunities for Community College Staff in Commercialization of Research Projects

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Over the years community colleges have collaborated with industry in many ways, including providing for job shadowing, co-op work terms and internships. However, there has been very little collaboration involving faculty and their aligned industries. Budget constraints experienced by community colleges over the last decade have largely prevented this collaboration and the backbone of our economy – small and medium enterprises (SME's) - lack the resources required to consider applied research activities. Faculty is available and keen to assist, but lack the time. Providing release time would stimulate two-way collaboration while simultaneously creating practical industry research and enriched and current instruction references.

KEY PROJECT ELEMENTS

- A supported “release time” component that allows interested and capable college staff to work within industry on applied research projects
- Terms of reference to guide the definition and management requirements of these projects
- Projects that are specifically chosen in each province based on local industry conditions; the best industry partners and the potential for impact in the local or regional economy
- A requirement to track progress and report results and best practices
- A project plan that solicits partners and describes actions that move the project forward in the commercialization continuum
- An overall evaluation of the individual projects and collective efforts by APCCC members, with a view to describing a future model for collective efforts by APCCC members

2) Atlantic Canada Labour Market Research Project

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The literature review and key informant interviews recognized a lack of current labour market data. During discussions at the roundtable, significant opportunities were identified as partners agreed that data was out-of-date and incomplete. Detailed employer information on current and future occupational imbalances is needed for career and program decision-making.

KEY PROJECT ELEMENTS

- The landscape related to labour market data - the partners, the data that exists, the gaps, and the gaps the community college system may be able to fill
- Potential uses for the data
- The collaborative framework - the overall partnership model
- The role for all four colleges as individual (provincial) and consolidated (Atlantic Canada) sources of current labour market data
- An ongoing plan for the dissemination of the data and related analysis
- How community colleges are seen as a key source of supply-side data and analysis that may be used to support broad industry/college curriculum planning initiatives

3) An Atlantic Canada Employers' Forum

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Colleges have a number of ways in which they currently work with industry and specific employers. This project idea springs from the notion that an informal but perhaps ongoing forum would seek to engage employers in a variety of initiatives that deal directly with competitiveness and productivity issues. This dialogue would include perspectives from within the four Atlantic provinces along with an overall regional perspective. An initial Atlantic Canada conference with industry partners could define better ways to work together to address information gaps regarding employer skills requirements. Subsequent forums could be face-to-face or virtual and ongoing.

KEY PROJECT ELEMENTS

- Creation of collaborative sub-groups that will work on key issues as identified by APCCC members and industry partners
- Identification of partners who can contribute information, analysis and/or funding for projects
- Agreement on methods and frequency of information dissemination
- Definition of research projects that can support mutual priorities
- Commitment to share results with industry and government agencies
- Definition of a process to match employer needs with curriculum for industrial and government employers
- Eventually establishing a mechanism for comprehensive joint human resources planning
- Making this information available to labour and communities

4) Engagement – Addressing Under-Employment in Atlantic Canada

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The literature review included a number of studies that have been written on this subject. Field visits to the colleges found that under-employment is an issue that concerns all colleges and communities. A number of practical initiatives have been scoped. They were discussed by the participants at the roundtable. It was felt that this area requires specific collective action if the fundamental issues of competitiveness and productivity are to be addressed.

KEY PROJECT ELEMENTS

- Establishing an APCCC sub-group to gather best practices information
- Sharing this information with government and industry partners
- Undertaking pilot projects. Examples include the PLAR (Prior Learning Assessment Recognition) pilot. Define the PLAR measures to use when assessing under-employed workers, technology solutions to delivery of literacy training, etcetera.
- Evaluating the above-mentioned pilots

7. General Recommendations

The following recommendations are provided to help create the momentum required to launch projects and manage them successfully. Because of its structure and staffing, the APCCC should play the role of coordinator of projects and channel for communications about these projects. Organizational suggestions include:

1. Review the results of the roundtable with the APCCC Board and seek approval to form a Steering Committee or other mechanism to guide the overall approach to addressing competitiveness and productivity issues through the specific projects identified in the roundtable process.
2. Communicate the results of the roundtable broadly to the community college community, participants and potential partners.
3. Expand the working partnership group beyond current APCCC contacts, defining specific working partnerships with Service Canada, Industry Canada, and other partners.
4. Identify staff interest in the project areas that emerged from the roundtable.
5. Define the process that the APCCC will use to scope, approve, fund and monitor various projects.
6. Further define the identified competitiveness and productivity projects, using this report as a departure point for discussions with staff and partners. Move quickly to implement projects where there is energy, momentum and apparent partners.
7. Use the process of working together to gather data on what works and what does not to further collaborative efforts across all four provinces.
8. Host an annual symposium of active partners (APCCC members and beyond) to discuss project progress, record best practices and review the overall APCCC-driven approach to competitiveness and productivity issues.
9. Communicate community college impacts in terms of economic development to the community, industry, funders, and other stakeholders. Expand the basis of information available to reinforce this message. Agree on joint marketing materials that can be developed and used by all colleges to accomplish this.
10. Create a central APCCC repository for competitiveness and productivity data, studies, reports and references.

8. Conclusion

With the completion of the **Roundtable on Competitiveness and Productivity in Atlantic Canada**, the APCCC has set the stage for a long-term pan-Atlantic contribution from its members. The APCCC has successfully brought together senior staff from the four provincial governments, four community colleges and federal government partner departments and agencies. The project has helped to define the focus for immediate action and long term partnership development.

Project achievements include:

- Completion of a literature review which provides a reference point for ongoing projects
- Facilitation of a roundtable for joint planning by many stakeholders and partners
- Achieving consensus that there is a role for the APCCC and its members in addressing competitiveness and productivity in Atlantic Canada
- Agreement that the APCCC should facilitate project activity in this area
- Obtaining delegate commitment to help move projects forward in their organizations
- Definition of four projects that have potential for collaboration across Atlantic Canada and will act as templates for further project work

The APCCC and its members have exciting projects to undertake. These projects will help to establish new partnerships, gather new data and develop new methods for collective work on issues of competitiveness and productivity.

9. APPENDICES

Appendix I – Project Methodology

Appendix II – Roundtable Participants

Appendix III – Roundtable Backgrounder

Appendix IV – Literature Review