



# The Food Island Student Bursary

ATLANTIC YOUTH BEST PRACTICES WORKSHOP

September 17 & 18, Halifax

# Key Focus and Objectives

- ▶ The Team Food Island Student Bursary Initiative was aimed at helping to address labour shortages in rural PEI.
- ▶ It is a bursary program to recruit students to work in the seafood processing and agriculture/farming sectors.
- ▶ It was undertaken by the PEI Seafood Processors Association, the PEI Federation of Agriculture, and the PEI Agriculture Sector Council.
- ▶ A series of promotional and marketing activities to recruit students to work in the seafood-processing and farming sector for the summer season.

# PEI's Labour Market: *A Shrinking Workforce Impacting Rural PEI*

- ▶ The need for new approaches to recruiting youth into traditional industries is a result of a serious decline in the working age population on PEI.
- ▶ The twenty-year changes (2006-2026) in 15-64 population by county are Kings: -35.1%, Queens: +24.5% and Prince: -23.0%.
- ▶ Kings Country and Prince County are the regions where worker shortages are greatest.
- ▶ Changes to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (in the case of the seafood sector) also posed significant challenges.

# Impacts of the Reduction in Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW's)

- ▶ A reduction in processing capacity by 25% from 2013 levels.
- ▶ Corresponding reductions in lobster purchases in addition to the potential imposition of boat quotas.
- ▶ Fishing sector's GDP contribution will be reduced by \$12.6 million.
- ▶ Overall employment will be reduced by 246 FTEs.
- ▶ Those processors most severely impacted will need to assess future viability of processing on PEI.
- ▶ Seasonal industries need other approaches to securing labour.

# Challenges of Worker Retention in Rural PEI: *Seafood Processing Example*

- ▶ Food Island Bursary Program was initially a response to the severe challenges facing the seafood processing sector.
- ▶ 547 resumes were received resulting in 456 interviews, representing 83% of the applications received for the 2017 processing season.
- ▶ Of those interviewed, 60% were offered employment overall.
- ▶ Of those offered employment, approximately 55% accepted.
- ▶ From start to finish, of the 547 applications received, 70 employees finished the season, representing a completion rate of 12.7%.

# About the Food Island Bursary

- ▶ The Food Island Bursary was originally designed to help seafood processing sector secure a new source of worker—students.
- ▶ The project involved the use of a \$500 to \$1000 Summer Student Employment Bursary paid to students upon completion of a summer work placement with a processing plant or farm.
- ▶ The bursary paid for by participating employers (25%), Workforce and Advanced Learning (25%), and the Government of Canada (50%).

# About the Food Island Bursary

- ▶ It was open to students that are returning to or attending a post-secondary institution or going into grades 11 or 12 in the Fall of 2019.
- ▶ Students going into grades 11 and 12 were eligible for a bursary of \$500.
- ▶ The assistance was based upon a work term of approximately 250 hours for Grade 10 and 11 students and 500 hours for university or college students.
- ▶ Grade 12 students entering university or college must work between 250 and 500 hours over the summer period to be eligible for a bursary.

# Program Planning and Project Management

- ▶ 1. Developed/finalized details of bursary framework/application process
- ▶ 2. Outreach through Associations/ Council and funders
- ▶ 3. Organized dates for on-site recruitment sessions
- ▶ 4. Organized participation in WAL career fairs
- ▶ 5. Monitored the flow of student applications to plants and farms to understand uptake
- ▶ 6. Provided ongoing project management to support the smooth functioning of all aspects of the program.



# Marketing & Recruitment

- ▶ 1. Branding, poster/brochure design production and distribution
- ▶ 2. Ad design and Placement
- ▶ 3. Social media activities and advertising
- ▶ 4. Developed/updated and monitored the Team Seafood and PEI Farm Team websites
- ▶ 5. On-site info sessions were held at Holland College/UPEI.
- ▶ 6. Participation/booth at WAL's career fairs and other sectoral fairs/events
- ▶ 7. Ongoing communications and media relations activities
- ▶ 8. Association-Led Communications

# Core Marketing Focus: *Turning a Negative into a Positive*

- ▶ The marketing/branding strategy for Team Food Island was to challenge negative public perceptions of seasonal work.
- ▶ The campaign focused on a call to action for young people to join the “Team.”
- ▶ The campaign challenged students to be a part of making the “best food in the world.”

# The Impact of the Bursary

## ► *Food Island Bursary Recipients*

Over 95% of students offered a job accepted a job

86% of the students that started the season completed the season

## ► *Processing Plants (Non Bursary Recipients)*

55% of the workers offered a job accepted a job

38% of workers who started the season completed the season

# Food Island Bursary: *A Good Investment*

## ► *Cost of Food Island Bursary to Industry*

The cost of the Bursary to the individual farm or seafood processing plant was:

\$125 for a \$500 Bursary

\$250 for a \$1000 Bursary

## ► *Cost of Temporary Foreign Workers*

Average non-wage/benefits cost of employing a TFW among processors was \$3349 with a high of \$4600 and a low of \$2550.

# Participant Perspectives: *Satisfaction Assessment*

- ▶ For the last 2 years, we conducted participant surveys.
- ▶ Survey assessed student perspectives on a number of factors:

*Satisfaction with wages*

*Satisfaction with level of supervision*

*Satisfaction with hours worked*

*Attitudes about working conditions*

*Assessment of the level of difficulty*

*Willingness to participate again next year*

*Willingness to recommend the program to others*

# Participant Perspectives: *Satisfaction with Wages*

- ▶ Overall, satisfaction with the money earned through wages and the bursary was exceedingly high among students.
- ▶ In the case of FT participants, overall satisfaction rates were 96% with 78% being very satisfied and 18% being somewhat satisfied. 4% of FT respondents cited being neutral on this question.
- ▶ In the case of TS participants, 100% expressed satisfaction with the money they earned with 88% being “very satisfied” and 12% being “somewhat satisfied.”
- ▶ While we have no comparable data for overall satisfaction levels with income, the responses from FT and TS participants is amazingly high by any measure.

## Participant Perspectives: *Difficulty of work*

- ▶ In terms of student perceptions of the difficulty of the work, 47% of TS participants found the work “somewhat more difficult” than they expected compared with 40% that had no opinion on the matter.
- ▶ 13% found the work “much easier” than they expected.
- ▶ 27% of FT participants found the work either “much more difficult” or “somewhat more difficult” than expected.
- ▶ 73% were neutral on this question, indicating the level of difficulty of the job was in line with what they expected.
- ▶ Overall, these results do not appear to suggest that the difficulty of the work experienced by the students was a negative factor in their employment experience.

# Participant Perspectives: *Adequacy of Supervision*

- ▶ Overall, respondents from both FT and TS overwhelmingly believed they received adequate direction from their supervisors during their work period.
- ▶ 90% of FT participants and 93% of TS participants believed they received adequate support.
- ▶ This finding is notable in that it speaks to an important variable in shaping satisfaction in the workplace.



# Participant Perspectives: *Expectations of hours Worked*

- ▶ Both FT and TS participants universally worked the number of hours they expected during the program.
- ▶ In both cases, over 90% of participants responded that they worked the hours they expected to work during their placement.
- ▶ This is obviously a positive finding in that sometimes the work in these seasonal sectors can be influenced by external factors (weather, volume of lobster landings) with regards to availability of hours to be worked.

# Participant Perspectives: *Working Conditions*

- ▶ Participants were asked to rate their working conditions for their placements.
- ▶ In the case of TS participants, 80% rate conditions as either “very good” or “good.” 20% rated their conditions as neutral.
- ▶ No one gave their working conditions a negative rating. 86% of FT participants rated their working conditions as “very good” or “good.”
- ▶ 14% of FT participants offered a negative rating.

# Participant Perspectives: *Willingness to Participate Next Year*

- ▶ Participants were asked whether or not they would participate in the program next year.
- ▶ In the case of TS, 64% responded that they would be “very likely” or “somewhat likely” to participate next season versus only 7% indicating they would be “not that likely” to participate.
- ▶ With regards to FT participants, 56% indicated that they would be “very likely” or “somewhat likely” to participate compared with only 15% indicating a likelihood of not participating.
- ▶ Almost 32% of FT respondents that they had not made a decision. In both cases, the large number of Neutral/don’t know responses is likely indicative of the uncertainty of what students’ plans are.

## Participant Perspectives: *Willingness to recommend the program to others*

- ▶ Participants were asked whether or not they would recommend employment through the bursary program to a friend.
- ▶ 68% of FT students would be “very likely” or “somewhat likely” to recommend the program to a friend compared with only 5% that indicated otherwise.
- ▶ 27% of respondents indicated that they were neutral/did not know with regards to whether or not they would do so.
- ▶ 73% of TS participants would be “very likely” or “somewhat likely” to recommend that a friend participate in the program versus 7% that responded otherwise.
- ▶ 20% of respondents indicated that they were neutral/did not know with regards to whether or not they would do so.

# Future Directions

- ▶ Need to drive recruitment efforts in rural communities to increase number of students willing to participate.
- ▶ Need a mechanism for matching up students to employment opportunities that is timely, flexible and administratively easy.
- ▶ Need to increase print advertisement/social media to grow awareness of the program.
- ▶ Need to better utilize career fairs as a means of pre-recruiting students to participate, perhaps in cooperation with sectoral associations.
- ▶ Need to better leverage the reach of sectoral organizations to market the program.