

INVESTED

in Innovation

**Guide to Hosting a Business Innovation Agenda
Engagement Session**



INVESTED in Newfoundland and Labrador



Newfoundland
Labrador

Business, Tourism, Culture and
Rural Development

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A Guide to Hosting a Business Innovation Agenda Engagement Session

Introduction:

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is developing a new Business Innovation Agenda. Newfoundland and Labrador's innovation and business stakeholders are invited to take part in this conversation and share their perspective.

There are multiple opportunities for engagement on this initiative, including discussion tables in each region of the province; stakeholder hosted focus groups; and independent submissions.

Who Should Use this Guide?

Anyone interested in hosting a focus group, or an independent group discussion regarding business innovation in Newfoundland and Labrador should read this guide.

The guide contains:

- important information on how to plan and facilitate a meaningful conversation;
- references to other helpful resources to help you run a smooth and effective session; and
- additionally, a Note Taker's Template (template to capture ideas discussed at the session, Appendix H) and Participant Action-Idea Sheet (template for participants to record any additional ideas participant's may want to have considered, Appendix G) are provided at the end of this guide. These Templates are also available online at NLInnovationAgenda.ca and may be printed to use during your session.

While this guide has largely been designed to assist those interested in hosting relatively small community-based conversations (i.e., about 15 people or less), many of the ideas and sample materials contained here can be used - with some modifications - for larger audiences. (For a group of more than 15 participants, please refer to Appendix E: How to Adjust for Larger Groups).

Documents You Will Need:

For your conversation you will need the following:

- Copies of the Business Innovation Agenda Discussion Document.
- Copies of the Note Taker's Template (Appendix H and available for download at NLInnovationAgenda.ca), and/or a laptop computer to capture ideas emerging from the session.
- Copies of the Participant Action-Idea Sheet for all participants (Appendix G and available for download at NLInnovationAgenda.ca) to ensure all participants' ideas are captured.
- Discussion questions (Appendix F and available for download at NLInnovationAgenda.ca).

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All documents are available at NLInnovationAgenda.ca. If you have any questions about the materials or would like an electronic copy sent to you, please contact:

Jonathan Hammond, Development Officer (Innovation)

Department of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development
2nd Floor, West Block
Confederation Building
P.O. Box 8700
St. John's, NL A1B 4J6

Email: innovation@gov.nl.ca

Phone: (709)729-6811 / 7000 or 1-800-563-2299

Important Considerations for Hosting a Session:

Planning is critical to hosting a meaningful engagement session. It is recommended individuals or organizations interested in hosting a session:

- Review the Business Innovation Agenda Discussion Document available at NLInnovationAgenda.ca.
- Set a date for the session that allows you sufficient time to notify participants.
- Set a time for your session that you think can work for the people you want to invite or believe would like to participate.
- Arrange an appropriate venue for the session ensuring it is accessible, appropriately-sized, and comfortable (visit the location in advance to be sure it meets your needs).
- Invite the people you want to attend or believe will be interested in the topic (see Sample Invite, Appendix A).
- Find an individual(s) who you believe can be an effective note taker (see the section Important Reminders for the Note Taker).
- On the day of the session, set up the room appropriately (e.g., to encourage a relaxed atmosphere and to stimulate discussion, consider arranging chairs in a circle or semi-circle, or around a table).
- Ensure you have a laptop computer for use by the note taker or sufficient paper copies of the Note Taker's Template (Appendix H).
- Ensure that you have ample copies of the Discussion Document and the Participant Action-Idea Sheet (Appendix G) as well as enough pencils/pens for participants.

Delivering the Session:

Welcome/Introduction

- Get started on time.
- Safety: Let people know where emergency exits are located and any other safety-related messages you feel are necessary.
- Introduce yourself and welcome the participants. (See Sample Introductory Script for the Host, Appendix D).
- Describe the purpose of the session and review the agenda.
- Advise the participants that the note taker will not record the names of people making comments, however it is important to remind participants this is a public event (Appendix I, includes the Privacy Notice). Direct participants' attention to the privacy notice located on their table.
- Give participants any special instructions/reminders about the session (see the section Important Reminders for the Host).
- Outline general rules of order for delivery of the session.
- If size of audience and time allow, invite participants to introduce themselves.
- Ask participants to briefly review the Discussion Document (ideally each should have a copy) or make a brief presentation on the main themes contained in the document.

Idea Sharing and Discussion:

- Begin the session by reminding participants that there will be five areas of discussion based on related questions and an opportunity at the end to cover other topics or issues that were not addressed or discussed throughout the session.
- Ask the first question and encourage the audience to begin sharing ideas.
- If the conversation is slow to start, ask some prompting questions (see Appendix F: Questions and Sample Prompts).
- Work through the questions with participants and encourage all to participate. If required, take steps to ensure single individuals do not dominate the discussion (Note: people should be given opportunities to contribute but make it clear that they are not required to do so).
- Ensure the note taker captures the key points on the provided templates (written or electronically).
- Between each topic, if time permits, ask participants, "Now that you have heard ideas from everyone on this area, have any new ideas emerged for you? Is there anything you want to say about one or more of the ideas raised by another?"
- Parking lot items: At the end of each topic area discussion, if time permits, ask "Are there any other possible action-ideas you want to mention and discuss before we close the session?"

Concluding the Session:

- Thank everyone for attending and for participating in the conversation.
- Let participants know that all comments collected during the session will be sent to the Department of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development to be organized and merged with input from all other engagement sessions. A summary document of what was captured will be posted on NLInnovationAgenda.ca, as well as provided to the Private Sector Advisory Committee for consideration. The privacy of individuals will be protected throughout the process.
- Collect all public input (the note taker's electronic file and/or recording sheets; Participant Action-Idea Sheets).
- Ensure all electronic files and hand-written input collected is provided to the Department of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development as soon as possible.

Important Reminders for the Host:

- Clearly state that your main role is to ensure that action-ideas are collected and positive discussion occurs among participants.
- Ask participants to turn off cell phones, or set to vibrate.
- Tell the participants where the washrooms and emergency exits are and inform them of any other safety issues related to the facility.
- Should any media be present at your session, identify them to the audience and ask the media to conduct any conversations with participants outside the main room to avoid disruptions and to not record individual statements unless authorized.
- Encourage participants to speak openly and honestly, and listen to and respect the views of others.
- Explain the role of the note taker/recorder (see the section Important Reminders for the Note Taker).
- Ask the questions as outlined and try to keep participants focused on the question being discussed.
- Explain how we want to capture all ideas (even those ideas where not everyone agrees).
- Stay neutral on specific ideas presented.
- Ensure no individual dominates the discussion time. If an individual continues to talk beyond the agreed upon time you can ask them to wrap up their remarks and tell them this idea has been captured, and if time permits you will revisit the topic at the end of the session.

Important Reminders for the Note Taker:

- Ensure that any information that is obviously identifying to an individual is not recorded (e.g., if someone says "My name is Mr. Smith and my view is...." the note taker shall not record this individual's name; only the view point provided).

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- Capture all individual action-ideas related to the five guiding questions using participants' words.
- Seek clarification on actions noted, if required, by repeating back what has been captured.
- Enter each idea into the appropriate (electronic or paper) form provided.
- Capture an idea multiple times if it is raised multiple times.
- Ensure that the Privacy Notice, Appendix I, is at your table and/or displayed in the room.

Where to Send Your Submissions:

Jonathan Hammond, Development Officer (Innovation)

Department of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development
2nd Floor, West Block
Confederation Building
P.O. Box 8700
St. John's, NL A1B 4J6

Email: innovation@gov.nl.ca

Phone: (709)729-6811 / 7000 or 1-800-563-2299

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Appendix A:

Sample Invitation

(The following is a sample invitation to the session you are planning. Feel free to personalize this and adjust it to make it relevant to invited guests.)

Good Afternoon,

*You are invited to a Business Innovation Agenda Focus Group in **(Community)** at the **(Venue)** on **(Date)** beginning at **(Time)** hosted by **(Host Group)**.*

*The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is developing a Business Innovation Agenda and is inviting stakeholders and the public to contribute to its development. **(Host Group)** has organized a session to ensure we are involved in the conversation. Ideas and feedback gathered from the session will be submitted to the Department of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development.*

*At this focus group, we will discuss the supports and resources required to advance innovation in new and established businesses. **For details on this session and to register, call (Telephone number)**.*

Thank you,

Host's Name (and organizational affiliation if appropriate)

Appendix B:

Sample Agenda

The following is a recommended agenda for a session of approximately 15 participants. If you expect your sessions to be attended by more than 15 people, see the Appendix E: How to Adjust for Larger Groups.

A conversation on Business Innovation in Newfoundland and Labrador

Date:

Location:

- Welcome/Introduction (5 minutes)
- Overview of the Session: Purpose; Agenda (5 minutes)
- Review of Discussion Document (10 minutes)

Discussion Questions

- Question 1: (25 minutes)
- Question 2: (25 minutes)
- Question 3: (25 minutes)
- Break (15 minutes)
- Question 4: (25 minutes)
- Question 5: (25 minutes)

- Are there any additional suggestions you would like to add on the development of a Business Innovation Agenda? (15 minutes)

Wrap up and thank you. (5 minutes)

Appendix C:

Sample Event Scenario

Event: A dialogue on Business Innovation in Newfoundland and Labrador

Organized by:

Date:

Start Time & Expected Duration:

Location:

Event Set-up:

- Note taker will use a tablet/ laptop/ paper template/ flip charts/ sticky notes to record participant feedback.
- Participants will be provided with copies of the Discussion Document and the Participant Action Idea Sheet (Appendix G).
- Pens and paper.

Order of Events: (Sample times are provided. Please adjust to the time of day your session is being held.)

6:00 p.m. Welcome/Introductions (5 minutes)

- Host welcomes participants
- If the audience is not already familiar with each other, ask participants to briefly introduce themselves
- Introduce the session (Sample Script, Appendix D)

6:05 p.m. Overview of the Session (5 minutes)

- Review the purpose of the session
- Review the format for the session
- Explain roles of the host, note taker etc.
- Review the privacy notice

6:10 p.m. Discussion Document Overview (10 minutes)

- Briefly review the information contained in the Discussion Document that provides the basis for your discussion.

6:20 p.m. Discussion Round # 1 (25 minutes)

- The host introduces the first discussion cycle.
- Question
- For each discussion question the note taker captures ideas and comments without attributing names or personal information
- Facilitator provides a time check at 10 and 20 minute marks

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6:45 p.m. Discussion Round #2- (25 minutes)

- The host thanks everyone for their contributions to the first question and introduces the second discussion cycle
- Question
- Process repeats as above

7:10 p.m. Discussion Round #3 – (25 minutes)

- The host thanks everyone for their contributions to the second question and introduces the third discussion cycle
- Question:
- Process repeats as above

7:35 p.m. Break (15 minutes)

7:50 p.m. Discussion Round #4 – (25 minutes)

- The host thanks everyone for their contributions to the second question and introduces the third discussion cycle
- Question:
- Process repeats as above

8:15 p.m. Discussion Round #5 – (25 minutes)

- The host thanks everyone for their contributions to the second question and introduces the third discussion cycle
- Question:
- Process repeats as above

8:40 p.m. Final Discussion Round – (15 minutes)

- The host thanks everyone for their contributions and advises that there is now one additional opportunity to add any additional input that they feel they haven't expressed already.
- Question: Is there any additional suggestions you would like to add on the development of a Provincial Business Innovation Agenda?

8:55 p.m.

- Thank you and Wrap Up (5 minutes)

Event concludes.

Appendix D:

Sample Introductory Script for the Host

This sample script is meant to help you introduce the session. Feel free to personalize this and make it relevant to the participants you are hosting.

Welcome and thank you for attending this Focus Group. My name is () of (Host Organization) and I am the facilitator for this session. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is developing a new provincial Business Innovation Agenda. To inform this agenda, Government is asking stakeholders and the public to contribute their ideas and suggestions. The contributions you make during the session will be sent to the Department of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development.

Today we will discuss five topics. The Discussion Document provides an overview of the topics and sets the context for our discussion here today. We will have approximately 25 minutes to discuss each topic area. We understand all of the topics are connected and some ideas may apply to more than one topic area. Don't worry if your idea does not neatly fit into the particular topic under consideration. What's most important is that your ideas are shared, understood and recorded.

Please speak openly and honestly and respect the views of others during the session. All views and ideas are considered important. My job as your facilitator is to ensure that the discussion stays on track, that everyone has an opportunity to contribute, that the discussion is respectful, and that we cover the topics we have been asked to consider in the time we have.

Firstly, it is important to note that none of the input collected at this session will be personally attributed. In other words, no names will be associated with any answers or input captured. Any language used that would potentially allow someone to be inadvertently identified after the fact will not be captured. Furthermore, as you have noticed, no attendance has been or is being taken.

Any registration information that may have been collected was only used to gauge the number of participants likely to attend this session, and will be destroyed. For more information on how we will address such issues, please see the Privacy Notice we have provided (Note: have a copy of the Privacy Notice in this guide on hand, preferably taped to a wall or door where people can easily view it, or distributed on tables where people are seated). This is, however, a public session and we remind you to use your own judgment when sharing personal stories or information. As with any public session there is a possibility there may be media present at some point during the day.

Appendix E

How to Adjust for Larger Groups

Be ready to adjust your session if more people arrive than expected by having additional chairs and materials available. However, if you expect or are planning for more than 15 people at your session, some pre-session modifications to the agenda and additional planning are recommended.

Larger group sessions are more complex and difficult to plan and implement than smaller sessions. The larger the group, the more difficult it becomes to capture the views of all participants as individuals may be more intimidated to speak openly, there is an increased risk of disruptive sidebar conversations and there may not be enough time to hear from everyone adequately.

If you know in advance that you are likely to get a large number of people at your session, we recommend that you arrange the room to allow for smaller table discussions (i.e., six to eight people per table). You can identify one volunteer person per table to act as table note taker/facilitator (Note: if you have the people required, a better alternative is to have one facilitator and one note taker per table). In this case, you become the lead-facilitator who periodically gives guidance to your table volunteers. The session agenda would also need to be modified somewhat to reflect the need for tables to give brief 'report-backs' to the larger group. For instance, if you opted to go with four tables of eight people because you did not want to have an open plenary discussion with 24 people, instead of allotting 25 minutes per question for individuals to present ideas (the scenario for 15 or less people), you would give each table 15 minutes to discuss their ideas and then each table would also have approximately three minutes each to present the key ideas or highlights emerging from their table discussion.

If you are caught off guard by the arrival of more people than anticipated, and there are not enough Discussion Documents available for everyone, ask people to share the Discussion Document and to write down their ideas on note paper. (Note: It is always advisable to have extra materials on hand, including note paper and pens, no matter how many people you are expecting.)

Appendix F

Questions and Sample Prompts

Visit NLInnovationAgenda.ca for a complete list of standardized questions to choose from in order to host your session. Below are a few select questions from the website along with sample prompts intended to start the conversation.

Topic 1: Business Innovation Skills

What resources and supports are required to ensure those launching new start-ups and those in established businesses have the skills needed to pursue business innovation excellence throughout their operations?

Prompts

- What skills do you see as critical to advancing innovation in businesses?
- What challenges do businesses in our province face in developing these skills?

Topic 2: Market Opportunities

With business becoming more globalized, what innovative tools can new and/or established businesses use to help identify, reach, sustain and grow the value and volume of their customer base?

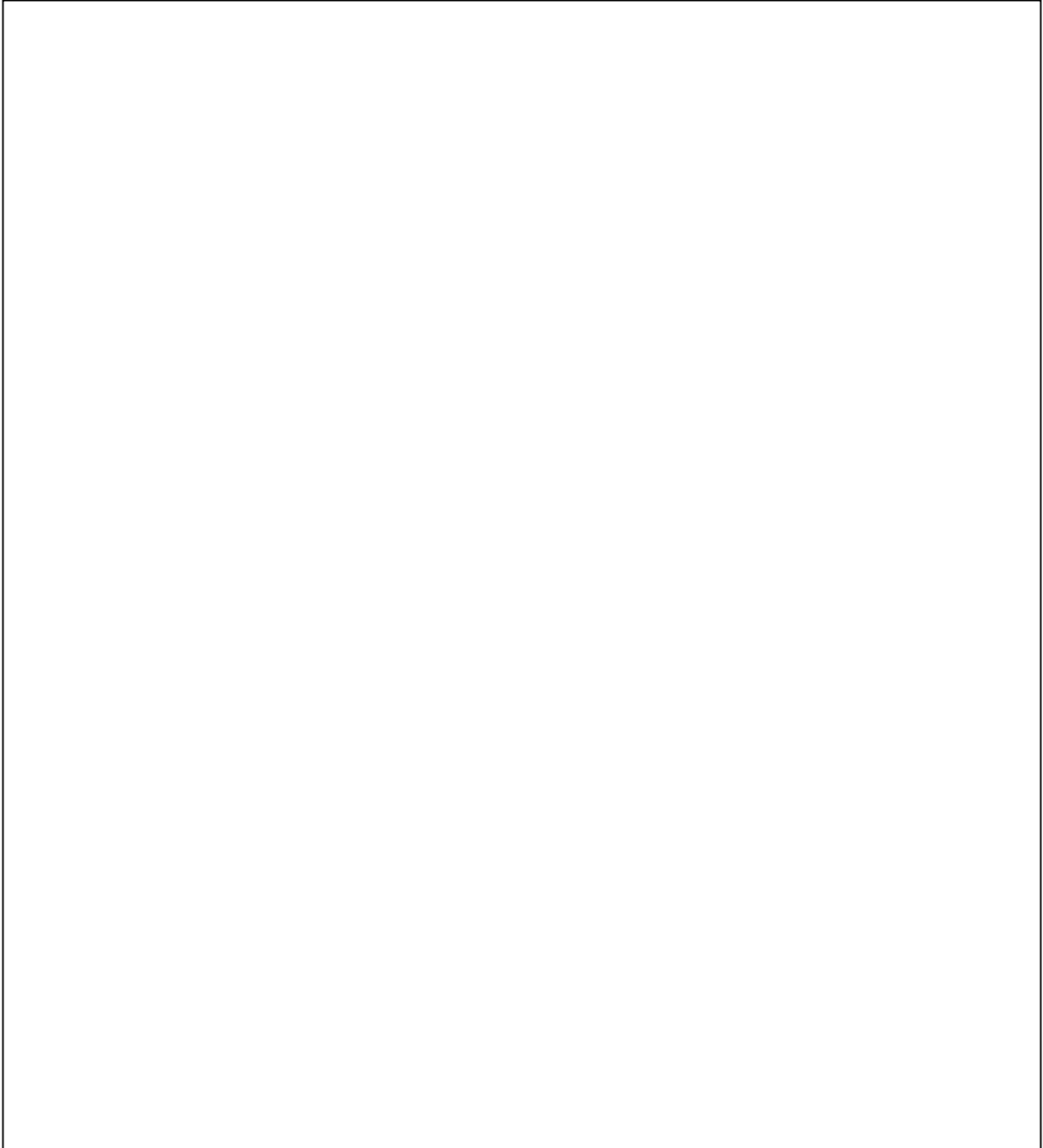
Prompts

- What are the barriers to innovating or adapting product or service offerings to capitalize on business opportunities in new markets?
- What kinds of support would help reduce these barriers?

Appendix G

Participant Action-Idea Sheet

Please write down any additional ideas you have related to the questions discussed in the session.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for participants to write down their additional ideas related to the session's questions.

Appendix H

Note Taker's Template:

Please record participant input:

Topic #1:
Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">•
Topic #2
Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">•
Topic #3
Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">•

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Topic #4
Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">•
Topic #5
Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">•

Appendix I

Privacy Notice:

We want participants to feel comfortable expressing views and have taken these steps to ensure you are not identified:

- We will not write down the names of individuals making comments.
- The note taker will not write down information that would obviously identify you.
- Registration information will be destroyed after the session.
- Attendance will not be taken.

Please keep in mind that this is a public event. While we will take steps to ensure individuals are not identified in government documents, we cannot control what other participants may say outside this room.

Your views are being collected under the authority of section 61(c) of the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015*, for the purpose of developing a Provincial Business Agenda. If you have any questions about how this information will be collected, used and disclosed, please contact the Department of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development:

Contact:

Jonathan Hammond, Development Officer (Innovation)

Department of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development
2nd Floor, West Block
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P.O. Box 8700
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