

Yaffle Connects

# **Study and Stay:** Making Newfoundland and Labrador Home for International Students



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Event Date: 26 September 2019  
Report Published: 24 April 2020

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# Study and Stay:

## Making Newfoundland and Labrador Home for International Students

*The Atlantic Canada Study and Stay initiative is a new program aimed at building partnerships and helping students create a future in NL where they can make their mark on the innovative and entrepreneurial landscape.*

Program Coordinator Ying Zhang gave us a closer look at the challenges and opportunities facing international students who wish to make NL their home after graduation. The following summary report outlines Ms. Zhang’s main points and contains an overview of the question-and-answer period that followed her presentation.

***“We know that NL, right now, is facing issues, where people are retiring and their businesses are for sale and we need people to take over, so we reach out to the community to see where we can work together.” –Ying Zhang***



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## SESSION SYNOPSIS:

Program Coordinator Ying Zhang presents *Study and Stay*, a program that teaches international students the skills they need to start their business. The free competitive online program runs from October to July and focuses on preparing students to enter the entrepreneurship space in NL, either through starting their own business or getting a job until they can sustain themselves.

This program fits with a new immigration pathway the NL government has put in place for international graduate entrepreneurs, and helps them down that path. Students get mentorship from members of the community as well as the chance to network with a wide range of people. The program aims to set students up for success in NL, and offers funding to 5 students who have graduated to help them start their business. It also values interaction between the students and the community, since that opens more doors for all parties involved.

[WATCH THE ENTIRE PRESENTATION HERE](#)



*Atlantic Canada's Study and Stay Program Coordinators*

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## KEY TAKEAWAYS:

### *Paraphrasing Ms. Zhang's points*

- All four Atlantic Canadian provinces offer the *Study and Stay* program, an initiative that teaches international students professional and entrepreneurial skills with the goal of helping them start businesses in-province.
- After graduation, international students might not be able to survive on just their new business, and they may have to look for a job at the same time; *Study and Stay* supports both of these efforts.
- It's a free online program offered to international students in or entering their final year of university, and who are interested in starting a business, chosen through a competitive selection process.
- The program has six pillars:
  - 1) Cultural and Social Adaptation – coaching students' cultural development so they can integrate more easily;
  - 2) Career and Labour Market Support;
  - 3) Access to Immigration Resources and Support – the provincial government offers an immigration pathway for international graduate entrepreneurs;
  - 4) Professional Communication – very important for international students to find, retain, and succeed at a job;
  - 5) Networking and Professional Connections – holding networking events, and connecting international students to professionals in the workplace;
  - 6) Entrepreneurship Training and Mentorship – an important focus since the goal is for students to be able to start or purchase a business right after graduation; NL is also facing issues with businesses having no one to take them over.
- The program focuses on furthering students' understanding of the entrepreneurship ecosystem and helping them acquire and develop the skills necessary to navigate it.

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- There are typically around 50 students in a cohort, and the program lasts 10 months, from October or November until July.
  - The program covers topics related to entrepreneurship and professional development, offers access to a wealth of resources, and can be completed on the student's own schedule. These resources are always being updated and improved to add more points relevant to international students; for example, more specialized training on how to incorporate a business, or more information on immigration pathways or intellectual property, which are very important topics for international students to understand.
  - Professional development is taught through a combination of strategists who help students one on one, mentors who work with students over the course of 6 months, and group workshops.
  - There are three key milestone events: a managerial retreat where students get to know each other and get oriented in the program; a SEED (Skills for Entrepreneurship and Employment Development) conference, where students meet people from all around NL and can practice marketing themselves; and a graduation event in July.
  - For students who've completed the program, there's a seed funding competition where 5 students will be selected to win \$5000 to help start their businesses.
  - *Study and Stay* wants to work with the local community to get mentors, introduce the community to international students, and use these students' expertise to help the local ecosystem; they also want students to get to know other places in NL that have business opportunities.
  - Students with all sorts of backgrounds are accepted into the program; through their experiences they can get to know their community, and the community can get to know them as well, which opens the door to more opportunities.



*Participants in the Study and Stay program in NL*

## **QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD:**

*Paraphrasing Ms. Zhang's responses*

**Q: IS IT A TWO-PRONGED PROGRAM IN THAT ENTREPRENEURSHIP IS A MAJOR FOCUS BUT IT ALSO WORKS ON PROFESSIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT?**

Yes. This program started in Atlantic Canada for professional development, but since the NL government has an immigration stream for entrepreneurs, we make that an important focus; however, we know that it's not the only path. Ideally, students have some business experience, and most try to start up a business right away, but some might not be able to.

**Q: DO YOU HAVE ANY STATISTICS ON HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE SUCCESSFULLY STAYED IN NL BECAUSE OF THIS PROGRAM?**

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There's only been one graduated cohort so far, and 100% of those students are still in-province. The goal is to retain students after graduation, so if a student doesn't show an intent to stay, they wouldn't be selected.

**Q: WHAT'S THE APPLICATION PROCESS LIKE, AND HOW OFTEN DO APPLICANTS MEET ONCE THE PROGRAM HAS STARTED?**

The application is online, through the [Study and Stay website](#). Students have to answer a series of questions and submit a letter of intent for their business plans and ideas after graduation; they also need to have LinkedIn profile set up in order to finish the application. After the program is started, workshops are done through Brightspace, MUN's online learning platform, as well as another platform called "Students to Mentors." We also plan to have a monthly meeting where we invite speakers and panelists to meet our students and talk about entrepreneurship, aside from the retreat and the conference.

**COMMENT FROM ATTENDEE:** I would totally recommend this program. It was a great experience; I worked with two students and it wasn't too time-consuming.

**Q: HOW DOES GETTING STUDENTS OUT TO OTHER REGIONS OF NL WORK, IN TERMS OF TRANSPORT?**

We haven't decided how we're going to get them there, but we can talk about that, and always keep the students' safety in mind.

**Q: ARE MOST STUDENTS LOCATED IN ST. JOHN'S?**

It differs between cohorts. The last cohort had students from all over NL, though most are from St. John's.

**Q: SINCE THE LAST COHORT FINISHED IN JULY, IS IT STILL TOO SOON TO KNOW HOW MANY STUDENTS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO GO INTO DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES?**

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Yes, but we're still following and supporting them, and we can invite them back if there's something they could help with. CBDC has a small lending program that doesn't require permanent residency to apply for loans, which can help international students, since traditional banks often need them to have permanent resident status. I'm really interested in hearing more about that, as funding can be a difficult point for international students; one student wanted to purchase a store but couldn't obtain the funds.

**Q: AFTER A STUDENT COMPLETES THE PROGRAM, DO THEY GET PERMANENT RESIDENCE, OR IS IT MORE OF A PATHWAY TO HELP WITH IMMIGRATION IN GENERAL?**

It's more of a pathway: there's no guarantee that the students will get permanent residence, and they all have different situations, but this does offer a way for student entrepreneurs to apply for permanent residence.