



47th ANNUAL MEETING – SEPTEMBER 2025

NAFO Internship Program – Review (Prepared by the NAFO Secretariat)

Preamble

At the 2024 Annual Meeting, STACFAD recommended that:

- **The NAFO Secretariat undertake a comprehensive review of the internship program, including the monthly stipend and meaningful work projects available to interns, to ensure it remains mutually beneficial for the NAFO Secretariat and the intern.**
- **The results of the comprehensive review be presented to STACFAD for consideration and review at the 2025 Annual Meeting of NAFO.**

After a review of the NAFO internship program, the Secretariat identified key areas for further refinement and expansion. In line with the STACFAD recommendation, specific attention was given to the monthly stipend and the structure of work projects, as outlined below.

Review of Stipend

The NAFO Secretariat reviewed the monthly stipend to ensure it remains competitive to a diverse range of international applicants.

Current Stipend – NAFO interns currently receive a monthly stipend of CAD \$2,250, which was last adjusted in 2021.

Interns are responsible for covering their travel costs to and from their place of residence, as well as the cost of travel insurance, medical insurance and daily living expenses while residing in Halifax.

The current monthly stipend may no longer be sufficient due to continued rising living costs in Halifax. For example, the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment has surged to approximately CAD \$2,030, compared to CAD \$900–\$1,000 when the program was initiated. In the current housing market, rental costs alone would consume nearly 90% of the monthly stipend, leaving limited funds for other essential expenses.

It is also underscored by the hourly equivalent of the stipend. The monthly stipend of CAD \$2,250 equates to CAD \$13.85 an hour (based on a 37.5-hour work week). This rate is well below the current minimum wage standards in Nova Scotia of CAD \$15.70 per hour. This minimum wage rate will increase to CAD \$16.50 per hour on 01 October 2025, as announced

by the Government of Nova Scotia¹, further widening the gap to nearly three (3) dollars per hour.

Government of Canada Student Pay Rates – The NAFO Secretariat follows the Government of Canada pay scales. As of 01 May 2025, the Government of Canada student rates of pay² is between CAD \$18.84 and \$25.17 per hour dependent on the academic level.

This comparison suggests that a monthly stipend to range from CAD \$3,061 to \$4,090 (based on a 37.5-hour work week) depending on the qualifications of the successful intern is better aligned with competitive compensation.

Review of Work Projects for Interns

The NAFO Secretariat reviewed the work projects of its previous interns.

In the past, the NAFO Secretariat has traditionally selected interns with a background in fisheries science and fisheries management.

The primary function of the NAFO Secretariat is to provide administrative support to its members for scientific research and fisheries management efforts. The NAFO Secretariat has limited ongoing tasks or large projects that span over their several months that may be relevant to interns in these fields, leaving interns to fill the interim periods with administrative tasks or independent academic work. This has made it challenging to consistently offer projects that are directly beneficial to the interns.

Additionally, when the internship program was established, it was anticipated that interns would submit a report on their experience to help inform potential program adjustments. While informal verbal feedback may have been received, no formal reports have been requested or received.

For these reasons, the NAFO Secretariat identified potential refinements to the internship program to ensure meaningful engagement for interns while supporting key organizational needs.

Potential Enhancement Options to the NAFO Internship Program

- **Increased stipend** – It is proposed to increase the monthly stipend to range from CAD \$3,061 to \$4,090 (based on a 37.5-hour work week) depending on the qualifications of the successful intern. This adjustment aims to ensure the internship program remains competitive and attractive to a diverse pool of applicants from all Contracting Parties.

The 2026 budget estimate has been increased from \$14,000 to CAD \$18,000. This allocation would accommodate the proposed adjusted monthly stipend without significantly reducing the current internship duration up to six (6) months or 26 weeks.

¹ <https://novascotia.ca/lae/employmentrights/minimumwage.asp>

² <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/pay/rates-pay/student-rates-pay.html>

For example, a monthly stipend of CAD \$3,061 would support an internship duration of approximately 25 weeks, while a stipend of CAD \$4,090 would support an internship duration of approximately 19 weeks.

- **Expanded Intern Roles** – The expansion of the internship program to include interns not only specialized in fisheries science and fisheries management, but in other functions relevant to the Secretariat, such as database management, administrative support, website development, and meeting coordination.
- **Project Development and Recruitment Model** – The NAFO Secretariat could establish a bank of project ideas aligned with annual workload and routine tasks.

Project development in collaboration with Contracting Parties actively engaged in fisheries science and fisheries management could broaden the range of work available to interns. Contracting Parties could potentially benefit from intern involvement in NAFO specific tasks or projects, enhancing both operational efficiency and knowledge-sharing.

This partnership could provide interns with valuable hands-on experience that directly supports NAFO's objectives. The Secretariat would offer guidance and support to ensure interns effectively contribute while working alongside the Contracting Party.

The NAFO Secretariat proposes a targeted recruitment model to enhance the efficiency and relevance of the internship program based on predefined projects and intern roles. While the internship program will have an annual budget allocation, recruitment could occur when a specific intern project is developed by either a Contracting Party or the Secretariat. This approach ensures candidates are matched with predefined projects that align with Secretariat priorities, optimizing both intern contributions and organizational needs.

- **Program Flexibility** – Offering remote internship opportunities may increase accessibility for a broader pool of candidates and create a more flexible program. However, considerations such as data security, IT infrastructure, and hybrid communication must be addressed first to ensure a seamless and secure working environment.
- **Intern Feedback** – The NAFO Secretariat will invite interns to provide feedback on the internship program which would provide valuable insight into program effectiveness and guide future improvements.

Proposal for STACFAD Consideration

To improve both the intern experience and the overall effectiveness of the internship program, the NAFO Secretariat proposes the following:

- To increase the monthly stipend to range from CAD \$3,061 to \$4,090 (based on a 37.5-hour work week) depending on the qualifications of the successful intern(s). The placement(s) would be for a duration of up to 25 weeks annually.
- To implement some or all of the proposed enhancements to the NAFO internship and ensuring it continues to provide valuable opportunities for interns while supporting the Organization's operational needs.