HEALTH + COMMUNITY CARE
WORKFORCE
SECTOR COUNCIL

Strategic Plan

2025-2028

Vision

Informed, supported and sustainable health and community care workforce.

Mission

To inspire and empower excellence in the workforce toward enriching the lives of people in care and support.

Values

Respect – We are fair, ethical, and inclusive, and express meaningful recognition and appreciation of all individuals in our diverse community, encompassing cultural competency.

Innovation– We transform challenges into opportunities and promote evidence–informed decision–making through research and best practices.

Collaboration – We establish proactive alliances and achieve common goals through partnerships.

Accountability – We maximize the available resources to achieve the vision with integrity.

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Partnering for Success

Funding partners

Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care
Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration
Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive
Association of Industry Sector Councils of NS

Industry Associates

Aware NS
Futureworx
Home Support Network (Health Association of NS)
NS College of Nursing
NS Community College
Nova Scotia Works
PeopleWorx Society

Partner Organizations

Advanced Gerontological Education Inc.
Age-Friendly Institute
Aging Proactively
Aging Well NS
Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion
Canadian Mental Health Association Nova Scotia
Carla Anglehart
Continuing Care Council (Health Association of NS)
Diverse Abilities Nova Scotia
Generation Z Research
GEO Nova Scotia
Hirst Healthcare Consulting
Hy 'N' Hancement Consulting Inc.
Learning Institute for Health Care Providers
Make Your Move at Work Initiative
McMaster University
Mental Health Commission of Canada
Strengthening a Palliative Approach to Long-Term Care
Velsoft
Wessex Technologies

Board Sector Representation

Directors

- Continuing Care Assistant Program Advisory Committee
- Diverse Abilities Nova Scotia
- Doctors Nova Scotia
- Home Support Network (Health Association of NS)
- Nova Scotia Regulated Health Professionals Network
- Nova Scotia Residential Agencies Association
- Nursing Homes of Nova Scotia Association
- Regional Residential Services Society

Resourse Representatives

- Continuing Care Association of Nova Scotia
- Department of Community Services Disability Support Program
- Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration
- Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care

State of the Health Care and Community Support Sector

Health and Support Workforce Challenges in NS

The frontline workforce is experiencing high turnover rates, as many workers leave one organization only to move to another similar one, resulting in the same pool of staff shifting around rather than an actual increase in trained workers. Recruitment efforts rely heavily on international hiring, while generating domestic candidates remains difficult, especially since there are fewer programs to develop local talent, particularly in rural areas. Opportunities for retirees to retrain and reenter the workforce are limited, as are initiatives to inform and attract local youth at the high school level to lesser-known health and support care careers, such as Disability Support care work. To improve retention, organizations must foster a supportive culture, provide ongoing training, and create a strong sense of belonging so employees feel valued and committed long-term. Workforce distribution also remains uneven, with fewer qualified candidate pools available in rural communities. Meanwhile, burnout and early retirement continue to affect seasoned workers, many of whom choose to retire early, switch careers, or work casually for greater flexibility.

Government/Legislative Factors

Remedy

- Isolated work environments.
- Safety First for EE's – Workers will require safety, physical and psychological in residential support to ensure the utmost safety for those they support and advocate.
- The workforce of supporting residents is an unregulated profession.
- Families are considering incorporating for ease of hiring support staff.

WCB Legislation

- Gradual Onset Stress claims compensable – Sept 1 – potential information overload with unknown implementation strategies and support for organizations to properly prevent incidents.

Environmental and Economic Factors

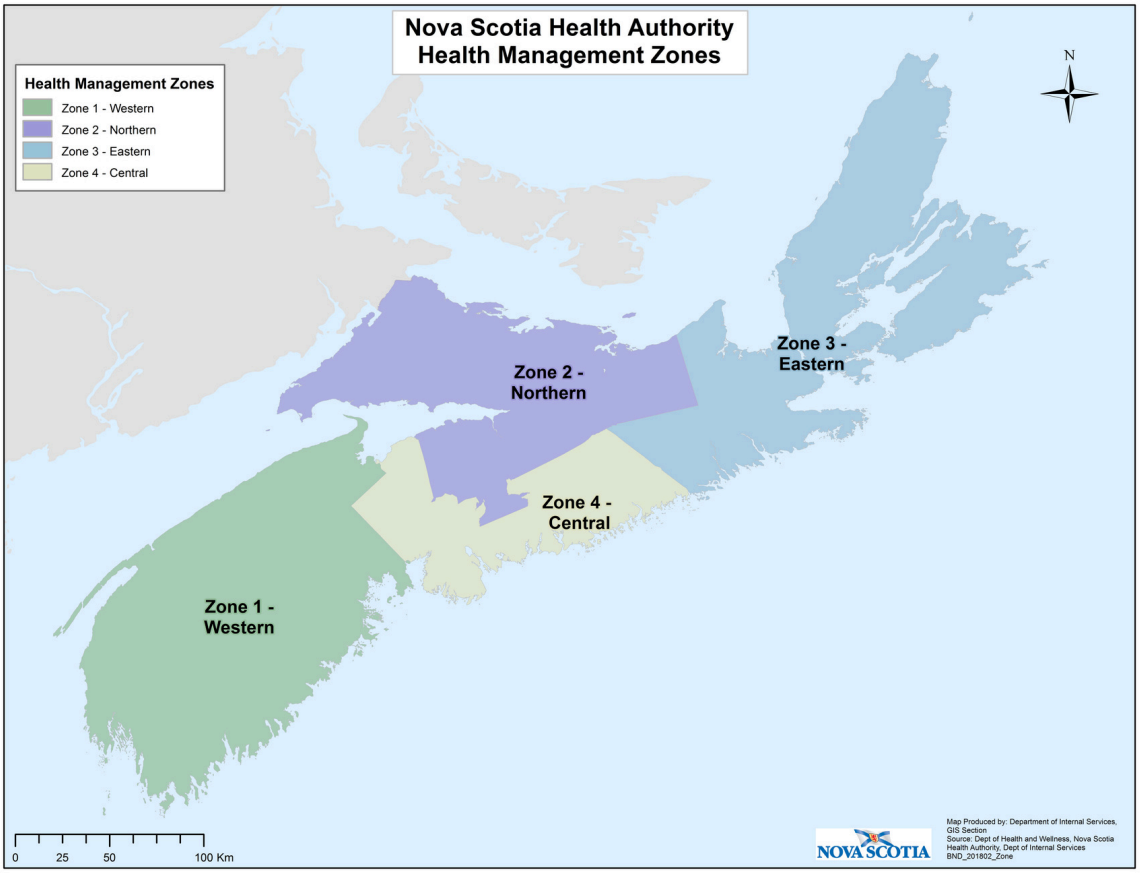
- Immigration integration/acceptance – Successful integration and acceptance of international cultures working in harmony with NS culture have to be mutually understood and accepted. Many newcomers are overwhelmed with cultural differences and underwhelmed with how to navigate and learn the Nova Scotian culture through more than just happenstance.
- Housing shortages – As NS expands rapidly, affordable housing continues to be problematic for many frontline workers.
- Unpredictable extreme weather events – Organizations have limited resources to devote to emergency planning and implementation.

Environmental Scan

The environmental scan was developed through consultation with stakeholders and review of survey feedback, providing a forward-looking assessment of external trends. These demographic, technological, policy, and socio-economic factors set the context in which the Sector Council must operate and directly inform the strategic priorities outlined in this plan.

External trends impacting our sector:

- Demographic Shifts – Aging population, declining birth rates, and increasing cultural diversity due to immigration are reshaping workforce dynamics and the needs of people in care.
- Technological Advancement – Growth in digital tools, AI, and data analytics is transforming service delivery, but also exposing digital literacy gaps, especially in rural areas.
- Legislative and Policy Changes – Key developments such as the DSP Remedy and new WCB legislation (e.g., gradual onset stress claims) require updated training, governance, and support structures.
- Workforce Challenges – Ongoing labour shortages, early retirements, leadership succession risks, and unequal access to qualified staff in rural vs. urban areas strain service capacity.
- Socio-Economic Pressures – Rising cost of living, housing shortages, and limited access to support services affect both recruitment and retention across the sector.
- Shifts in Care Delivery Models – Changing scopes of practice, increased use of nurse practitioners and allied health professionals, and evolving workplace expectations demand flexibility and innovation.



S.W.O.T. Summary

S — Strengths

- Passionate and skilled team, including staff, board, and facilitators
- Sector-specific training aligned with workforce needs
- Strong leadership and responsiveness to emerging challenges
- Strong partnerships and stakeholder engagement
- Forward-thinking and innovative mindset
- Deep knowledge of sector needs and data-informed decision making
- Accessible and personalized support and services
- Ability to secure and manage funding for education

W — Weaknesses

- Limited public awareness of the Council and its services
- Heavy dependence on government funding and lack of diversification
- Communication gaps both internally and externally
- Limited in-person training options and course variety
- Risk of duplication with other sector organizations
- Lack of recognition as a sector leader
- Insufficient engagement from some partners

O — Opportunities

- Expanding training and leadership development across the sector
- Supporting the implementation of the DSP Remedy
- Enhancing collaboration with schools and professional associations
- Strengthening presence in rural and underserved communities
- Acting as a navigator among training providers
- Growing role in digital competency and innovation
- Leveraging data analytics to support recruitment and retention strategies

T — Threats

- Sector fragmentation and overlapping mandates among similar organizations
- Funding volatility and short-term funding cycles
- Limited perceived value among some sector stakeholders
- Limited ability of staff to attend training due to system pressures and backfilling challenges

Strategic Priorities 2025-2028

Our strategy is centred around five strategic pillars that will guide our actions over the next three years. Each priority reflects the sector's most pressing needs and positions the Council to lead effectively.

Prioritize Workforce Data Analysis

- Engage partners on data collection and interpretation
- Conduct relevant and reflective needs assessments for all relevant sectors
- Embed monitoring into decision-making to keep the Council focused and on track

Optimize Workforce Development

- Identify gaps in workforce development and training and needs across all sectors
- Develop a workforce development plan based on sector needs
- Address knowledge and skills gaps through sector-specific training

Strengthen Partnerships

- Establish a plan to build strategic partnerships to engage rural communities and professional organizations to understand needs
- Determine the key partners and how to increase engagement

Diversify Funding Model

- Research and secure funding opportunities beyond current sources
- Align funding strategies with sector priorities
- Seek financial support for key educational initiatives

Enhance Communication (Critical Success Factor)

- Increase sector awareness of the Sector Council by developing a clear, concise communications plan and leveraging social media
- Enhance internal and external communication

We are committed to advancing these priorities with integrity, collaboration, and accountability. Each pillar will be supported by clear goals, measurable outcomes, and ongoing engagement with our partners to ensure that the Sector Council's work remains responsive, sustainable, and impactful.

Operational team

Executive Director
Stephanie Girard-Fraser

Workforce Training Consultant
Cheryl Nickerson

Responsible Workplace Consultant
Evelena Beaton

Administrative and Program Coordinator
Jane Zvonarova

Finance Manager
Joanne Jones

Data Scientist
Joshua Dort

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Manager
Zoé Hawkins

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