



People Strategy

Strengthen and support a healthy, high-performing workforce





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For the purpose of this document, "team members" refers to employees, physicians, volunteers, researchers and learners.





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Message from the President and CEO

Nova Scotia Health has a broad mandate and a critically important mission to deliver health services and support the health and wellness of Nova Scotians. We do that through the people who work, learn and volunteer here.

When our employees, physicians, learners, researchers and volunteers are connected to our vision and values through their own sense of purpose, feel valued, feel safe and are supported, it is reflected in the work they do and the quality of care and service they provide.

This, Nova Scotia Health's first *People Strategy*, is intended to strengthen our efforts to support the health, wellness and safety of our people and create a healthy, high-performing workforce.

The *People Strategy* reflects the voices of thousands of people in our organization who took the time to share ideas, advice, hopes, concerns, passion and pride about their work. It builds on our strengths and acknowledges that we still have much to do. That is the hallmark of being a learning organization – to continuously assess and make improvements on the basis of engagement, feedback and evaluation.

As the largest employer in the province, we are in a position to lead by example and strengthen our reputation as an organization where people can learn, innovate and grow. We can cultivate a culture that is open, celebrates diversity and inspires people to excel. That is our work to do together.

While health care is a constantly changing and challenging environment, we remain committed to improving access and patient experience, delivering safe, quality care and supporting people to be healthy and well. Our response to the *COVID-19* pandemic has shown what we can accomplish when we work together toward a common goal. This resiliency, ingenuity, agility and strength is an important part of our identity and will serve us well into the future.

Everyone at Nova Scotia Health has a crucial role to play in helping to fulfil this *People Strategy*. I know how deeply people care about the work they do, their communities and their colleagues and that we have the people, passion and foundation to turn this plan into action. I look forward to shaping that journey with you.

Dr. Brendan Carr
President and CEO





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Introducing the People Strategy

Nova Scotia Health is committed to providing excellent care and service while working to improve the health status and wellbeing of Nova Scotians. All individuals, collectively across the organization, are the foundation of this effort. They are integral to serving, building, connecting, and caring for communities to attain our organization's vision: **Healthy people, healthy communities – for generations.**

In order to provide the quality care that Nova Scotians deserve, we need to empower everyone to be the best that they can be to serve our communities. We, in turn, need to invest in the future of everyone at Nova Scotia Health for generations.

That is why we are pleased to introduce our first **People Strategy**.

A *People Strategy* is a guide for the culture of the organization. It shapes who we are, who we want to be, how we live our organization's values, how we work together and how we develop our people.

The *People Strategy* is inclusive of all team members who support the organization. It identifies the important elements and the things that need to be done to create an environment where everyone is engaged to reach their full potential. We acknowledge that everybody will be at different starting points to implement the initiatives of the *People Strategy*, but the goal is for everyone to achieve.





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People Strategy and the Strategic Plan

The *People Strategy* is a key component of the Nova Scotia Health strategic plan’s strategic directions: **Our Services**, **Our People** and **Our Community**.

Guided by the plan’s vision, mission and values, a priority area for Nova Scotia Health is its health human resources. The aim of the *People Strategy* is to strengthen and support a healthy, high-performing workforce. Five themes are identified in the *People Strategy* as the pathway for us to achieve this aim together: **collaborate and work effectively, develop the optimal performance of all individuals, integrate diversity and inclusion, and strengthen organizational health and wellness.**

VISION

Healthy people, healthy communities – for generations

MISSION

To achieve excellence in health, healing and learning through working together

VALUES

Respect, Integrity, Courage, Innovation, Accountability

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Our Services

Deliver a high-quality and sustainable health system

Our People

Strengthen and support a healthy, high-performing workforce

Our Community

Work with our communities to improve the health and wellness of Nova Scotians

People Strategy





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Informing the People Strategy

Your voice in the People Strategy

The *People Strategy* was developed in 2019/20 to align with Nova Scotia Health’s refreshed *Strategic Plan, Healthier Together*. The *People Strategy* is shaped by your voices and input. We engaged with many team members across all zones in a wide variety of extensive feedback opportunities.

A variety of consultation channels were used including focus groups, the *Work Life Pulse* survey, physician engagement survey, zone leadership forums and physician and medical advisory forums. In addition, we encouraged team members to provide additional feedback on the draft *People Strategy Framework* through a Nova Scotia Health online poll and forum in September 2019.

As part of the development of the *People Strategy* and to stimulate engagement and discussion, research was conducted on leading people practices from world-class health care organizations. A steering committee was established to guide the development of the strategy, led by the Vice President of Quality and System Performance and the Vice President of Medicine. In all, thousands of voices in the organization shared their concerns, questions, ideas, and advice as well as positive feedback.

What we heard

The following are the common themes we heard and that were taken into consideration during the creation of the *People Strategy*:

What is going well

- ✓ Would recommend Nova Scotia Health as a place to be cared for; proud of the care provided
- ✓ Teamwork is strong and team members are helpful to each other
- ✓ Teams provide top quality patient care (and other services)
- ✓ Individuals feel that they are part of a team
- ✓ Supervisors are perceived as fair
- ✓ There is a respectful work environment





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Informing the People Strategy (Cont'd.)

What can be improved

-  Clarity of organizational goals and priorities
-  Career paths and progression
-  Professional and leadership training and development ★
-  Diversity and inclusion ★
-  Decision-making, autonomy, role-clarity ★
-  Responsiveness to feedback
-  Workload and flexibility ★
-  Rewards and recognition ★
-  Psychological safety, health, and wellness ★
-  Recruitment and onboarding for families ★
-  Caring for and connecting with each other
-  Two-way communication ★

★ High area of emphasis for physicians





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People Strategy Framework

The *People Strategy* themes provide the framework for the actions that will help us achieve our aim to “**strengthen and support a healthy, high-performing workforce.**” These themes were created in response to what we heard from you. As well, we reviewed leading practices related to: empowering individual and collective talent, developing the type of work environment that helps everyone succeed and organizations thrive, and what will be most impactful to shape our culture. The themes are interconnected and also reinforce each other, however, are not mutually exclusive.

Summarized below are the five themes and broad actions on our roadmap for the next three years.



Caring for and connecting with each other

We acknowledge that health care is physically, intellectually, and emotionally demanding. Everyone works tirelessly to deliver exceptional care to patients and the demands of the work can often make it challenging to connect with and care for each other within the organization.

This theme is centered on providing the tools, programs and supports that reinforce an organizational culture of caring, connection, collaboration, and joy. While this theme and its broad actions are reinforced in other themes of the *People Strategy*, it was felt to be of significant stature and importance to merit a distinct set of actions. Creating a quality health care system can only be achieved if all those within the system derive satisfaction, if not joy, from what we do. The two are inextricably linked to each other but also to improving the experience of patients in the system.

Integrating Nova Scotia Health’s values and caring-based competencies into people processes and training can lead to improvements in patient experience and outcomes, a more positive and motivating work environment, and increased employee engagement and resilience with less absenteeism.

Enhancing engagement, creating more opportunities to hear everyone’s voice and connecting with leaders are all actions we have embarked on and will continue to expand. Finding the unique motivators and rewards to show gratitude and recognition is also part of this theme—from thank you sticky notes to a huddle to share a good day story—these are some of the many ways we need to reassess joy at work and making it a shared responsibility.





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People Strategy Framework (Cont'd.)

We want everyone's experience in our organization to reflect the type of caring organization we aspire to be and what we stand for in the communities we engage.

Caring for and connecting with each other - Broad Actions

- ✓ Embed Nova Scotia Health values and caring-based competencies into people processes and learning programs
- ✓ Engage team members meaningfully and be responsive to feedback
- ✓ Enhance collaboration, connectivity, visibility and organizational and team effectiveness
- ✓ Bring joy in work



Developing people

As the largest employer in the province, we require the right individuals with the right skills to be successful in delivering our programs and services. We aim to build a strong identity as a learning organization that prioritizes everyone's development and career aspirations. We need to develop, motivate and support team members through their career journey.





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People Strategy Framework (Cont'd.)

We need to build capabilities across the organization to align and deliver on our values and vision, and set us up for success to operate in an environment characterized by change and innovation. As a priority, this requires a robust end-to-end talent management framework and processes to attract, retain, and grow all individuals. This would include critical elements like: effective onboarding, coaching, mentoring, and feedback, regular and fair performance evaluations, succession planning, and learning programs and systems. All these processes need to support and reinforce the *Strategic Plan*. For example, designing the performance management process in alignment with the *Strategic Plan* should allow everyone to see how their work matters and contributes to the organizational goals.

Learning and development will be more than a series of training programs. It would encompass fostering an open leadership culture where all individuals are encouraged, rewarded, and feel safe enough to courageously speak up, contribute ideas, take risks, and admit errors (otherwise known as psychological safety). Developing the workforce will become a distinctive characteristic of this organization.

We acknowledge that the maturity of this varies across the organization and there will be different starting points. As a first step, we need to confirm we have the right foundation in order for everybody to have the right tools available to build what we need to be successful in this area. A prime example of this is ensuring we have a common learning system for all and individuals are given the space in order to help cultivate a learning organization.

Developing people - Broad Actions



Attract and hire a high performing workforce



Foster a learning organization





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People Strategy Framework (Cont'd.)



Support team members to achieve their full potential



Align development to strategy and results



Making it easier to work together

We heard from team members that there are opportunities to make it easier to work together by improving the structure of the organization, the efficiency and effectiveness of processes and systems, the clarity of roles, and the transparency of decision-making.

We acknowledge that this has been challenging over the last few years, and recognize the criticality of getting this right so our work is made easier and enables us to be more effective at meeting our goals. We are a large, rapidly evolving and dynamic organization, and this has been a work “in progress.” It is crucial to ensure that organizational roles define work and performance expectations clearly, there is regular two-way communication, and decisions are timely and transparent so that we can better provide quality care to serve patients and communities.

As we developed the *People Strategy*, we were already in the process of initiating and implementing several of the broad actions that will enable us to more easily work together. These include: restructuring of the executive leadership team for shared decision-making between clinical operations and medical leadership, establishing a clinical operational council to integrate local planning that also maintains provincial focus and two-way communication, conducting a pay and benefits review to ensure consistent compensation across the organization, and conducting a medical bylaw review for physicians.

While these changes and the broad actions of this theme are an ongoing “continuous improvement” process that will take time and careful consideration to fully implement, we are optimistic that they will strengthen the organization overall.





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People Strategy Framework (Cont'd.)

Making it easier to work together - Broad Actions



Create alignment through clear vision, goals and priorities



Clarify roles and accountabilities



Ensure appropriate structures and processes to enhance effective decision-making



Align and implement consistent compensation and benefits across the organization



Actively building diversity, equity, antiracism and belonging into the workplace

We heard that being a culturally competent and culturally safe, diverse and inclusive organization is important to team members and patients. The *Black Lives Matter* movement reminded us and shone a light on the inequities that remain prevalent in society and within the organization.

The actions reflected in this theme are directed at fostering a climate of trust, enabling innovation through diverse perspectives and inclusive cultures, and reducing discrimination and harassment. Understanding diversity, systemic racism and the negative impacts of implicit or unconscious bias is a critical priority for the organization.





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People Strategy Framework (Cont'd.)

We are proud to have Diversity Committees that work tirelessly on this agenda and will continue to champion this work moving forward. The broad actions and initiatives for this theme were informed by their input and the *Diversity Plan* prepared by the Provincial Diversity Committee.

While we acknowledge that there is still much to learn and do, there are already many foundational initiatives in progress that are shaping a more culturally competent organization, for example: welcoming more diversity to our Board of Directors this year, offering many new and existing self-directed education modules and facilitated sessions to build competency in diversity and inclusion, and updating the *Equity in Employment Policy* and the accompanying *Recruitment and Selection Policy*.

Collecting and tracking demographic and experiential information is a critical component of the *Diversity Plan*—“what gets measured gets improved” and as one of the broad actions, we will be providing individuals the opportunity to self-identify in their employee profile to better understand our workforce composition. This will provide a baseline set of information and enable us to design and develop people programs and systems to support everyone.

Actively building diversity, equity, antiracism and belonging into the workplace - Broad Actions



Create an environment that is diverse, fosters respectful relationships, and a sense of belonging within the workplace



Develop competencies and behaviours within the workforce that support an equitable organization where people experience a sense of belonging





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People Strategy Framework (Cont'd.)



Promoting the physical and mental health and wellness of the workforce

Team members deserve to work in a safe workplace that protects and supports their overall health and wellness. The health and wellness of the workforce is also critical for patients, communities, and our reputation as a provider of high-quality care.

This theme emphasizes the importance of occupational health, safety and wellness which promotes all individuals' holistic well-being and helps create a psychologically safe, harassment-free and healthy climate. Health care workers are at increased risk of exposure to workplace stressors and incidences of harassment and violence, that not only contribute to somatic injuries but also psychological consequences. Proactively addressing mental health and wellness with interventions like resilience training, is a primary prevention strategy that can help the workforce handle work stress better and develop protective factors against stressors in the workplace.

We are committed to providing and advancing our comprehensive health, safety, and wellness programs to reduce risk and protect the workforce physically and mentally. We will also continue to work with partners to support actions within this theme, for example, with national and provincial associations' programs directed at physician health and wellness.

While this has always been an area of importance, it has recently become more heightened and front of mind in light of the *COVID-19* pandemic. For example, we took a variety of measures to ensure adequate supply of proper personal protective equipment (PPE) for everyone's safety. This included, but was not limited to, guidance to the workforce on access and judgment in using PPE, PPE fit tests, procurement of PPE supply, and providing training on PPE use.

We will continue to maintain increased attention on the health and wellness of the workforce as we continue to respond and recover from the *COVID-19* pandemic and evolve beyond it.





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People Strategy Framework (Cont'd.)

Promoting the physical and mental health and wellness of the workforce - **Broad Actions**



Champion mental health and wellness within the workforce



Support the physical and occupational health and safety of team members





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Reaching Our Destination

The *People Strategy* is ambitious, yet practical. It will evolve with your support. Implementation of the *People Strategy* will take time.

We acknowledge that some groups across the organization will be starting from different points of maturity and in some cases we may need to invest in new systems and programs. This will be a marathon rather than a sprint, and everyone has a role in shaping this journey. Change is never easy but a necessary step to transform and respond to the evolving needs of patients and communities. We have demonstrated in many ways that we have the capability, resilience, innovative mindset, and agility to rise up to this challenge.





7 Measuring Success

These are broad measures that our organization plans to track and we will set targets for each theme. Some of these measures may involve creating a baseline (e.g. the first year of conducting a survey on diversity), as well as targets for ongoing progress reporting.

Themes	How success will be measured
Overall	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Recognized as one of Nova Scotia’s and Canada’s top employers
Caring for and connecting with each other	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Accreditation <i>Canada Work Life Pulse Survey</i> – improved overall workplace experience measures
Developing people	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Accreditation <i>Canada Work Life Pulse Survey</i> – improved engagement and leadership measuresReduced vacancy rateImproved hiring processing timeReduced turnover rate
Making it easier to work together	<ul style="list-style-type: none">See above <i>Work life pulse survey</i> – organizational performancePer cent of programs that implemented co-leadership model
Actively building diversity, equity, antiracism and belonging into the workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Implementation of surveys to measure baseline diversity data and experience in the workplace; ongoing monitoring tied to key initiatives
Promoting the health and wellness of the workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reduced lost time frequency rateReduced sick time and overtime trendsReduced time loss injuriesIdentified and addressed workplace violent incidents



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