



BUSINESS PLAN

2024-25

Community Services

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Budget 2024-25: Business Plan
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Department of Community Services

2024-25 Priority Actions in Support of Government's Business Plan

The Department of Community Services supports vulnerable children, youth, families and individuals in alignment with critical government priorities, including healthcare, the economy, and healthy communities. The Department's core programs operate in 35 offices based in communities across the province. The Status of Women Office is co-located with the Department. Principles of prevention and early intervention and client-centredness are embedded within all of the Department's policies, programs and delivery of services. A dedicated division provides guidance to programs and their delivery to ensure equity, inclusion, diversity, Africentricity and to address anti-Black racism.

Strategic Initiatives

The Department is committed to collaborating with other departments, the private sector, and community partners to reduce child poverty. Work in 2024-25 will build on recent key initiatives, which include increases to the Nova Scotia Child Benefit, creation of a leading-practice program of supports for children leaving care, and enhanced prevention and early intervention employment and educational supports for youth in poverty. Collaboration across departments and communities will also support implementation of Solution Six of Nova Scotia's Action for Health, addressing barriers to health. Work will focus on the formative years of a child's life to curtail the impacts of poverty. Progress will be measured by metrics such as the percentage of children living below the Market Basket Measure, Canada's official poverty line.

The Department will conduct its legislated four-year review of the *Children and Family Services Act* (CFSA). Following broad public engagement in fall 2023, a Minister-appointed CFSA Review Committee will conduct focused engagements in 2024-25 and a comprehensive review of the legislation, with a report detailing their recommendations to be released by March 1, 2025.

Child and Family Wellbeing (CFW)

The Department continues its foster care system redesign with a long-term goal of having 1000 foster families. Following the successful pilot of Hub Homes (Mockingbird Family Model) in Cape Breton and Preston Township, work will continue to expand foster care placement types, improve peer support and respite for foster families, and collaborate with former children in care and foster caregivers on the new model.

Investments will continue for community-based service providers delivering prevention and early intervention programs. Reductions in the number of children in temporary emergency arrangements will continue through a range of initiatives to ensure children in care are receiving the appropriate supports for their needs. A new Practice Framework and policy manual will guide the work of staff, partners, and service providers. The Framework is rooted in reflective practice, Africentric and Indigenous approaches, family preservation, and child and family centred decision making. An Africentric team led by African Nova Scotian social workers will ensure supports are culturally responsive and rooted in community.

Progress will be measured by metrics such as number of children in care, specifically from marginalized communities, and participation in community-based family decisions and reunification.

Disability Support Program (DSP)

The Department will continue its response to the Human Rights Review and Remedy for the Findings of Systemic Discrimination Against Nova Scotians with Disabilities. In 2024-25, emphasis will be on reducing the number of people in institutional settings and increasing the number of individuals living in community. New individualized supports will be introduced to provide individuals with control over their life choices. Four new regional multidisciplinary teams will provide community-based supports to persons with disabilities and an emergency response team will be established. Human and technical resources critical to implementing the Remedy will be established, including support staff within the community whose strong connection to local resources enables them to support participants in realizing a good life in their community. Learnings from Africentric engagements and connections with other equity seeking communities will be reported back to inform African Nova Scotian and other communities of programs and to ensure supports are culturally relevant. Progress will be measured by metrics such as the number of DSP participants living in community, institutional placements, and participants waiting for services. Beginning in May, the Province will complete an Annual Remedy Progress Report.

Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA)

Updates to policies and programs will ensure programming is equitable, anti-racist, and meets the needs of clients. The Elevate Employment Support Services initiative will improve supports and enhance participation in employment and post-secondary educational opportunities. A new Disability Supplement will be introduced in May 2024 to support ESIA clients living with a disability. Other priorities include supporting food security initiatives and employment-focused youth prevention programming to help reduce intergenerational poverty. Progress will be measured by metrics such as number of youth and adults engaged in employment services and those graduating from training and post-secondary programs, specifically from racialized and marginalized communities.

Partnerships with other departments and community service providers will continue to provide supportive housing, emergency shelter, and wraparound supports in year two of the Department's Supportive Housing Action Plan. Work will continue towards a target of 1,085 new supportive housing units, bringing the provincial total to 1,516 by 2027/28. Progress will be measured by number of supportive housing units and wraparound supports, units with culturally appropriate supports, and individuals sheltered or housed.

Status of Women Office (SW)

Continued investment in women's centres and transition houses will support women experiencing gender-based violence. Through the Canada-Nova Scotia Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence and Standing Together, investments will be made to increase service provider capacity to address and prevent gender-based violence, expand culturally responsive services, and address factors exacerbating gender-based violence. Cross-governmental work will address recommendations from the Mass Casualty Commission, and investments in initiatives to prevent human trafficking and support survivors. Continued support for Indigenous-led approaches in response to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls will be a priority, including the opening of the Native Women's Association Resilience Centre in Spring 2024. There will be a renewed focus on strengthening economic security for women through their participation in leadership opportunities. Progress will be measured by metrics such as the number of individuals accessing services, calls made and counselling sessions provided via helplines, and women participating in leadership programs and receiving educational bursaries.

Financial Summary

Departmental Expenses Summary (\$ thousands)

	2023-2024 Estimate	2023-2024 Forecast	2024-2025 Estimate
<u>Programs and Services</u>			
Senior Management	921	1,247	1,138
Strategic Policy and Decision Support	4,930	5,180	4,642
Corporate Services Unit	4,374	4,559	3,225
Inclusion, Diversity and Community Relations	394	472	638
Service Delivery	95,756	102,596	96,904
Strategic Operations and Innovation	17,424	18,453	18,775
Disability Support Program	552,146	548,035	668,290
Child and Family Wellbeing	161,318	172,908	168,953
Employment Support and Income Assistance Program	444,416	522,683	589,795
Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women	18,234	20,602	26,809
Total - Departmental Expenses	1,299,913	1,396,735	1,579,169
Ordinary Recoveries	19,472	18,968	21,256
<u>Funded Staff (# of FTEs)</u>	1,613.5	1622.5	1,724.0
Department Funded Staff			

Note:

For Ordinary Revenues, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 2

For TCA Purchase Requirements, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 1