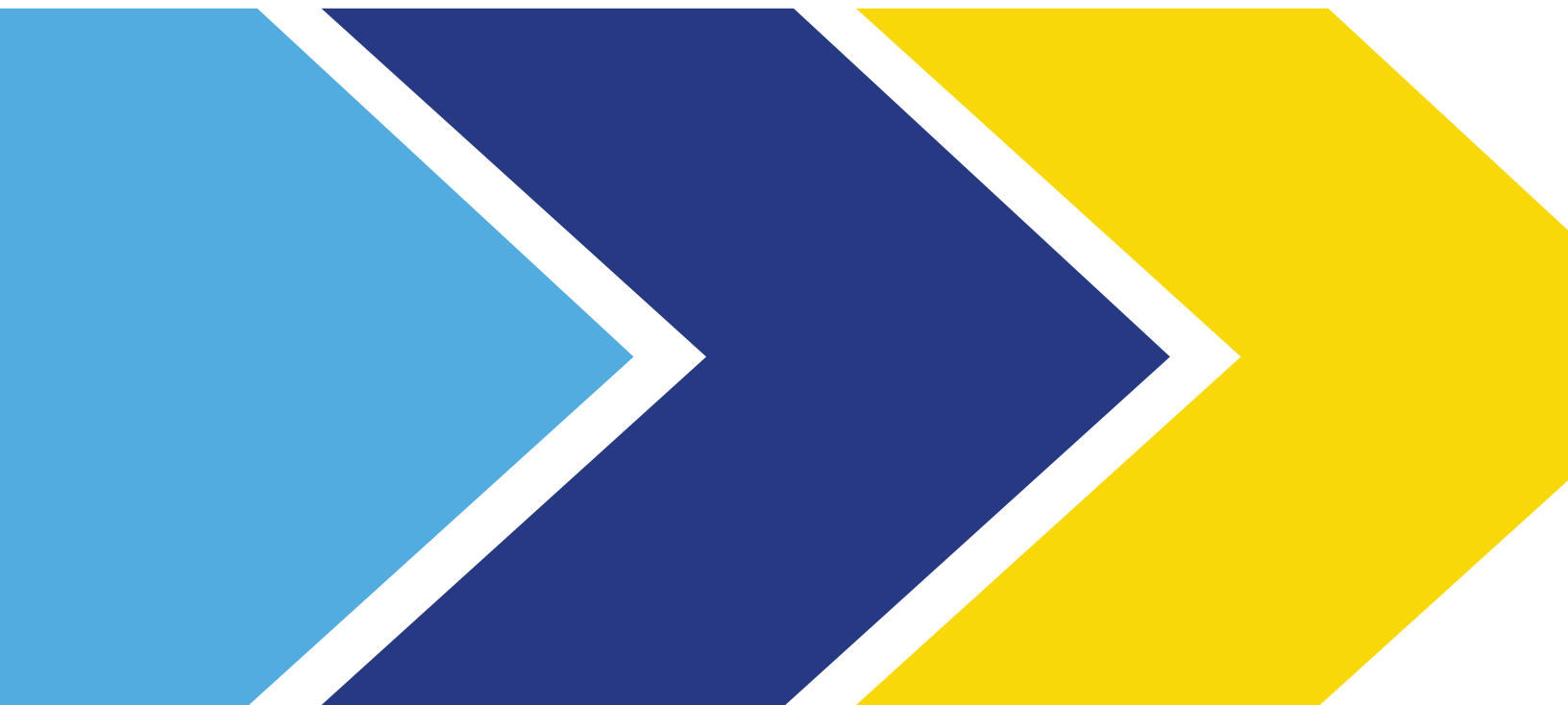


BUSINESS PLAN

2022-23



Community Services



© Crown copyright, Province of Nova Scotia, 2022

Budget 2022-23: Business Plan
March 2022
ISBN: 978-1-77448-361-9

Contents

- Department of Community Services 2
 - Message from the Minister 2
 - Strategic Priorities in 2022-23..... 4
 - Establish a five-year target for the reduction of childhood poverty..... 4
 - Enhancing both the short and long term model for supportive housing 4
 - Provide services under the Disability Support Program, Children Youth and Family Services and the Employment Support and Income Assistance Program that support vulnerable children, families, and individuals: 4
 - Child and Youth Commission..... 8
 - Ongoing Impact of COVID-19 8
- Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women 9
 - Overview and Mandate..... 9
 - Strategic Priorities in 2022-23..... 9
 - Continue to encourage women’s participation in leadership 9
 - Explore initiatives to strengthen women’s economic security 9
 - Ensure women, and their children are safe from gender-based violence..... 9
- Departmental Expenses Summary 11

Department of Community Services

Message from the Minister



It is an honour to present this 2022-2023 Business Plan for the Department of Community Services and the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women office. As you read through our plans for the year ahead, I hope you learn more about our commitment to serving Nova Scotians.

Our focus at Community Services is on supporting Nova Scotians to provide for themselves and their families, increase independence, and participate in their communities. By working together with government and community partners, we can and will do more for those we serve.

No amount of poverty is acceptable, and my department is part of a government-wide effort to develop a five-year plan to reduce child poverty. This plan will include targets to measure progress and show the positive impact that new investments have on children and families.

We believe Nova Scotians with disabilities should live in their communities, with opportunities for personal growth and to be valued for their contributions. Large residential facilities will continue to be phased out as more participants in the Disability Support Program move to community-based independent living.

A bright future for Nova Scotia includes children, youth and families who are safe and healthy. The foster care system is being redesigned to increase support and training for our foster families, who provide a loving, nurturing home for children in their care. In addition, a Child and Youth Commission will be created to protect and advance the rights, interests and viewpoints of children and youth.

Work to further an anti-Black Racism Strategy reflects the fact that people of African descent living in Nova Scotia face encounters with racism every day, in our society. Systemic racism and inequality, and their impacts, must be identified and addressed in our systems, institutions and communities.

Everyone needs a safe, affordable place to call home. Working collaboratively across government and with communities, our focus is to expand supportive housing options for people at risk of homelessness, provide wraparound supports, and develop culturally relevant housing.

At the Status of Women office, we work in partnership with government and in community to advance equality for women and girls in Nova Scotia. For the coming year, our priority is to increase women's economic security, promote leadership opportunities and support innovative projects to address and prevent domestic violence.

In closing, I would like to recognize the staff of Community Services and the Status of Women office and all the service providers who are our partners. Their energy and dedication make a positive difference in the lives of many Nova Scotians.

Thank you.

Honourable Karla MacFarlane
Minister of Community Services
Minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act

Strategic Priorities in 2022-23

In 2022-23, the Department will continue to implement strategic enhancements to its programs and services in alignment with Government's priorities. These key initiatives will focus on priorities that support key client and support system outcomes, with intentional efforts to ensure cultural responsiveness is reflected in all.

Establish a five-year target for the reduction of childhood poverty

- A coordinated approach across government and external stakeholders will be undertaken to address child poverty and its underlying causes with a particular focus on marginalized communities.

Enhancing both the short and long term model for supportive housing

- The Department will continue to work to develop a provincial supportive housing approach with both short- and long-term initiatives that help children, families, and individuals live safe and healthy lives in their communities.
- The Department will co-design the approach with the Office of Addictions and Mental Health. In partnership with government departments, community organizations, and non-governmental partners, the Department will enable wraparound supports for people experiencing homelessness and address barriers to stable housing such as physical and mental health challenges. Supports will include harm reduction, mental health services, community-based supports, as well as culturally appropriate services.

Provide services under the Disability Support Program, Children Youth and Family Services and the Employment Support and Income Assistance Program that support vulnerable children, families, and individuals:

Nova Scotians will be supported to have more control over their own lives

The Department of Community Services will support Nova Scotians to increase their independence, so they can meaningfully make their own decisions and pursue their own interests through the following initiatives:

- Increasing community living capacity through continued closure of large residential facilities and construction of more small option homes.
- Planning for a review of the *Homes for Special Care Act* to modernize this legislation for the current needs of Nova Scotians.
- Establishing an individualized funding model for persons with disabilities to improve self-directed choices and support plans.
- Explore the development of services and supports for Nova Scotian children, youth, and families, including the piloting of new supportive programs for individuals with disabilities.
- Continuing to implement the *Adoption Records Act* and develop subsequent regulations to modernize open adoption records practices.

Nova Scotians will be better able to meet their basic needs

The Department of Community Services will continue to help clients better meet their basic needs through the following initiatives:

- Continuing the implementation of initiatives that address food insecurity for vulnerable Nova Scotians, particularly in rural areas and with marginalized communities.
- Exploring new transportation pilot sites and opportunities for expansion that enhance access to transportation to individuals experiencing low-income, with an emphasis on rural communities
- Initiating long-term planning for Income Assistance current and future rates to ensure the basic needs of Nova Scotians are met.
- Improvement and expansion of employment-focused interventions that better meet the needs of low-income households from marginalized communities
- Increase of the Nova Scotia Child Benefit which supports low-income families and helps to reduce child poverty.

Nova Scotians will be safe, and supported through increased prevention and early intervention

The Department of Community Services will work toward ensuring services move from a crisis driven approach to one that is proactive and prevention- and early intervention-focused through the following initiatives:

- Implementation of key initiatives to advance the three-year Prevention and Early Intervention strategy for children, youth and families.
- Further expansion of the department's prevention and early intervention approach across all programs areas to prevent the need for intrusive interventions. This approach will address social determinants of health and focus on promoting proactive, client-centered services.
- Connecting expectant families, including those with high needs, to culturally appropriate prevention and early intervention programs and services to proactively meet the needs of the child and their families.
- Implementation of several coordinated strategies to address sexual exploitation and human trafficking in Nova Scotia, particularly of youth. This will include programming for youth at risk of sexual exploitation and trafficking and workshops / training for social workers, caregivers, and other professionals. This work will also include specialized placements and more individualized supports for the youth.
- Continuing to invest in targeted preventative interventions focused on better meeting the needs of dependents of Income Assistance recipients, or youth experiencing poverty.
- Collaboration with the Office of Addictions and Mental Health on various initiatives that promote wellbeing for vulnerable Nova Scotians.
- The development and implementation of a comprehensive program to support families with children with disabilities.

Nova Scotians will be more included in their communities

The Department of Community Services will work towards ensuring that Nova Scotians will be included in their communities, so they have opportunities to participate in employment, volunteer work, and cultural, recreational, and social events. This will be advanced through the following initiatives:

- Development of small option homes for persons with disabilities; explore different approaches to expediting construction of the homes, such as modular homes.
- Supporting community day programs that promote social inclusion and allow persons with disabilities to have meaningful and purposeful activities in their day. *My Days*, a new initiative, will be added to support individuals transitioning out to the community by providing them with individualized funding and choice in how they spend their days.
- Working closely with current residents of Harbourside Lodge and their families to plan for their new community-based homes. New small option homes will be created to support residents who are transitioning from the facility. The Department will also support the staff at Harbourside Lodge during the transition.
- Expand by 200 placements over four years, a collaborative program between Community Services and Seniors and Long Term Care whereby young adults with severe disabilities living in long-term care settings are supported to live in community and have their needs met. These community homes will be fully accessible to support usability and independence of the residents
- Continued work with government partners to implement recommendations from the 2013 *Roadmap*, particularly regarding self-directed living choice and the review of Residential Care Facility program.
- Initiatives to address food insecurity and isolation with an emphasis on social and cultural connections.
- Application of an Indigenous lens on the programs and policies for children, youth, and families. This is in line with the Department's commitment to carry out the mandates from federal child welfare legislation.

Employment and income supports will be proactive, practical, and targeted

For those who can work, opportunities for employment can mean independence, self-sufficiency, as well as economic and social security. The department will work on the following initiatives:

- Continued progress to evolve ESIA services for youth through the integration of wraparound supports. Areas of focus span several key areas such as mental health supports and access to food and transportation.
- Beginning work to innovate and improve employment-focused programming that meets the needs of adult Employment Support Services (ESS) participants.

Programs and services will be delivered more efficiently

The Department of Community Services will deliver client-centric programs and services to Nova Scotians with the goal of maximizing departmental resources, through the following initiatives:

- Redesign of the foster care system - a comprehensive, strategic and systemic response to critical unmet cultural needs and issues within the foster care program. This work includes an increase in funding, enhanced supports for foster parents, implementation of a new foster care hub model as well as an engagement mechanism with youth currently or previously in foster care to better serve clients.
- Continued development of client-centred services through a digital strategy that enables better access to supports for all families, children and individuals served by the Department.
- Focusing on creating conditions for success for service providers.
- Initiating a review of the province's adoption program. The Department will also begin preparing for the next mandated *Children and Family Services Act* review.
- Continuing to work with staff to develop supports to ensure service delivery teams have the tools and resources needed to effectively deliver services to clients using a client-centric approach.

Work to strengthen relationships with African Nova Scotian and African Canadian communities

The Department of Community Services will continue its engagement with people of African descent across the Province and work to better address the unique needs of children, youth, and families of African descent. This includes working with all departments to improve education, health, and economic outcomes by addressing systemic racism, inequity and their impacts. The following initiatives will be undertaken:

- Continue the implementation of the Department's anti-Black racism strategy including:
 - Engaging with African Nova Scotian and African Canadian communities to further build Disability Support Program offerings;
 - Conducting an Africentric review of Children Youth and Family Support programs and policies;
 - Beginning the implementation of recommendations from the Employment Support and Income Assistance Africentric Review;
 - Continuing to identify and address anti-Black racism in programs and services delivered by the Department; and
 - Beginning the implementation of the Inclusion, Diversity and Community Relations Division's Strategic Plan, particularly in building strong relationships with African Nova Scotian and African Canadian communities.
- Deliver initiatives identified within government's *Count Us In: Nova Scotia's Action Plan in Response to the International Decade for People of African Descent*.
- Work with community partners on the path forward outlined by the *Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children Restorative Inquiry*.
- Deliver employment-focused programming for African Canadian and African Nova Scotian clients through culturally appropriate service delivery and service providers.
- Design, build and implement a new unit within the Child, Youth and Family Supports Division that works to improve child welfare service experiences for our children, youth, and families of African descent and enhances cultural understanding and skill development among

social workers supporting these families. The team will be led by a supervisor of African descent who will be providing cultural advice and guidance to social workers.

- Continuing to improve service delivery and evidence-based analysis to program and policy development through the collection of disaggregated demographic data.

Child and Youth Commission

The *Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children Restorative Inquiry* made a recommendation to develop an independent body, through the design of a Child and Youth Commission, to move from a complaints-driven, reactive model to one that convenes proactive, collaborative system change. As such, the Department of Community Services will:

- Co-lead the development of the Child and Youth Commission with the Executive Council Office. The work will be undertaken in partnership with other government departments and engage with African Nova Scotian, Mi'kmaw, First Voice, youth services, and other stakeholders to incorporate their perspectives.

Ongoing Impact of COVID-19

- Continue to offer pandemic-related support to youth transitioning from care.
- Nova Scotians who are currently in emergency shelters will be transitioning to supportive housing such as modular housing units. Ongoing safety protocols and practices will continue to be in place to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19.
- Ongoing delivery of some services online to provide flexibility to clients. This approach started during the pandemic and will continue to be a service delivery approach post-pandemic.
- Support service providers to mitigate COVID-19 impacts by providing access to personal protective equipment, workplace testing, and other required supports.

Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Overview and Mandate

The mandate of the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women (Status of Women) is to bring issues affecting the lives of women and girls in Nova Scotia to the forefront of government. The Status of Women office supports the Advisory Council, appointees to which are drawn from the diversity of women across Nova Scotia.

The Status of Women office provides research, policy advice, and information services in pursuit of equality for all women in Nova Scotia. To advance this mandate, the Status of Women office works collaboratively with government departments, agencies, academia, community groups, and women-serving organizations.

Strategic Priorities in 2022-23

Continue to encourage women's participation in leadership

- Introduce online modules of the Campaign School to support women interested in becoming candidates and elected officials at multiple levels, including municipal, provincial, federal and Mi'kmaw Band elections.

Explore initiatives to strengthen women's economic security

- Continue to support the Women Innovating in Nova Scotia (WINS) Bursary, providing financial support to women studying in science, technology, and skilled trades programs at the Nova Scotia Community College. A designated number of these bursaries are awarded to Indigenous women, African Nova Scotian women, and women living with disabilities.

Ensure women, and their children are safe from gender-based violence

- Provide operational funding and support to women-serving organizations across the province that play a key role in ensuring women and their children are safe from gender-based violence, and that they are supported to be economically secure.
- Lead the development of a provincial action plan to prevent domestic violence, called Standing Together. Over the last several years, the initiative has invested in relationships, research, and prototypes to disrupt cycles of violence, better support survivors, and address systemic barriers. In 2022-23, Status of Women will develop an action plan and recommendations based on the culmination of these learnings and insights.
- As part of this work, Status of Women will continue to collaborate with the Department of Justice to develop and implement human-centred responses to domestic violence, including cross-system coordination for high-risk cases, enhanced training for police and service providers, and examination of domestic homicides to understand how to prevent future tragedies.
- Collaborate across all levels of government, with the Departments of Community Services and Justice, and with community as part of the province's coordinated strategy to prevent human trafficking, with a specific focus on supporting African Nova Scotian and Indigenous-led efforts to address trafficking and sexual exploitation.

- Continue to coordinate government's collaborative efforts with the Mi'kmaq and other provincial departments regarding Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). In 2022-23, Status of Women will continue to centre families and Indigenous women's leadership in identifying opportunities for action. This work includes coordination with Federal-Provincial-Territorial and Indigenous groups regarding implementation of national and regional priorities and identifying opportunities for partnership.

Departmental Expenses Summary

Departmental Expenses Summary (\$ thousands)			
<u>Programs and Services</u>	2021-22 Estimate	2021-22 Forecast	2022-23 Estimate
Senior Management	911	1,024	921
Policy and Innovation	8,398	9,874	8,459
Corporate Services Unit	3,829	3,968	3,919
Inclusion, Diversity and Community Relations	297	335	337
Service Delivery	99,097	101,429	100,180
Strategic Services	11,832	12,502	13,437
Disability Support Program	449,592	453,981	500,852
Child, Youth and Family Support Program	123,054	129,168	131,218
Employment Services and Income Assistance Program	416,110	383,119	444,089
Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women	11,194	11,268	14,240
Total - Departmental Expenses	1,124,314	1,106,668	1,217,652
Ordinary Recoveries	18,721	16,851	16,286
Funded Staff (# of FTEs) Department Funded Staff	1,585.5	1,615.5	1,610.3

Note:

For Ordinary Revenues, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 2.
For TCA Purchase Requirements, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book,
Chapter 2