



TOGETHER *Again*



ENGAGE NOVA SCOTIA
2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Do a thing



Our Story

WHERE WE'VE BEEN

In 2012, Nova Scotians from many sectors and regions gathered to consider how our province could do better. Engage Nova Scotia developed from a vision for our province to be more vibrant, inclusive, equitable, and resilient. Our work was conceived for anyone who believes in the promise of Nova Scotia and recognizes that more of us want to participate in shaping its future.

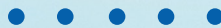
We believe now more than ever that the rich opportunities and deep challenges before us will be solved by many people and organizations working more effectively together. To this end, our work puts us at the intersection of public, private, community impact, and academic sectors.

For over a decade, we have convened gatherings of all sizes to surface and listen to the stories of Nova Scotians. We've brought people together to question and imagine how this province – through the energy, insights, and experiences of its community members – can become more collaborative, inclusive, and adaptive to change.

We have coordinated initiatives and events focused on building relationships like, Share Thanksgiving, One Cape Breton-Unama'ki, From Me to You, the Interconnection Initiative, and many (many) public engagement events from one end of the province to the other.

Since 2017, our attention has primarily been on coordinating the Nova Scotia Quality of Life Initiative. We work collaboratively across all sectors to centre quality of life as a measure of success and progress that guides us all. Our approach involves building trust, collecting data, analyzing insights, and supporting impact. Since 2021, we have also been leading a three-year, federally funded Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) program, which is a series of opportunities to collaborate on action for sustainable, equitable, and inclusive futures. Like all our work, it's built on strong partnerships and has involved new research, knowledge translation, and provincewide networks and events.

To all who've been part of this journey with us so far, thank you. You've helped shape what Engage Nova Scotia is today and what it will become.



A Letter

FROM THE BOARD CHAIR AND CHIEF ENGAGEMENT OFFICER



Looking back over the last year fills us with gratitude for and inspires hope from the many ways we were able to gather and (re) connect. As an organization that specializes in bringing people together and asking thoughtful questions to mobilize action, the experiences we've had this year have been more meaningful than we could have imagined.

As you'll read about in the pages that follow, we brought people together for conversations and collaborations about quality of life and our collective futures.

We brought local wellbeing data to life for people in new and compelling ways thanks to the launch of two innovative, web-based tools. These innovative tools allow us to analyze and visualize the NS Quality of Life Survey data (the largest data set of its kind in Canada) quickly and clearly. They make it possible for us to share insights about the lives of Nova Scotians like never before.

The vast potential of these tools has led us to be invited into countless planning sessions, council meetings, community events, conferences, and more – all with the goal of shining a light on the opportunities and challenges facing communities.

It was a year of being together again – across sectors, regions, and demographics - as Nova Scotians were navigating a return to routines and reorienting themselves to feel more connected. We were right there with you.

We were honoured to collaborate on projects inspired by, and in support of, children and youth, newcomers, persons with disabilities, historically under-represented communities, and many others. We learned so much by supporting the Tajikeymik health transformation gathering, undertaking the Sustainable Development Goals Winter Road Trip in ten communities, and leading Interconnection Initiative gatherings across the province.

We're delighted to be recapping the highlights of the journey with you here. Thank you for engaging, learning, and creating action with us. We couldn't have done it without generous support and collaboration of our government and non-government partners from one end of the province to the other – particularly our municipal, federal, and provincial partners.

Perhaps most notably, the Government of Nova Scotia has been - and remains - an integral supporter of Engage Nova Scotia from our beginning. Together with government, communities, and institutions, we can change the approach to improving health and quality of life, with, and for everyone.

Sincere regards,



Jaime Smith,
Board Chair



Danny Graham,
Chief Engagement Officer

Our Vision

A more vibrant, inclusive, equitable, and resilient Nova Scotia

Our Mission

Change the approach to improving quality of life – for everyone

Our Work

Drive provincial and national initiatives as part of a global movement aimed at measuring and improving quality of life for all.

Equip governments, organizations, and individuals with insights and tools they can use to address complex challenges, rise to opportunities, invest in what matters most, and affect change in their own backyards.

Nurture belief in a better world that everyone can feel part of and committed to.

Focus Areas

The **Nova Scotia Quality of Life Initiative** is leading the wellbeing movement in Canada and involves advancing a quality of life framework, undertaking the NS Quality of Life Survey every five years, and sharing and mobilizing survey results.

Our **Sustainable Development Goals program** is a series of opportunities to collaborate on action for sustainable, equitable, and inclusive futures.

Social connections projects that we create are opportunities for people to strengthen their strong and weak ties, as well as their sense of belonging – all essential aspects of our wellbeing and good quality of life.

Land Acknowledgement

We undertake our work across what is currently known as Nova Scotia, which is part of Mi'kma'ki – the traditional and unceded lands of the Mi'kmaw Nation.

In Mi'kma'ki, the Peace and Friendship Treaties are foundational to our relationships with each other and the land. We are all Treaty people and so we all have the opportunity and responsibility to learn about and uphold them.

With deep gratitude, we also recognize the legacy of people of African descent here in Nova Scotia where there are over 50 historic African Nova Scotian communities across the province. Black lives matter, Black futures matter – always.

We make this acknowledgement to recognize the shared history of this place and the people here because it's an important frame as we strive for a more vibrant, inclusive, equitable, and resilient province – all together.



OUR 2022-2023

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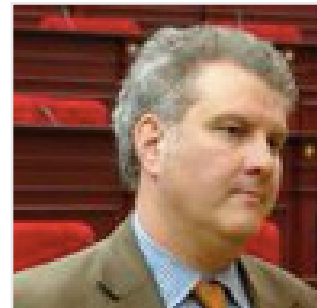
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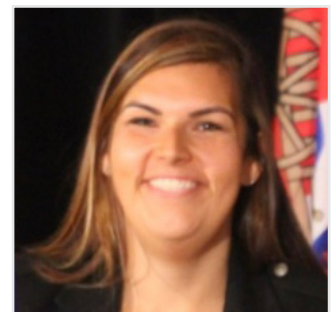
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TOGETHER *Again*

2022-2023 HIGHLIGHTS

Launch of Wellbeing Mapping Tool



A breakthrough tool built from the ground up



We publicly launched the Wellbeing Mapping Tool on May 31 to over 100 government and geospatial experts across Nova Scotia, as part of GeoNova’s annual geomatics conference. We were humbled by the enthusiasm expressed by conference-goers, media, and the public.

The tool is a breakthrough in mobilizing and democratizing data. The 2019 NS Quality of Life Survey data, with 200+ variables and close to 13,000 respondents, represents the single largest quality of life dataset in Canada.

The Wellbeing Mapping Tool enables anyone who is interested to visit our website, and map and graph those survey results in an interactive way. It enables academics, decision-makers and community members alike to use the findings to support, advocate for, and inform what they do (like research, funding proposals, and policy and program development).

The Wellbeing Mapping Tool was designed and built from the ground up by researchers at Dalhousie University’s Faculty of Computer Sciences in partnership with our team. It serves as a way to benchmark the NS Quality of Life Survey results and will allow us to layer in new data when we resurvey (planning for 2024).

As part of the tool’s launch, we also hosted online introductions to it for the NS Quality of Life Initiative’s provincewide network and other community members.

“This is the first time one of our partners is making wellbeing survey results available this way. This is a breakthrough because you can use the tool to understand the perceptions and experiences of Nova Scotia residents at neighbourhood, community, and regional scales.”

Dr. Bryan Smale,
Director of the Canadian
Index of Wellbeing



Wellbeing Analysis Tool

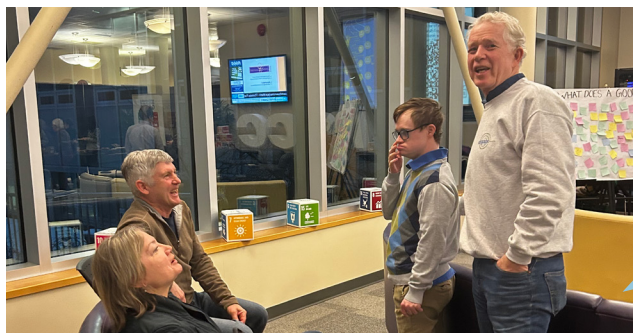
Transforming the way we share insights and knowledge with others



The Wellbeing Analysis Tool can analyze the 2019 NS Quality of Life Survey data in minutes, rather than the days or weeks it takes to do this manually, and represents a significant leap for our organization. It has been a catalyst for countless presentations, keynote speeches, and conversations, and has attracted the attention of provincial government departments, municipalities, and community organizations alike.

Now that we can quickly analyze the 2019 data in ways that bring specific topics, regions, or demographics into focus, we are beginning to see our aspirations for impact come to life.

A recent example includes an in-person presentation to CBRM Councillors that revealed the stories and struggles of younger adults, low-income families, lone-parent families, and persons with disabilities. The insights generated by our tool prompted much discussion and Council is considering reworking their Strategic Vision to more explicitly address inequities in the community. We're also bringing the data analysis to a partnership with the Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunity to reveal unseen challenges of persons with disabilities. The analysis and our collaborative discussions are establishing a baseline for the 2030 targets set in the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act.



The tool allows us to:

- Find and highlight patterns in the data
- Summarize notable assets and concerns shared by groups of Nova Scotians
- Generate spreadsheets that make significant findings visible
- Conduct more complex analyses
- Present data in compelling and memorable formats

“Reciprocating what was the hope of Nova Scotians when they participated in what we were doing – breathing life into their stories, which is ultimately what the data is, and making it incredibly accessible through the two tools. This is arguably a monumental breakthrough.”

Danny
CEO

SDG Summer Gathering



The first in-person event we hosted since 2019



The first in-person event we hosted since 2019 was the SDG Network Summer Gathering, which brought together 30 network members and SDG project partners from across the province in June.

The SDG Network is made up of people from across the province who are working on or curious about the SDGs. Throughout the year, they meet to share information with one another and discuss progress on the SDGs across Nova Scotia. Their positive feedback to this event validated the need to gather in intentional ways, which shaped how we brought people together throughout the year, particularly as part of the SDG program.

Join the SDG Network



Lunch and Community Conversation with Summer Street

Celebrating 10 Years of Engage Nova Scotia



On July 13, over 100 co-workers, friends, and neighbours gathered for a delicious meal to hear a conversation about belonging between Tracy Hermillon, Bob Bennett, Sarah Wiseman, and Bahati Hategekimani, moderated by our Board Chair, Jaime Smith, at Summer Street in New Glasgow. For 50 years, Summer Street has existed to “create and facilitate opportunities for people with intellectual disability – one person at a time.”

The event was part of our organization's 10-year anniversary, marked by centring recognition of people who are leading the kind of work related to belonging, inclusion, and equity that we can all learn from.

It was a moving afternoon in a place that is special to so many. Those in attendance were asked to think about what the conversation inspired them to want to do or change, somewhere they live, work, or play – and to take that idea with them.

Once again, we were humbled by the knowledge and experience of our partners and event speakers, and honoured to create a space for them to share their stories. Event-goers weren't the only ones who expressed enthusiasm for the day – anyone who missed it benefited from a CBC Radio story that captured the speakers' radiance.

Listen to the CBC Radio story



Winter Road Trip

Conversations and connections about the Sustainable Development Goals and quality of life for all



Over five weeks in January and February, we went on a 10-stop road trip in partnership with Nova Scotia Community College, with events at their campuses provincewide. The communities we went to were Dartmouth, Truro, Sydney, Port Hawkesbury, Amherst, Stellarton, Lawrencetown (Annapolis Valley), Yarmouth, Bridgewater, and Halifax.

At the heart of each event was a 1-hour conversation about quality of life, belonging, and change-making, moderated by our SDG Program Director, Blair Crawford. Each conversation featured the voices of 3-4 people who had been nominated locally, which led to dynamic, diverse, and representative speakers. At the end of it all, we'd engaged with more than 35 speakers and 330 attendees.

We didn't focus on single SDGs in the conversations but designed the 2-hour events in a way that centred the stories of others and asked speakers to bring their whole selves to the conversation. This approach led to an event that didn't feel like a panel – for speakers or audience members – and a series of 10 conversations that were candid, inspiring, and insightful in their own ways. All of them pointed to basic needs being met, belonging, and self-determination as being central and important pieces to a good quality of life.

Events also included time to connect with speakers, our team, and community members and learn more about the SDGs and themes from local quality of life data. There was gratitude for this time to learn and connect - in most places it was hard to wrap up 'on time' because the mingling and connecting was so energetic; attendees were rediscovering the magic of getting together. Through these events, the SDGs became more than a framework or measure, they were a thread of connection.

Read our 2-part blog series about the Winter Road Trip



“There was something so unique and special about getting to have genuine and honest conversations with them [the speakers], about the things they care about the most. When I was up there...I actually forgot that there was an audience.”

Blair,
SDG Program Director
and conversation host

Interconnection Initiative

Small gatherings to consider big questions



The Interconnection Initiative was a series of small gatherings that we held across Nova Scotia in March as part of our SDG program.

Gatherings brought together almost 50 people across four, three-day gatherings. They were organized around communities so folks could gather with people they may share geographies or experiences with.

Each gathering was a chance for Nova Scotians from diverse backgrounds to slow down and consider questions about what a good life, society, and future that includes everyone could look like. The agendas included shared time for conversation and connection, as well as solo time for recharging and reflecting.

We say about our work, 'to belong here is to be you.' It is in this spirit that our events are designed, but it was powerful for participants to say they were able to be vulnerable, trust the process, and felt the space we created was a place for them. Many people felt that the gathering they went to came at the right time. And we observed that creating spaces for vulnerability enables deeper and more meaningful and transformative connections and conversations than you'd have otherwise. What we learned is informing how we build on this initiative in the year to come.

“A gift of learning and inspiration for me was the authenticity you brought as a hosting team, offering your gifts, learning alongside us, but also holding the container with presence!”

Interconnection Initiative participant



SDG Partnership Opportunity

Engagement support for our partners' projects



The partnership opportunity through the SDG program offers support to springboard community projects and advance them through a facilitated process that is community-focused, data-informed, and supported by resources.

Many of our partnerships involve designing and facilitating community engagement opportunities. This year's opportunities to gather were central to our partnerships with:

Spencer House • SchoolsPlus Victoria County • National Farmers' Union – Nova Scotia

In addition to the partnerships above, the work of Proud Pairs and New Dawn is supported by this opportunity.

In the last year, we also launched two new partnerships with:

1. **Steam Space, an Annapolis Valley-based community enterprise**
2. **SchoolsPlus Musquodoboit and Musquodoboit Valley Family Resource Centre**

For details about the gatherings hosted as part of the SDG partnership opportunity and more information about this work overall, please see our 2022-2023 Annual SDG Program Report.



“It’s exciting and humbling and hopeful to be embedded in peoples’ work through the partnership opportunity. We get to be part of what others do in a small, but meaningful way.”

Erika,
Facilitation and
Engagement Coordinator

Showing up for Community

Working with Road to Economic Prosperity Advisory Committee



Part of the role of our Outreach and Participation Lead, Tammy Ewing, is to support the work of the Halifax Partnership's Road to Economic Prosperity for African Nova Scotian Communities. She participates in the Road to Economic Prosperity Advisory Committee (REPAC) that's driving the work, and it leads her to make new quality connections and pursue opportunities for relationship-building throughout the year.

Tammy's role is to support all the Councils that comprise their work – for example, helping to bring the specific ideas of the Youth Council to fruition and to support their three strategic priorities:

- Build unity and capacity among African Nova Scotians

- Establish land ownership, develop infrastructure, and attract investment; and,
- Increase participation in education, employment and entrepreneurship.

Some of the work Tammy supports includes highlighting careers, creating mentorship opportunities, and promoting employment opportunities to African Nova Scotian youth. Overall, her work is tied to enabling future generations to thrive. It's an opportunity for Engage's Quality of Life data to be shared with community, and in turn for people's lived experiences to inform and inspire how we build trust or collect data in the future. This partnership is grounded in showing up for and with community, and bringing visions and ideas to life.

Canadian Wellbeing Knowledges Network

Building the momentum from coast to coast for a national movement



The Canadian Wellbeing Knowledges Network is in the early stages of forming and we are passionate about being one of the key voices helping to shape its structure, purpose, and direction.

We led the design and facilitation of events throughout the year that laid the network's foundation, including four 3-hour online dialogues with researchers, professionals, and community members in public health, child and youth wellbeing, and local communities and

initiatives across sectors. Since then, we led the design and facilitation of the Network's first in person gathering, a two-day event held in Ottawa in April that saw more than 60 people working on various aspects of wellbeing policy, advocacy, and research come together and make lasting connections. Engage will continue to help refine the network's membership, function, and direction in the months ahead, continuing to build momentum for the quality of life movement in Canada.



ON THE HORIZON

WHERE WE'RE GOING

The next year will build on what we've been working towards over the last few. We feel the momentum for centring quality of life as a measure of success and progress that guides us all is at a tipping point, and we're moving in a more propulsive way than ever before.

Over the next 12 months, our work will include preparing to re-survey Nova Scotians about their quality of life and wellbeing, and building enthusiasm and anticipation for this milestone. We will also be refining and expanding what the Wellbeing Mapping Tool can visualize and leveraging machine learning to strengthen what the Wellbeing Analysis Tool is capable of.

This next year will also see the creative culmination of our SDG program, shaped by what we hear from you. Part of the culmination will include youth gatherings hosted as part of the Interconnection Initiative, research and storytelling, and concluding the work we share through the partnership opportunity.

You can continue to expect us to work provincewide – from Yarmouth to Sydney and everywhere in between. This includes ensuring you're equipped with information about quality of life in your communities to make program, policy, and investment decisions. It includes prioritizing social connections and fostering a sense of belonging. It includes building a more connected and active national wellbeing network while contributing to the global quality of life movement. And it includes creating opportunities to talk with and advocate for one another with care and intention – within our team, among partners and event participants, and across Nova Scotia.

We will continue to model that relationship-building, trust, and iteration leads to the strongest, most long-lasting impacts, from the personal to provincial. Sticking to these practices has allowed us to evolve our work and outcomes, and it powers the ideas yet to come.

We will keep showing up for Nova Scotia with openness and vulnerability hand-in-hand with research and the skills to translate it into action. Together, we're changing the approach to improving quality of life – for everyone. And because of you – partners, supporters, data users, local leaders, and storytellers – our efforts aren't about us; they're about us all.

BY THE NUMBERS



We are working with over **20 provincial government departments and agencies**, including Nova Scotia Health and Senior Partnership Committees.



33+ conference/gathering presentations, including 4 keynotes, and 4 to international audiences



2 groundbreaking tools launched: Wellbeing Mapping Tool and Wellbeing Analysis Tool



17 media interviews for print, digital, and radio



12 formal partnerships across our SDG program activities



200 hard copies of *Survey Snapshots* distributed across the province



7+ external reports and other grey literature cited NS Quality of Life Survey data



1 new data-sharing agreement (for a total of **13 DSAs signed** with post-secondary and other institutions in Nova Scotia)



1600+ newsletter subscribers



11,000+ social media followers



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