



Engage Nova Scotia's
Sustainable Development
Goals Program

**2022
2023
ANNUAL
REPORT**





INTRODUCTION

Engage Nova Scotia is an independent non-profit organization whose vision is a more vibrant, inclusive, equitable, and resilient province. Our mission is to change the approach of measuring quality of life – for everyone. And we work collaboratively across all sectors to centre quality of life as a measure of success and progress that guides us all.

We do this by:

- Driving provincial and national initiatives as part of a global movement aimed at measuring and improving quality of life for all.
- Equipping 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.
- Nurturing belief in a better world that everyone can feel part of and committed to.

What we do includes three primary focus areas:

- 1) the Nova Scotia Quality of Life Initiative;
- 2) our Sustainable Development Goals program; and,
- 3) projects to strengthen social connections.

We've been driving the NS Quality of Life Initiative as our primary focus since 2017. In 2021, we also began coordinating our three-year program to advance the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) across the province (2021-2024). This project is funded by the Government of Canada's Sustainable Development Goals Program.

The SDGs are 17 interconnected global goals and calls to action that were decided on by the United Nations General Assembly and are based on the five pillars of sustainable development: people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership.

The UN's plan for working towards the SDGs is outlined in the 2030 Agenda. The SDGs are where we want to be, and the 2030 Agenda is a map and plan for how to get there. In Canada, the 2030 Agenda has been adopted in the National Strategy, *Moving Forward Together*.

The SDGs and the 2030 Agenda are closely aligned with the NS Quality of Life Initiative, which applies the Eight Domains of Wellbeing Framework. The Eight Domains framework was created by the Canadian Index of Wellbeing, which is our primary research partner in the NS Quality of Life Initiative. Both the SDGs and eight domains are complementary and comprehensive frameworks that are data-informed and impact-driven, and they are both focused on more sustainable futures as we move forward together.

The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.

ABOUT OUR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS PROGRAM

Engage Nova Scotia's SDG program is an opportunity to collaborate on action for sustainable, equitable, and inclusive futures. Its purpose is to raise awareness of and advance the SDGs locally and collaboratively, and to support Nova Scotia residents to be part of the global movement.

The primary focus areas of our SDG program are:

1

Engage all Nova Scotians to feel included in, informed about, and inspired by the SDGs.

2

Support projects and ideas that work towards the SDGs at a community level.

3

Explore a pan-jurisdictional approach for advancing wellbeing and the SDGs.



Through each area, we're committed to advancing the SDGs in partnership with communities across the province, including historically marginalized and underrepresented groups. What this looks like in practice is reaching out to individuals, organizations, and community groups to explore the opportunity of collaboratively working together on strengthening understanding of the SDGs as well as actions to advance them in ways that are partner-led.

A NOTE FROM OUR NEW PROGRAM DIRECTOR

I'm delighted to step into the role of SDG Program Director for its final year after the steadfast, creative, and ambitious leadership of Blair Crawford.

Under Blair's direction, we released *Survey Snapshots*, an infographic report that illustrates 2019 Nova Scotia Quality of Life Survey data related to each SDG. Available in both English and French, over 200 hard copies have been distributed across Nova Scotia (and counting) with digital versions available for download too.

Blair launched the crowd-sourced SDG Map, which comprises over 100 people, projects, organizations, and resources related to the SDGs in Nova Scotia. Each point on the map includes a description, relevant SDGs, and how to get in touch. This year we added a layer to reflect the path of our provincewide Winter Road Trip (which you'll read about in this annual report).

Blair also established the SDG Network, which typically meets monthly online, and met in person for the first time last June. (If you'd like to join this network or drop in for a meeting, email me: ebout@engagenovascotia.ca).

With support from the rest of the Engage Nova Scotia team, this year Blair launched dynamic and diverse partnerships and research opportunities, carried out a series of provincewide initiatives, and delivered presentations to local and national audiences about our program and the importance of the SDGs. We're excited to tell you about the many activities of the last 12 months and invite you to share in our gratitude and celebration for all Blair's contributions.

I joined the Engage Nova Scotia team this year to support the facilitation and engagement involved in the SDG program and it's been my pleasure to work alongside Blair to bring major initiatives to fruition, like the Winter Road Trip and Interconnection Initiative, as well as support our partners to launch or scale their efforts to improve the quality of life of their communities.

As I step into the role of SDG Program Director for its third and culminating year, I am committed to bringing the intention, thoughtfulness, and relationality that has characterized the life of the program so far. I look forward to continuing our support of work by Nova Scotians across sectors, regions, and focuses; creating spaces for deeper connections, shared learning, and new possibilities; practicing emergence; meeting people where they are; and, sustaining our momentum.

It's been an incredibly active and meaningful time for the SDG program and I'm excited to keep stretching what we can achieve together by bringing what we've learned throughout the program into this last year.

Let's keep rising to the challenges and possibilities.

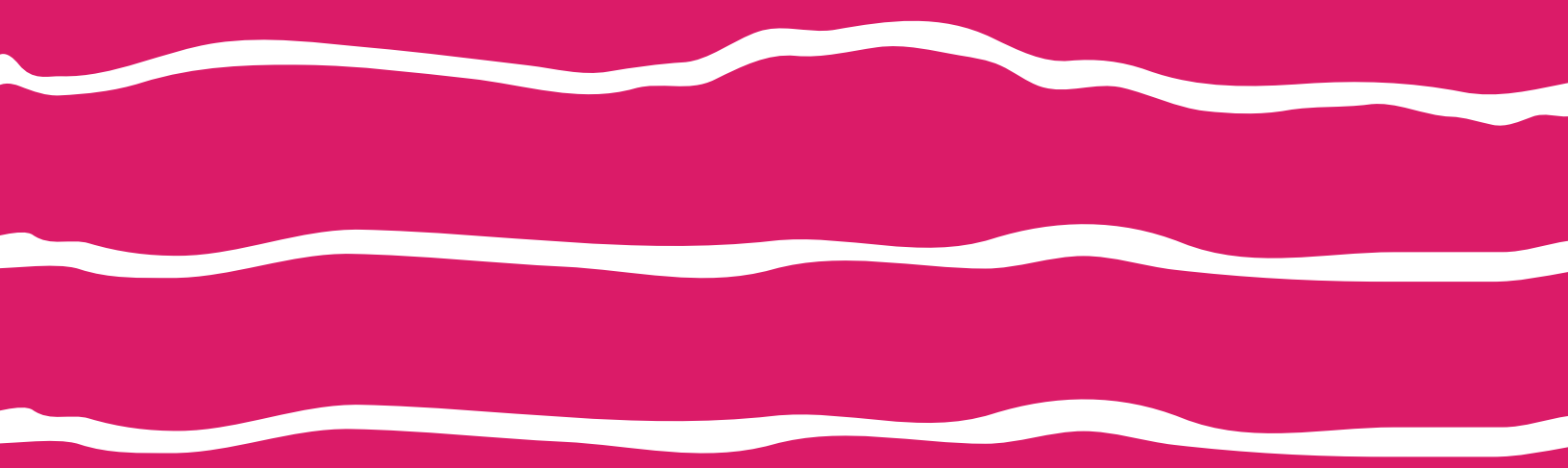


Erika Bout (she/her)
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2022

2023

IN REVIEW



NOVA SCOTIA SDG NETWORK

The SDG Network is made up of people from across the province who are working on or curious about the SDGs. Throughout the year, 10-20 people meet monthly to share information with one another – stories, research, resources, and best practices – and discuss progress on the SDGs across Nova Scotia.

They met in-person for the first time with some of our other SDG project partners for a Summer Gathering in June. About 30 network members and SDG project partners from across the province gathered at the Halifax Central Library to get to know one another, share and receive project updates, and provide input on future activities of our SDG program.

Their positive feedback to this event validated the need to gather in intentional ways, which shaped how we brought people together throughout the year.

JOIN THE SDG NETWORK



WINTER ROAD TRIP

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. At the heart of each event was a 1-hour conversation about quality of life, wellbeing, change-making, belonging, and connection 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.

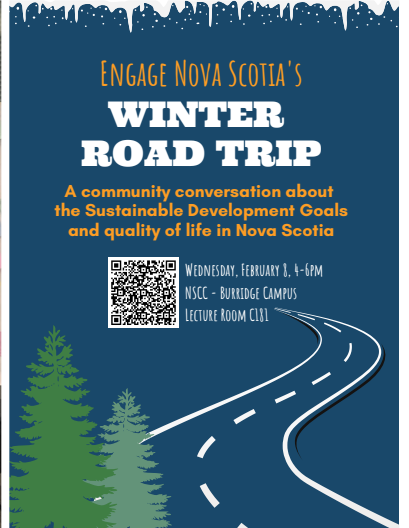
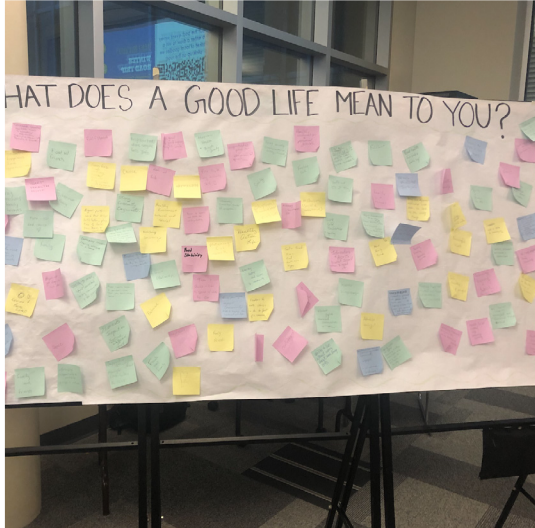
We didn't focus on single SDGs in the conversations but designed the 2-hour events in a way that centred the stories of others and asked speakers to bring their whole selves to the conversation. This approach led to an event that didn't feel like a panel – for speakers or audience members – and a series of 10 conversations that were candid, inspiring, and insightful in their own ways. While each conversation was unique and personal, themes emerged across the 10 events and pointed to basic needs being met, connection and 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. The tone of events and conversations was welcoming and warm, like ones you'd have in your own space, and they captured the idea that no matter what we do, when we're doing something, we're adding to a greater whole.

Throughout the Winter Road Trip, 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





INTERCONNECTION INITIATIVE

The Interconnection Initiative was a series of small gatherings that we held across Nova Scotia in March. Each one was a chance for Nova Scotians to make connections with people and possibilities that could impact their world for the better. The initiative was born from the idea that new possibilities are unlocked when small groups of people, in unlikely combinations, connect in a new way.

We took a networked, interconnected, and creative approach of getting there and the intentionality showed in the initiative's success. The iterative and emergent planning led to a strong design that seeded elements of surprise and mystery, and yielded curiosity and magic. We also approached the design of the initiative with the reality of the pandemic in hand and acknowledged it has shaped how and why we show up together, and what we need when we do.

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.

As a result, the four regional gatherings were:

- Northeast Nova Scotia at the Tatamagouche Centre
- Unama'ki – Cape Breton at The Inverary
- Halifax Regional Municipality at Asitu'lisk
- Valley, South Shore, and Southwest Nova at Asitu'lisk

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. In addition to facilitated time, there were shared meals and time spent walking, exploring, and re-energizing outside.

We invited people to stretch, even if the gatherings felt outside their comfort zones. They were asked questions they hadn't been asked before. They shared stories they hadn't told anyone before.

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.



PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITY

The partnership opportunity offers support to launch or expand community projects and advance them through a facilitated process that is community-focused, data-informed, and supported by resources.

In addition to sharing local wellbeing data related to a partner's project, most partnerships involve designing and facilitating community engagement opportunities. This year's engagement opportunities were a part of partnerships with:



Spencer House: We hosted two gatherings with Spencer House to engage seniors and newcomers on the design and pilot of The Buddy Project. The intention of The Buddy Project is to create social connections and foster friendships between and among seniors and newcomers in Halifax. The gatherings were sequential – the first was a lunch ‘n’ learn for people to drop in and learn about the second gathering, which was an engagement session.



The engagement session welcomed participants from the YMCA Centre for Immigrant Programs, interpreters, and Spencer House participants. Through small group discussions, folks provided input on the shared vision for the project and its logistics. Conversation prompts included: What is important to you when building a connection with someone? How should buddies be matched? What should be considered regarding accessibility, transportation, timing, and communications? In this way, The Buddy Project was co-developed and designed by future users of the program.

Following this engagement session, we supported Spencer House to launch the pilot and created a summary report that synthesized guidance from the engagement session alongside 2019 NS Quality of Life Survey results that Spencer House can use to run this program past the pilot. In October, Lisa Lachance (MLA for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island) recognized the program during Statements by Members at the Nova Scotia House of Assembly.



SchoolsPlus Victoria County: We hosted engagement sessions with over 75 students across Grades 6-8 and then 9-12 at Baddeck Academy to support establishing a school food cupboard. The school food cupboard is an effort led by SchoolsPlus to help address student food insecurity. It allows any student to grab a bite to eat if, and when, they need it.

Students were energetic and thoughtful with what they shared about:

- How they hope people feel when they use the cupboard;
- What kind of food should be available in it;
- How students and community members can be involved;
- Where the cupboard should be located within the school, and
- Creative names for the cupboard.

This partnership is ongoing as we consider a second engagement with students at another local school and synthesize what we heard from the students at Baddeck Academy.



National Farmers' Union – Nova Scotia: We supported the NFU-NS to engage 40 youth members during a national NFU retreat at Asitu'lisk (formerly known as Windhorse Farm).

The engagement session was an opportunity for youth to share their ideas and insights for the next phase of NFU activities, related to the group's four priority areas:

1. Living and fair wages for farmers;
2. Land access;
3. Anti-discrimination and BIPOC solidarity; and
4. Reconnecting youth and other farming adjacent organizations in the province.

Participants explored questions like,

**“WHAT ARE YOUR VISIONS FOR THE NOVA SCOTIA FOOD SYSTEM IN 10 YEARS?” AND
“WHAT IDEAS DO YOU HAVE THAT WORK TOWARDS THOSE VISIONS?”**



PROUD
PAIRS



In addition to the partnerships and gatherings above, our partnership with Proud Pairs is in support of a 2SLGBTQIA+ mentorship initiative looking to expand the diversity and reach of their program. Our partnership with New Dawn is in support of developing a data portal for Cape Breton Regional Municipality that helps residents better understand the challenges of poverty there.

We also launched two new partnerships in the last year with:

1. Steam Space, an Annapolis Valley-based community enterprise;
2. SchoolsPlus Musquodoboit and Musquodoboit Valley Family Resource Centre, which are groups working to expand a regional food security program and support ongoing conversations to address food insecurity in the region more broadly.

We look forward to bringing these project partnerships to meaningful conclusions in the months ahead and, in the years ahead, continuing to support each other's work however we can.

THANKS TO OUR SELECTIONS COMMITTEE:

Meghan McMorris, Keandre Beales, Engage Nova Scotia board member Dr. Gabrielle Donnelly, and Engage team members, Tammy Ewing, Erika Bout, Blair Crawford, and Laura Whitman.

RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS AND OPPORTUNITIES

In partnership with Research Nova Scotia, we issued our first call for research proposals. Two graduate students undertook analyses of the 2019 NS Quality of Life Survey results related to newcomers to Canada, time adequacy, and other quality of life indicators they selected.

This partnership allowed us to work with researchers who have advanced statistical skillsets who could also be supported by their PhD supervisors. It was a pathway to more sophisticated analyses than what we can do with the tools we have alone, and we are eager to see the student research published in academic journals.

One student explored the relationship between newcomers' time adequacy and wellbeing, and how other quality of life indicators, particularly health and work-life balance, affect the relationship between them. The other student's research sought to examine the interrelationships between people new to Canada, time adequacy, age, and a few other quality of life indicators to try to identify subgroups of immigrants to Nova Scotia who flourish relative to those who experience greater challenges after immigrating.

We teamed up with the Change Lab Action Research Initiative (CLARI) to connect community groups with researchers and fund the research they undertake together.

This partnership supports community groups based in Nova Scotia working to improve peoples' quality of life here, and whose projects relate to one or more of the SDGs and will use 2019 NS Quality of Life Survey data. Five projects will be undertaken over the next year.



SNAPSHOTS OF SURVEY SNAPSHOTS

<p>1 NO POVERTY</p> <h3>End Poverty in All Its Forms Everywhere</h3> <p>At least once during the 12 months before the survey,</p> <p>1 in 5 Nova Scotia residents were UNABLE to pay their bills on time (19.3%) & 1 in 5 Nova Scotia residents were UNABLE to afford the things that they need (20%)</p> <p><small>About one quarter of Nova Scotia residents (25.7%) reported annual household incomes less than \$40,000 and just over one quarter of Nova Scotia residents (27%) reported annual household incomes more than \$100,000.</small></p>	<p>2 ZERO HUNGER</p> <h3>End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture</h3> <p>12.2%</p> <p>Just over 1 in 10 Nova Scotia residents (12.2%) did not have enough money for food at least once in the last year leading up to the survey and 2.9% used a local foodbank. Almost 1 in 5 Nova Scotia residents (17.7%) could not afford nutritious food at least once in the past year – just over 7% could not afford nutritious food once a month.</p>	<p>3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING</p> <h3>Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages</h3> <p>Most Nova Scotia residents were satisfied to some degree with their:</p> <p>67.1% LEISURE TIME 72.3% MENTAL HEALTH 57.9% PHYSICAL HEALTH 62.1% TIME ADEQUACY</p> <p><small>Alternatively, some Nova Scotia residents were dissatisfied to some extent with their leisure time (13.6%), mental health (12.5%), physical health (22.2%), and time adequacy (17.7%).</small></p>	<p>4 QUALITY EDUCATION</p> <h3>Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all</h3> <p>NOVA SCOTIA RESIDENTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 38.6% agreed local educational courses weren't too expensive 55% were satisfied with the accessibility of educational opportunities 58% were satisfied with the availability of educational opportunities 27.9% did not agree that local education opportunities were affordable 16.2% were not satisfied with access 20.8% were not satisfied with availability
<p>5 GENDER EQUALITY</p> <h3>Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls</h3> <p>25.2% The percentage of women who ever felt discriminated against because of their gender</p> <p>The percentage of women is nearly double</p> <p>13.5% The percentage of men who ever felt discriminated against because of their gender</p>	<p>6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION</p> <h3>Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all</h3> <p>78.5%</p> <p>Over three quarters of Nova Scotia residents (78.5%) agreed to some extent that their local water quality was good. Just over 1 in 10 residents (10.7%) disagreed with that.</p>	<p>7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY</p> <h3>Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all</h3> <p>99.5%</p> <p>Most Nova Scotia residents (99.5%) were mindful of their energy consumption and made some attempt at conserving energy in the last year. (0.5% reported never conserving energy).</p>	<p>8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH</p> <h3>Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all</h3> <p>The percentage of Nova Scotian's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their financial situation and their work situation:</p> <p>21.8% some dissatisfaction with their financial situation 62.3% at least somewhat satisfied with their financial situation 17.2% some dissatisfaction with their work situation 63.5% at least somewhat satisfied with their work situation</p>
<p>9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE</p> <h3>Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation</h3> <p>4% of Nova Scotia residents reported they didn't have internet access.</p> <p>NS Quality of Life Survey: Internet access</p> <p>96% Yes 4% No</p>	<p>10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES</p> <h3>Reduce inequality within and among countries</h3> <p>35.4%</p> <p>35.4% of Nova Scotia residents reported feeling discriminated against because of some aspect of their identity.</p>	<p>11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES</p> <h3>Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable</h3> <p>57.2%</p> <p>57.2% of Nova Scotians were satisfied to some degree with their sense of belonging to their community. 18.1% were not satisfied.</p>	<p>12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION</p> <h3>Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns</h3> <p>Regularly, very often or all of the time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 97.6% of Nova Scotia residents recycled materials 93.9% of Nova Scotia residents reduced waste 95.6% of Nova Scotia residents separated waste 89.5% of Nova Scotia residents reused materials
<p>13 CLIMATE ACTION</p> <h3>Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts</h3> <p>89.6%</p> <p>89.6% of Nova Scotians agreed to some extent that they had a personal responsibility to protect the natural environment.</p>	<p>14 LIFE BELOW WATER</p> <h3>Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development</h3> <p>78.2%</p> <p>Life below water is tied to Nova Scotians' economic, social, cultural, and spiritual wellbeing and ensuring its health is tied to our own quality of life.</p>	<p>15 LIFE ON LAND</p> <h3>Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss</h3> <p>78.2%</p> <p>A majority of Nova Scotia residents (78.2%) agreed to some degree with the statement that their community's air quality was good.</p>	<p>16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS</p> <h3>Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels</h3> <p>49.4%</p> <p>Half of the population (49.4%) reported that government programs and services had made no difference in their lives.</p>
<p>17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS</p> <h3>Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development</h3> <p>We think that making progress on the SDGs requires partnership and collaboration from local to global scales – and everything in between.</p>			

LOOKING AHEAD



READY? LET'S GO

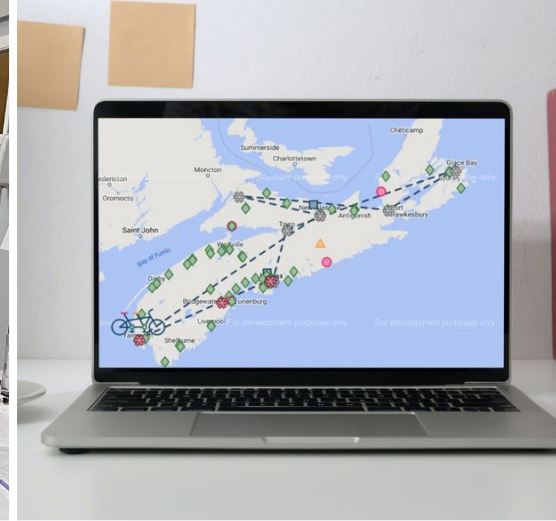
The third and culminating year of our SDG program involves both new activities and a synthesis of the work to date – of people, stories, and activities. In the last 12 months of the SDG program, it's come alive for community members - even as there's more to come.

We will continue to coordinate the provincewide SDG Network, share *Survey Snapshots*, and promote the growth of the crowd-sourced SDG map. Ongoing partnerships with community groups to launch or scale up their projects will take shape, get refined, and wrap up – depending on what phase the partnership is currently in.

Additional gatherings will take place as part of the Interconnection Initiative alongside significant storytelling to relay the impact with heart and creativity in tangible ways. There is also additional research related to quality of life and the SDGs that will take off – with community groups as part of our partnership with CLARI and by researchers selected in partnership with Research Nova Scotia.

Along all avenues of our program, from local to national opportunities, we will continue to leverage the power of partnerships, storytelling, and connection to bring the SDGs to life for people in new ways throughout the year ahead and beyond.





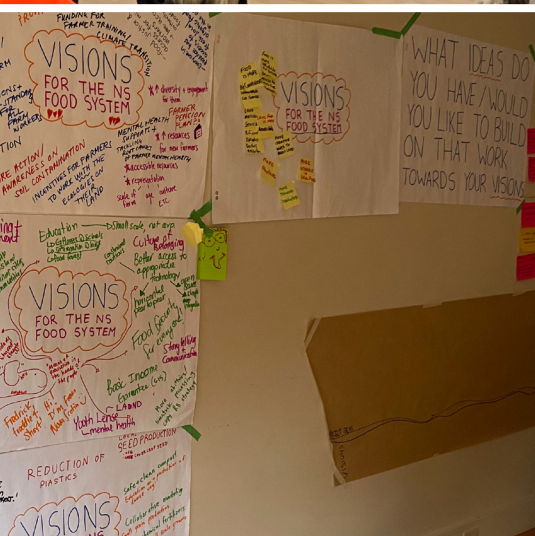
ENGAGE NOVA SCOTIA'S
WINTER ROAD TRIP
Community Conversations about the Sustainable Development Goals and Quality of Life in Nova Scotia



ALL EVENTS ARE AT YOUR LOCAL NSCC FROM 4-6PM



16 JAN	Dartmouth	18 JAN
23 JAN	Truro	Sydney
30 JAN	Port Hawkesbury	25 JAN
6 FEB	Amherst	1 FEB
13 FEB	Pictou	8 FEB
15 FEB	Lawrencetown	Yarmouth
	Bridgewater	Halifax





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