

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



# YEARS

OF ENGAGE NOVA SCOTIA



The work of rebuilding and changing is not just on the shoulders of those in leadership positions. You have to have a community around you as well that you equally can trust to help guide you.

— Mayor Amanda McDougall

The Meet-Up  
Conversations about Quality of Life in Nova Scotia  
March 29th - May 7th

The Meet-Up  
Conversations about Quality of Life in Nova Scotia  
April 1st

## 2021-2022 ANNUAL REPORT

OUR TIME  
HOW DOES THE WAY WE SPEND OUR TIME, WHERE AND WITH WHOM IMPACT OUR WELLBEING?







# Remembering

## WHERE WE CAME FROM

Ten years ago, Nova Scotians from many sectors and regions gathered to consider how our province could do better. Engage Nova Scotia developed, then, from a vision for our province to be more vibrant, inclusive, and resilient. Our work was conceived for anyone who believed in the promise of Nova Scotia and recognized 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 often puts us at the intersection of public, private, non-profit, and academic sectors.

For the last decade, we have convened gatherings large and small 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 and insight 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*, 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 NS Quality of Life Initiative. The focus of the Initiative is to prompt fresh perspectives and new action – by all of us – that better balances our social, environmental, cultural, and economic priorities.

In collaboration with a broad spectrum of partners, we work to understand our wellbeing and what will improve it. We're also focused on equipping people and communities with tools to make change that reflects what matters most.

Thank you to everyone across Nova Scotia (and beyond) who have connected with us and what we do. By joining this journey with us, you've had a hand in shaping Engage Nova Scotia to be what it is – and what it will become over the next ten years.





# A Letter

## FROM THE BOARD CHAIR & CHIEF ENGAGEMENT OFFICER



As we look back on the milestones from the last ten years, we are filled with appreciation for the many partners who have made our shared journey possible. Like us, they believe in the enormous promise of Nova Scotia and are ready to take action toward a more vibrant, inclusive, equitable, and resilient society.

Over the years, thousands of event participants and hundreds of organizations have inspired, supported, and challenged us. As we look back, and ahead, it's hard not to be struck by how much things have changed - and how much has also stayed the same.

The last few years have given everyone a particularly unique opportunity to reflect broadly on pressing forward as well as what challenges (still) lie ahead. This underscores the importance of applying long-term solutions to long-standing systemic issues. For that to happen, we all need to see our Nova Scotia reality - its possibilities, complexity, and failings.

The NS Quality of Life Initiative strengthens our understanding of this reality, to better inform policies, projects, and funding choices.

As an organization, we are focused on what matters most to our collective wellbeing, and ensuring fewer Nova Scotians are excluded from that.

In the last year we launched an interactive online "Wellbeing Mapping Tool" that reveals NS Quality of Life Survey responses from almost 13,000 residents across the province to hundreds of questions - disaggregated down to the first three digits of postal codes.

We also created the "Spotlight" tool to visualize deviations from the provincial average for survey results along regional and demographic lines. This enables people to illustrate the stories of their experiences, quickly and accurately, across those many survey questions.

Using the survey results, we designed and shared an infographic report called "Survey Snapshots" that assesses how Nova Scotia is doing across the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs). We have connected and coordinate a network of people in Nova Scotia committed to the UN SDGs who are bringing the concept of thinking globally and acting locally to life.

We continue to build trust and understanding with communities, that are wary of data collection and dissemination, especially in the African Nova Scotian community.

We continue to meet local leaders and community members in the questions that are unique to their region of the province, to unlock solutions to age-old issues.

Building on our history with Share Thanksgiving, our team has designed and coordinated new programs that strengthen human connections in our society - with From Me To You (a provincewide note-writing initiative) and Do a \_\_\_ thing (an opportunity for children and youth to create connections in their communities that bring them closer to the people and places around them).

Through it all we continue to learn from leaders in all sectors who are responding to challenges, and taking up the opportunity to innovate - socially, economically, and environmentally.

Our recent work would not have been possible without the support of partners at Dalhousie University, the Province of Nova Scotia, various departments of the federal government, and many grassroots organizations and individuals who always show up, and never give up, on Nova Scotia's future.

We are also indebted to our remarkable staff and Board of Directors. Together, they make Engage work. Nothing we do would be possible without their skill and dedication.

It's more possible in Nova Scotia (Mi'kma'ki) to face up to our past and live up to our future, thanks to the inspiring work happening in every pocket of our wonderful corner of the world. We look forward to another 10 years of progress.

### Sincere regards,



Dr. Gaynor Watson-Creed,  
**Board Chair**



Danny Graham,  
**Chief Engagement Officer**

# Our Vision, Mission, and Aspirations

Our vision is a more vibrant, inclusive, equitable, and resilient Nova Scotia.

Our mission is to cultivate engagement, contribute to an evolving provincial narrative, and catalyze actions aimed at strengthening social cohesion and improving the quality of life for all Nova Scotians.

Our aspirations are that, as Nova Scotians, we better understand our advantages, opportunities, and the hurdles in front of us. More people are stepping up with greater ability to improve our shared quality of life and economic conditions. We are more collaborative, inclusive, and adaptive to change.

## Our Approach

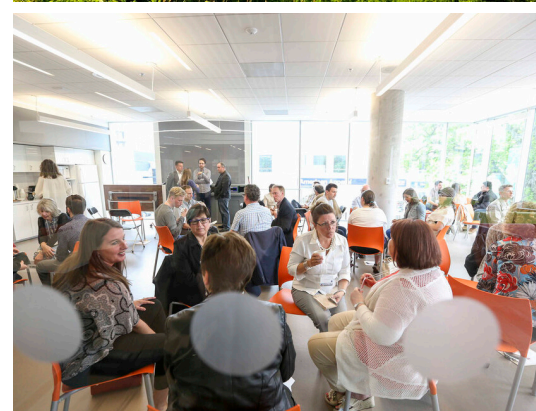
We actively seek to include diverse voices - from all cultural communities, from all parts of the province, and from as many perspectives as possible.

How we do things is as important as what we do.

We move forward in a spirit of responding to opportunities, supporting one another to take risks, and learning as we go.

We create just enough structure to support our activities, while staying lean, nimble, and transparent.

We operate in a collaborative, neutral, and open space that no one individual or organization owns or controls.





OUR 2021-2022

# Board of Directors



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Lawyer



**CARLA ARSENAULT**  
Principal,  
NSCC Marconi Campus



**EMILY LUTZ**  
Deputy Mayor of the  
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**DR. GAYNOR WATSON-  
CREED**  
**Chair**  
Associate Dean of Serving  
and Engaging Society,  
Dalhousie University



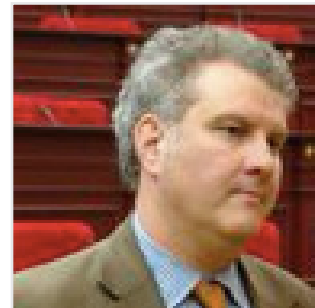
**DR. GABRIELLE  
DONNELLY**  
Associate Professor,  
Community Development,  
Acadia University



**HARI  
BALASUBRAMANIAN**  
Managing Partner at  
EcoAdvisors & Co-Founder  
of EcoInvestors Capital



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- StFX University



**KEVIN DEVEAUX**  
President, Deveaux  
International Governance  
Consultants Inc.



**LYNN HARTWELL**  
VP, Campuses and  
Communities, NSCC



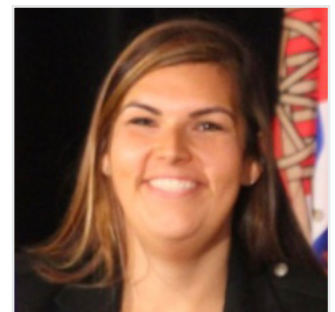
**DR. RACHEL B. ZELLARS**  
Assistant Professor,  
Social Justice and  
Community Studies, SMU



**RON SMITH**  
**Vice Chair**  
Experienced corporate  
and non-profit director



**SARA NAPIER**  
**Treasurer**  
President & CEO,  
United Way Halifax



**ZABRINA WHITMAN**  
Coordinator, Indigenous  
Affairs, Acadia University



A scenic view of a wooden boardwalk with teal accents leading down a grassy hillside towards a blue ocean under a cloudy sky. The boardwalk is made of grey wooden planks with teal-colored sections. A person is walking on the boardwalk in the distance. The background shows a coastline with a road and a blue ocean under a blue sky with white clouds.

# 2021 2022 IN REVIEW





N O V A S C O T I A  
**QUALITY OF LIFE**  
*Measuring what matters*

# NS Quality of Life Initiative



## THE MEET-UP: CONVERSATIONS ABOUT QUALITY OF LIFE IN NOVA SCOTIA

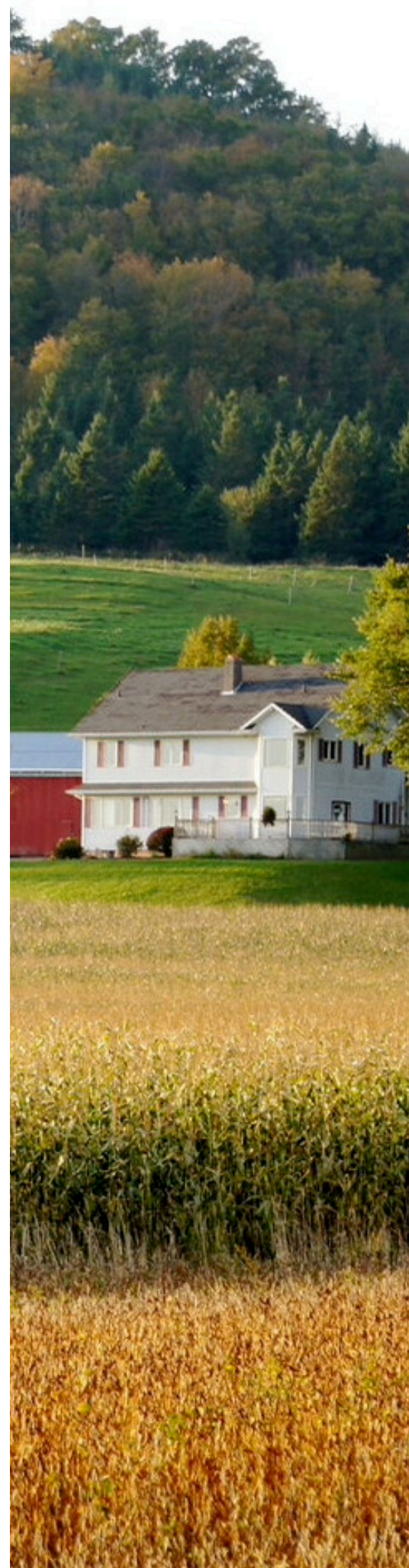
From March to May 2021, we hosted The Meet-Up – a 6-week series of online events about quality of life and wellbeing. Each week focused on a quality of life theme, and there were two opportunities to tune in and take part: 1) Blue Chair Chats, and 2) Whiteboard Jam Sessions. People could sign up for one, some, or all events – and over 100 people did. Blue Chair Chats were conversations between board members and friends of Engage with a group of invited guests about that week's focus. We called them 'Blue Chair Chats' because of the blue chairs in our office that have been home to thoughtful, challenging, and creative conversations for almost as many years as Engage has existed.

Each Blue Chair Chat saw different people come together for a unique conversation. Care and attention was paid to ensure diverse perspectives were represented in terms of age, race, ability, experience, and geography. The Whiteboard Jam Sessions were an invitation to Nova Scotians to put pen to paper in a workbook designed for the 1-hour workshop. Participants were guided through a series of reflections and brainstorming activities about that week's quality of life theme.



## Quality of Life Theme and Blue Chair Chat Host and Guests

<p>Week 1:</p>	<p><b>The 6 Ws of the Nova Scotia Quality of Life Initiative</b>          Host: Dr. Gaynor Watson-Creed; guests: Danny Graham, Tim Crooks, and Sarah MacIntosh-Wiseman</p>
<p>Week 2:</p>	<p><b>Trust and Participation – How does our trust in others affect how we take part in the places we live, work, and learn?</b>          Host: Catherine Hart; guests: Mayor Amanda McDougall, Rebecca Masay, and Tegan Daley</p>
<p>Week 3:</p>	<p><b>Our Time- How does the way we spend our time, where, and with whom impact our wellbeing?</b>          Host: Deputy Mayor Emily Lutz; guests: Crystal Watson, Karen Gallant, and Tasha Roscoe</p>
<p>Week 4:</p>	<p><b>Discrimination – How does discrimination affect our individual and communities’ quality of life and wellbeing?</b>          Host: Emme Beukema; guests: Carmel Farahkbakhsh, Marcie Shwery-Stanley, Tari Ajadi, and Wyatt White</p>
<p>Week 5:</p>	<p><b>People, Relationships and Place – How do our connections to one another and our communities matter to our quality of life?</b>          Host: Jamie Ferguson; guests: Aimee Gasparetto, Gabrielle Donnelly, and Indio Letchak</p>
<p>Week 6:</p>	<p><b>Impacts of Income – What is the relationship between wealth and income inequality and quality of life?</b>          Host: Lynn Hartwell; guests: Kolade Boboye, Lesley Frank, and Sarah MacLaren</p>



A part of bringing The Meet-Up to life was partnering with Inspiring Communities to make the series available through Wayside – an online learning platform and discussion forum. Blue Chair Chats were streamed to Facebook and recordings were also made available on our YouTube channel and Wayside.

Since Engage Nova Scotia was formed, it has strived to bring Nova Scotians together to share our stories and perspectives with one another. Typically, this has taken place in person – in every corner of the province. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, however,

The Meet-Up brought people across the province together virtually - to be in conversation with one another and share their perspectives and stories with everyone tuning in and taking part. We are known to create spaces for the kinds of conversation that aren't happening often enough, and we are deeply grateful to every Blue Chair Chat host and guest and every person who engaged in listening, learning, and jamming for continuing to make this a reality.

Read our reflective blog post for Inspiring Communities about The Meet-Up.

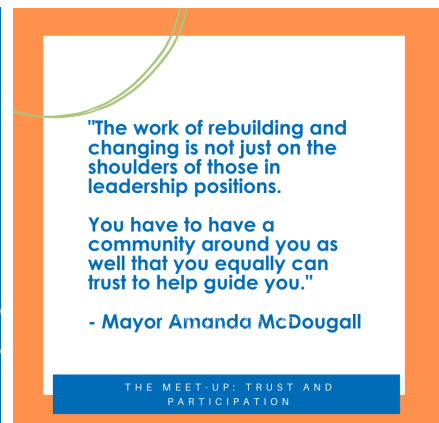
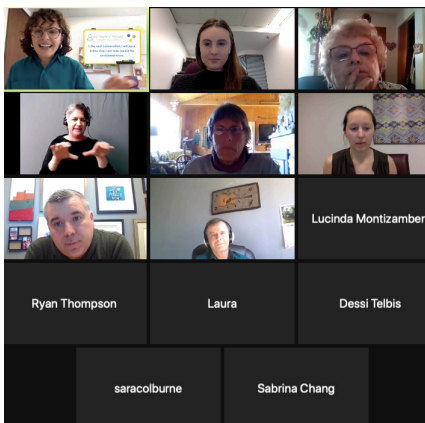


## LOCAL LEADERSHIP TEAMS

### Regional Gatherings:

In late Spring and early Summer, we hosted regional gatherings in partnership with Local Leadership Teams (LLTs) based in Cumberland, Strait Area – Western Cape Breton, Pictou County, Cape Breton Regional Municipality, Lunenburg – Queens, and Southwest Nova.<sup>1</sup> Each regional gathering shared local results from the NS Quality of Life Survey and provided the opportunity for group activities and conversations with other community members who attended. We signed off with an opportunity for people to let us know how they wanted to stay in the loop – including if they were interested in becoming LLT members. Engage team members followed up with everyone who indicated they were interested in learning more about the LLTs and, as a result, many groups welcomed new members.

Towards the end of the year, we began hosting interactive 'how-to' sessions about NS Quality of Life Initiative resources available. So far, ones for residents in Strait Area – Western Cape Breton and Pictou County have been held. While these offered a refresh on past reports and resources as well as the ability to request analysis services from the Engage team, these regional gatherings focus on orienting participants to two new tools – what we call the *spotlight tool* and the *wellbeing mapping tool*.



<sup>1</sup> LLTs are groups of people who steward the NS Quality of Life Initiative in their communities across the province.



## LLT Network Gatherings:

There are occasions where it's relevant to invite LLT members from across the province to a larger, single gathering. Ones we hosted this year were focused on the ways to visualize results, the SDG project, and the wellbeing mapping tool – always with the opportunity ask questions and talk about what we're seeing.



## SHARING SURVEY RESULTS

With close to 13,000 Nova Scotia residents responding to 230 questions that made up the NS Quality of Life Survey, the results represent the single largest dataset in North America about quality of life and leads to more than 300,000 data points. Each data point reflects the stories and experiences of people in Nova Scotia. Since the release of the survey results, we have been striving to get them into the hands of as many people as possible – to make sense of them with us, give them meaning, and bring data points to life through stories, ideas, and actions.

### Analysis Requests and Data-Sharing Agreements:

Two of the ways we share NS Quality of Life Survey results is by: 1) offering analysis, and 2) data-sharing agreements to access raw data. We have continued to build our organizational data analysis capacity and undertake significant analyses on a cost-recovery basis. In the last year, our data analysts have worked collaboratively with the Halifax Regional Municipality (which led to a presentation to the HRM Women's Advisory Committee) and the Northern Zone Community Health Boards. So far, we have 10 active data-sharing agreements with post-secondary institutions and organizations across Nova Scotia.

### Spotlight tool:

The spotlight tool uses the 2019 NS Quality of Life Survey data to visualize deviations from the provincial average along regional and demographic lines, survey questions, and combinations of all three. (With 230 questions asked in the NS QoL Survey the combination of variables that can be visualized is seemingly endless).

The tool is a reliable way to highlight patterns and things to pay attention to within the survey results. The information shared via this tool is not meant to give definitive answers to questions about life in Nova Scotia; rather, it complements other forms of analysis and supports we offer. The tool 'spotlights' areas of concern or celebration. (To date, they are available upon request). We are learning a lot and uncovering evidence about foundational wellbeing issues, such as mental health, social connections, and the importance of reducing everyday time pressures, that have historically received limited attention from government, media, academia, and even social advocates because they are nuanced, hard to research, and have few 'policy homes' within government departments and academia.

### Wellbeing mapping tool:

The wellbeing mapping tool was built from the ground up by researchers at Dalhousie University's Faculty of Computer Science in partnership with team members at Engage Nova Scotia over the last two years. Results of the NS Quality of Life Survey make up the dataset available through the tool, and you can explore survey results for geographic areas across the province. **A new site was designed to be a home for the wellbeing mapping tool, which allows you to map and graph NS Quality of Life Survey results in an interactive way.** Part of its strength and purpose is that visualizing data offers us opportunities to see the same information in a new way, often leading to new insights. The tool enables users to answer questions they're curious about and visualize data they're interested in how they want.

The wellbeing mapping tool is a breakthrough in terms of making wellbeing data available to people and organizations across the province. It also 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 Nova Scotians in 2024. The tool's development was supported by the Mitacs Accelerate program, and Mitacs' support will continue to resource its refinements and growth.



We did a soft launch of the wellbeing mapping tool in Fall and Winter, which enabled feedback before a broad, public launch in Spring.



## PRESENTATIONS, FACILITATED SESSIONS, AND PARTNERSHIPS

We describe our work as sitting at the intersection of public, private, non-profit, and academic sectors and we practice this through sustained outreach and relationships. As we began to shift the priority of the organization to the NS Quality of Life Initiative in 2017, we also started to focus engagement support and partnerships to those that advance quality of life. We continue to build out and make space for ways to understand the story of Nova Scotians more profoundly as well as develop partnerships and deliver presentations that surface and share them.

### Presentations and Facilitated Sessions

Every year offers continuous exciting opportunities to share our work broadly. At times, they are conventional presentations or tabling opportunities, and others are facilitated interactive sessions. Presentations included those to provincial bodies and departments as well as regional, national, and international organizations.

A sample includes:



#### Regional:

- Family SOS
- Valley REAP
- Inverness County Council
- CBRM Council
- Dalhousie Faculties



#### Provincial:

- Deputy Minister to the Premier and Office of Planning and Priorities staff
- Department of Economic Development and Crown Corporations
- Department of Communities, Culture, and Heritage
- Department of Health and Wellness
- Department of Community Services
- Department of Justice
- Accessibility Directorate
- Nova Scotia Health
- Canadian Mental Health Association NS Branch



#### National:

- Finance Canada
- Statistics Canada
- National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy
- Community Foundation of Canada
- Tamarack Institute
- Canadian Rural Community and Economic Wellbeing Forum
- Canadian Community Economy Pilot



#### International:

- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)
- What Works Wellbeing Centre in the UK



In other instances, we've been invited to be present or facilitate a session as part of a larger conference or event. Highlights include tabling at the Communities Building Hope Conference at Cape Breton University and hosting sessions or presenting as part of:

- McGill University's Institute for Health and Social Policy annual conference 'Policies for Better Lives: Strategies for life satisfaction and human wellbeing
- MIT Leadership Program
- GBA+ In Action Speakers Session
- Silvery Economy Summit
- Community Health Boards Managers' Meeting
- Mount Saint Vincent University Girls Conference
- Mount Saint Vincent University Spring Training
- ACIC Symposium

Additionally, we co-hosted a session with faculty at St. Francis Xavier University about what data is available and how to access it, plus multiple sessions with recreation leaders on the South Shore, including the Yarmouth Shelburne Municipal Recreation Association and Lunenburg Queens coalition of recreation, education, and health leaders.

Two of Engage's team members were invited to help facilitate the **Cape Breton Local Immigration Partner Update called Stories of Belonging – a day-long event that featured 'stories from new Cape Bretoners and those helping them to settle in.'** We also hosted a youth engagement called 'Youth Hangout: Getting to know Engage Nova Scotia' in March. The event was an important conversation starter with Black youth about the NS Quality of Life Initiative, what matters to them, and race-based data – their thoughts on it and how they'd like to be engaged around it. The young people who took part generously shared insights that will help us better shape approaches for the next survey as well as how they'd like to be in relationship with the organization going forward.







## PARTNERSHIPS

### #RisingYouth:

Throughout the summer and early Fall we partnered with #RisingYouth. We hosted a 'train-the-trainer' session for teams at over 10 local youth-serving organizations in July and co-hosted an Ideation and Grant-Writing Workshop with #RisingYouth about their grants in September. It was a 2-hour online workshop where young people (15-30 years old) found out how a community service grant from #RisingYouth could support an idea they had for their community, shape their idea using the 8 domains of wellbeing, meet other people who could help make it happen (i.e., Let's Sprout!), and be entered to win a draw for a \$50 Visa Gift card.

### NSCC Hack-a-thon:

CARET (Collaboration for Analytics Research, Education and Technology)<sup>2</sup> organized a student hack-a-thon using data from the NS Quality of Life Survey on June 1-2, 2021. The focuses were the Education domain and Time Use domain. Two student teams at StFX participated and created a data visualization to represent their answer to the hack-a-thon challenge. One of the students who participated in the hack-a-thon joined Engage Nova Scotia for a 6-week internship in data analysis.

### Data for Good:

Data for Good reached out to us after we released the survey results to explore what a partnership to offer free analysis to non-profits could look like. Data for Good is a national non-profit - with a recently established Maritimes chapter - who describe themselves as a 'collective of do-gooders' who empowers communities through data. They support non-profit organizations to make data-informed decisions that strengthen what they do, and they offer their services for free.

In partnership with the local Data for Good chapter, we issued a call for analysis requests to support non-profits' or community groups' data needs. Our partnership with Data for Good saw their volunteers undertake analysis of the NS Quality of Life Survey results for two non-profit organizations. The organizations selected from submissions were St. Margaret's Bay Community Enterprise Centre and the Downtown Dartmouth Business Commission. Data for Good volunteers undertook analysis of NS Quality of Life Survey results in collaboration with the selected non-profits and Engage data analysts. Project outputs included brief reports and presentations to share their findings.

"Data for Good provided us with a very insightful analysis regarding the Quality of Life data for our community. We are now able to compare St. Margaret's Bay with HRM and the Province as a whole and make informed decisions on our programming based on that comparison."

**Chris Pelham,**  
President, St. Margaret's Bay Community Enterprise Centre

<sup>2</sup>CARET is a collaborative of 6 universities in Nova Scotia, NSCC, and government and industry partners. They are dedicated to developing talent in IT and data analytics across Nova Scotia.

“The insights provided by Data for Good/Engage NS will help us achieve Downtown Dartmouth Business Commission’s mission to promote the vibrancy of downtown Dartmouth and foster spaces where people want to be.”

**Tim Rissesco**

Chief Executive Officer, Downtown Dartmouth Business Commission





## SDG Program



This past year marked the first of our 3-year Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Program. At its core, our SDG-related work is focused on strengthening awareness of the SDGs locally and supporting Nova Scotians to be part of the global movement. It began with several drop-in lunch 'n' learns to familiarize people with what we're doing.

### In the last year, we:

- Released a robust 50-page infographic report called *Survey Snapshots: Sustainable Development Goals and the NS Quality of Life Survey Results*.
- Launched an interactive crowd-sourced SDG map where users can find information about each of the 17 SDGs as well as individuals, organizations, projects, and resources that are advancing them in Nova Scotia. There are over 100 entries on the map.
- Kicked off a dynamic partnership opportunity. The opportunity offers support to springboard community projects and advance them through a facilitated process – from visioning to action – that is community-informed, data-driven, and supported by resources. Before the end of March, two partnerships were solidified with more on the horizon.
- Formed the SDG Network that meets monthly. This larger group of 10-20 people is focused on sharing ideas, stories, resources, and best practices.

Under the Network umbrella, three working groups have been established to focus on: 1) Creating and sharing materials that increased awareness about the SDGs; 2) Tracking SDG activities across Nova Scotia, and; 3) Facilitating community projects and engagements that impact the SDGs.

The SDG Program hosted 3 students through the 6-week Venture for Canada Intrapreneurship Program (VFC). The 'Intrapreneurs' supported the program by exploring effective SDG-related design, data analysis and visualization, and communications for a variety of demographic groups and audiences.

We also hosted a 6-week term placement for a student completing the Community Development program at Acadia University. This student built an engagement strategy around the SDGs and was involved with the logistics of implementing the partnership opportunity as well. Both internship opportunities will inform relevant aspects of the project going forward.

volunteer

good

fun

thoughtful

team

purposeful

welcoming

hard

supportive

family

community

big



Sometimes one small *thing* can make a big difference



Classrooms and workplaces have seen a lot of change in the last couple years, so we put a new initiative together for each of them called Do a \_\_\_ thing.

Do a kind thing

Do a small thing

Do a hard thing

Do a \_\_\_\_\_ thing

Whether we're getting back to old routines or building new ones, our relationships – with loved ones, friends, colleagues, and in our local community – are important. During the 2021-2022 year, we carried out the classroom version. It is a collection of simple activities for kids that could be woven into at-home or at-school learning and that promote wellbeing by creating connections to the people and places around them.

Close to 7000 children and young people across 250+ classrooms, daycares, and child and youth programs signed up to take part. Materials included a toolkit and wall-sized poster for classrooms, plus Do a \_\_\_ thing stickers, pencils, and activity sheets for each child. We had grades P-6 primarily in mind but high school classes, home schools, groups like Girl Guides, and organizations like the YMCA also signed up. Students participated across the province. Requests were also received from out-of-province, including BC, Ontario, PEI, and Manitoba. We partnered with Saltwire Network for the second year in a row to spread the word and reached their audiences through content in their newspapers and on their website as well as through digital takeovers. Materials were translated into French upon request and we were delighted to be guests on two of Nova Scotia's broadcast morning television shows.

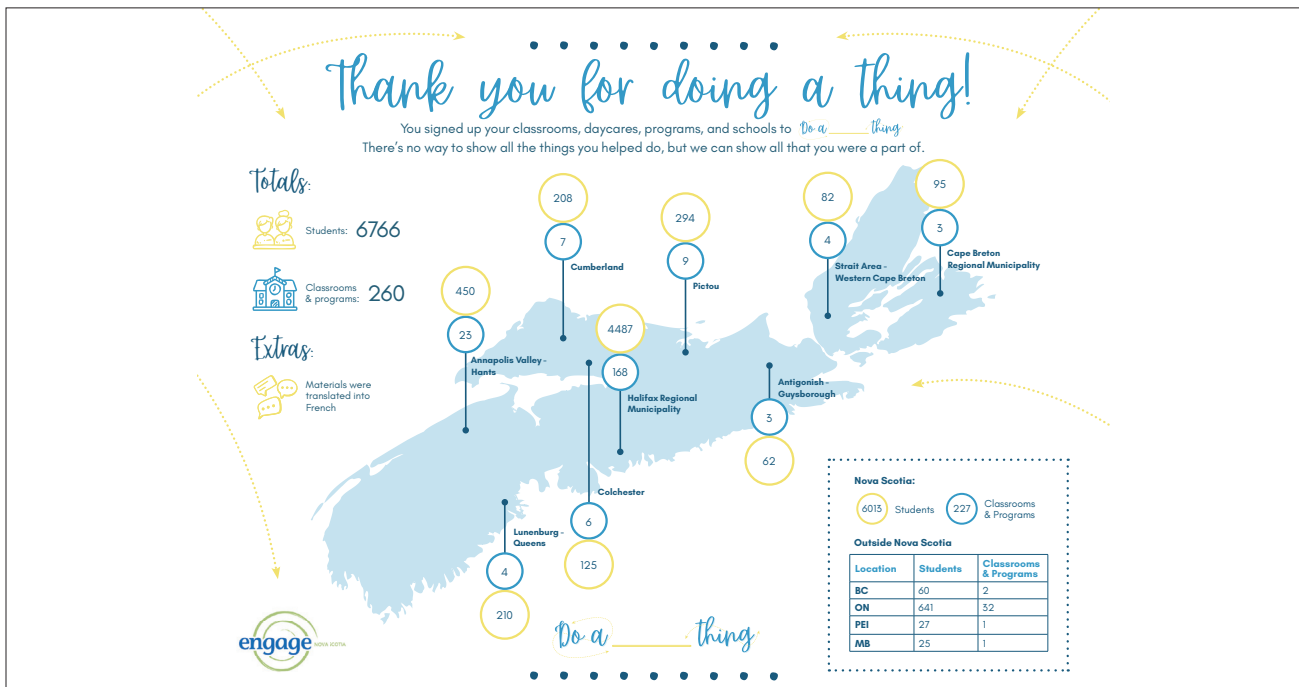


“We did things internally and externally, the children were excited and really bought into the random acts of kindness. They cleaned a local playground, did thoughtful things for friends and families. They were so proud to tell of the things they were doing! I think it was a wonderful initiative and thoroughly enjoyed participating.”

**Bonnie Minard**  
Executive Director of Portland Daycare Centre

“The best part of the Do a \_\_\_ thing project was that the something could be an anything! We appreciated how the neutrality of the language allowed us to use the activity to complete various tasks that ranged from large hard projects we'd been putting off, down to small actions of kindness - but that the most important part was ~doing the thing.~ This allowed flexibility and creativity when we were choosing what thing we wanted to do, and the adaptability was what allowed us to stay motivated throughout. Thank you for supplying us with the tools and language to participate!”

**Nikki Jamieson**  
Homeschool parent, Grade 2





# Engage Nova Scotia Milestones

## 2012-2022

### Municipalities Engagement Training (Sept 14):

Engage staff led a group of 45 mayors, councillors, and staff through a 1-day workshop.

### First Share Thanksgiving (Oct 10):

Share Thanksgiving asked Nova Scotia's residents to share a meal with newcomers. More than 900 people participated as dinner hosts or guests – the second highest number of matched participants in Canada.



## 2012

### Founding Meeting (June 15):

Organizers from local businesses and organizations hosted a gathering of 75 Nova Scotia residents from different regions and with different perspectives to consider how our province could do better. Engage Nova Scotia arose and developed from a vision for our province to be more vibrant, inclusive, and resilient.

## 2013

### Regular Meetings:

Throughout 2012 and 2013 regular meetings were held to confirm the purpose of the organization and undertake strategic planning.

## 2014

### Engage Inverness (Nov 30-Dec 1):

We co-hosted a 2-day conference with local leaders about collectively addressing economic and social challenges.



**Engagement Workshops and Gatherings:**

We led a workshop for staff and council of the Municipality of the District of Barrington (Feb 28), and co-hosted events with Cumberland County Life (Mar 25) and the Hubbards Area Business Association (Oct 21).

**'A New Partnership: Building relationship through education' (Nov 16):**

In partnership with Treaty Education Nova Scotia, Canadians for a New Partnership, and Dalhousie University, we hosted a public conversation about how Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Nova Scotia can build stronger relationships with one another – close to 300 people attended.

**Amherst Community Visioning Events (Feb 17 and Apr 27):**

Engage and the Town of Amherst co-hosted two events where 200 residents identified 6 priorities for the town, and people identified available resources, hurdles, solutions, and next steps for those priorities.

**Speaking Up (June):**

In partnership with CBC Mainstreet, we hosted forums in Sydney, Digby, Stellarton, and Halifax to hear peoples' thoughts on the Now or Never report.

**Municipal Engagement Clinics:**

We hosted 1-day clinics with councillors, staff, and community leaders in Antigonish County (May 10); Kentville, Kings County, West Hants, Windsor, Berwick, and Kingston (Sept 20); County of Lunenburg, Town of Lunenburg, Bridgewater, Chester, and Mahone Bay (Oct 11); District of Digby, Claire, and Town of Digby (Oct 17); Argyle, Barrington, County of Shelburne, Queens County, and Lockeport (Nov 20).

**Quality of Life Workshops (Sept 14-15):**

Two groups of Nova Scotians from across sectors joined us in Halifax and Membertou to interpret some early results from the NS Quality of Life Index.

# 2015

**Share Thanksgiving (Oct 16):**

More than 1000 people participated as hosts or guests.

**Stepping Up Conference (June 15):**

More than 830 people gathered across 12 communities in Nova Scotia and over 800 more tuned in remotely. Our event hashtag trended #1 in Canada. Organizers from 5 locations reconnected on Nov 30 to share what they learned about testing a regional approach to catalyze change.

# 2016

**Share Thanksgiving (Oct 9-10 and Nov 22):**

Guests from 40 different countries joined hosts across the province. The number of guest applications outnumbered hosts, so, with Scotiabank's support, we hosted a 440-person dinner at Pier 21 in November.

# 2017

**One Cape Breton-Unama'ki Summit (Nov 23-24):**

Over 40 municipal and Mi'kmaw leaders across Cape Breton identified shared priorities for the island at this event we helped facilitate.

**Share Thanksgiving (Sept 25):**

In partnership with Sobeys, we hosted four community dinners at stores in Antigonish, Clayton Park, Sydney, and New Minas.

**Engage Antigonish (Jan 31 and Apr 12):**

Town of Antigonish hosted two gatherings designed with us for community members to inform the development of their strategic plan.

**Community Engagement (Sept 22):**

Over 40 community members in the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's came together to discuss and define their community priorities and review the municipality's strategic plan.

**Engagement Clinic (Jan 17):**

We hosted a 1-day clinic with municipal councillors and staff from Colchester, Guysborough, New Glasgow, Truro, Stewiacke, Oxford, and Port Hawkesbury.

**One Cape Breton – Unama'ki Leadership Summit (Apr 4-5):**

In collaboration with Membertou First Nation and Cape Breton Partnership, we coordinated the second summit. Municipal leaders, Chiefs and councils, business leaders, researchers, and youth discussed the future of the island and strategized new ways for municipalities and Mi'kmaw communities to work together more closely.

**NS Quality of Life Survey Launches (Apr 25):**

1/5 households in Nova Scotia received an invitation to fill out the survey. With the support of NSCC and the Province, we organized regional local leadership teams. They and many partner organizations helped spread the word about the importance of people responding to the survey.

**Highland Summit (Feb 21):**

We hosted a 1-day clinic with municipal councillors and staff from Colchester, Guysborough, New Glasgow, Truro, Stewiacke, Oxford, and Port Hawkesbury.

**Release of NS Quality of Life Survey Results (Mar 11):**

In partnership with the CIW, we released the survey summary results. Almost 13,000 people responded to the 230-question survey, making it the single largest quality of life dataset in North America.

**Local Leadership Team (LLT) Network Gatherings (June 16 and Oct 20):**

These represented the first LLT Network Gatherings – one created space for processing the prior few months. The other involved a presentation and breakout conversations.

2018

2019

2020

**Release of NS Quality of Life Index:**

In partnership with the Canadian Index of Wellbeing, we released the Index that assembled 21 years of data for 60 wellbeing indicators.

**Last Share Thanksgiving (Oct 8):**

In partnership with EduNova, the fifth and final event, involved international students as guests.

**Measuring What Matters Panel Discussions:**

Over 200 attendees heard from panelists at events in Halifax (Apr 30) and Dartmouth (May 1) as part of the kick off to the NS Quality of Life survey.

**Beyond GDP Conference (May 23-24):**

People from across sectors exchanged information and ideas about measuring wellbeing in Canada at this co-hosted event with Dalhousie University's Centre for the Study of Security and Development and Department of Political Sciences.

**Recognition and Commemoration Task Force (Oct 28-29):**

Engage designed and supported the facilitation of the public engagement sessions hosted by the Task Force on the Commemoration of Edward Cornwallis and the Recognition and Commemoration of Indigenous History.

**Fall presentations:**

We hosted a series of online interactive sessions for various sectors about findings from the NS Quality of Life Survey and steps participants can take to use the results.

**Launch of opportunity to request analysis or data:**

We began offering two possibilities for additional analysis of the NS Quality of Life Survey results. One way is for us to undertake analysis and the other way is through a data-sharing agreement.

**Release of A Closer Look: The Nova Scotia Quality of Life Survey:**

Released in partnership with the CIW, this analysis shares high-level information about demographic groups, insights about wellbeing, and analysis related to social isolation, poverty, health, sense of community, trust, and experiences of discrimination.



### Snapshots of the NS Quality of Life Initiative (Feb 16 – 20):

NS Residents were invited to bring their coffee and curiosity to one of five 30-minute online presentations that provided an overview of what's happened so far and what's next.

### From Me to You launches :

Community members were invited to write or draw a notecard to someone as part of this provincewide note-writing initiative. We received requests for thousands of notecards across the province, and they were available in English, Mi'kmaq, and French.

### Do a \_\_\_ thing launches:

This initiative is a collection of ideas to make connections in community. Close to 7000 children and youth took part in the classroom version. The workplace version continues.

### Sustainable Development Goals Program:

The infographic report, Survey Snapshots, was released, the crowd-sourced SDG Map created, SDG Network established, and a partnership opportunity launched to springboard community projects.

### Wellbeing Mapping Tool (May 31):

In partnership with researchers at Dalhousie University's Department of Computer Science, we launched the tool for users to map and graph the NS Quality of Life Survey results in an interactive way.



# 2021

# 2022

### Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Initiative (June):

Engage is funded for a 3-year SDG project and begins work to bring its proposed activities to life.

### The Meet-Up (Mar – May):

We hosted a 6-week series of online events about quality of life and wellbeing. Each week focused on a different theme, and there were two opportunities to tune in and take part: 1) Blue Chair Chats, and 2) Whiteboard Jam Sessions.

### Engage turns 10! (June 15):

Full circle moments abounded as team members undertook work to fulfill the vision of a more vibrant, inclusive, equitable, and resilient Nova Scotia. They presented to municipal leaders, co-facilitated an event to build relationships between newcomers and long-time Nova Scotia residents, were interviewed by CBC Mainstreet, fielded questions about NS Quality of Life Survey results, and deepened our knowledge about creating spaces that foster a sense of belonging.



An aerial photograph of a vast, dense forest covering rolling hills. The forest is a rich, vibrant green, with the terrain creating a textured, undulating pattern. The sky is a pale, hazy blue, suggesting a bright but slightly overcast day. The overall mood is serene and natural.

# Looking Ahead

THE SECOND DECADE





So much has happened over the last ten years – at Engage Nova Scotia, in every corner of the province we work in, and across the world. When we look back at where we've come from, it has us looking humbly ahead knowing we can't foresee all the possibilities of the next decade – but it has us clear-eyed to keep going down the road we're on.

Sustaining and expanding our relationships is at the heart of what we do. And we'll strive to keep supporting you – people, organizations, businesses, governments, and academic institutions – in all the ways we can, to advocate and take action for a more vibrant, inclusive, equitable, and resilient province.

We'll continue our efforts to share what we're learning together about wellbeing in Nova Scotia and create ways to amplify your stories and insights; for example, by refining current tools, creating new ones, and through engaging events and research. We're also laying the groundwork to resurvey Nova Scotia residents in 2024.

The 3-year Sustainable Development Goals program we're leading is broadening even further through research, a provincewide forum, and more partnership opportunities, while the SDG map and Network grow.

Our commitment to fostering greater, stronger social connections and sense of belonging in communities will be reflected by carrying out simple and meaningful opportunities that include things like what we've done before - *Do a \_\_\_ thing, From Me to You, and Share Thanksgiving* - as well as things we've yet to imagine.

We've spent the last few years asking Nova Scotians: What matters most? How can we measure it? How can we make those measures matter? Similarly, an annual report seems to ask the same things. And while we've provided an accounting of sorts, of what we've made happen in the last year, what matters most to us is that where we've been and where we're going, will be with you.

Engage Nova Scotia  
has been built and  
shaped by people working  
together –  
**LET'S KEEP GOING.**

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**



**The Meet-Up**  
 Conversations about Quality of Life in Nova Scotia  
 March 29th - May 7th

The work of rebuilding and changing is not just on the shoulders of those in leadership positions.

You have to have a community around you as well that you equally can trust to help guide you.

- Mayor Amanda McDougall

**The Meet-Up**  
 Conversations about Quality of Life in Nova Scotia  
 April 13-16

**OUR TIME**  
 HOW DOES THE WAY WE SPEND OUR TIME, WHERE AND WITH WHOM IMPACT OUR WELLBEING?