Engage Nova Scotia's Sustainable Development Goals Program

Annual Report 2021-2022

INTRODUCTION

Engage Nova Scotia is an independent non-profit organization whose vision is a more vibrant, inclusive, equitable, and resilient province. Our work towards this vision sits at the intersection of community, business, government, and academic sectors.

We've been driving the NS Quality of Life Initiative as our primary focus since 2017. In 2021, we also began coordinating a three-year initiative 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 Funding Program.

The SDGs are 17 interconnected global goalposts 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 titled *Moving Forward Together.*

The SDGs and the 2030 Agenda are closely aligned and overlap significantly with the NS Quality of Life Initiative, which applies the eight domains of wellbeing framework - created by our research partner, the Canadian Index of Wellbeing.

Both the SDGs and eight domains are comprehensive frameworks that are data-informed and impact-driven. They both are focused on more sustainable futures and moving forward together.

ABOUT OUR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS PROGRAM

Engage's SDG program is led by Blair Crawford, who began their role as SDG Program Director in June 2021. At its core, our SDG program is focused on strengthening awareness of the SDGs locally and supporting Nova Scotians to be part of the global movement.

Our SDG program has three main threads of work:

1	2	3
Engage all Nova Scotians to feel included in, informed about, and inspired by the SDGs.	**Support projects and ideas that work towards the SDGs at a community level.**	**Model a pan-jurisdictional approach for advancing a wellbeing and SDG agenda.**

Through each thread, Engage Nova Scotia is 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 PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Looking back on the inaugural year of our SDG Program, I'm excited by and grateful for all that has happened since I began my role. Together, with partners from across the province, my work has included activities like establishing and providing ongoing support to a network of Nova Scotians working towards the SDGs, creating interactive tools that deepen our understanding of the goals and how they show up in our lives, and launching an innovative and dynamic partnership opportunity.

Most importantly, each part of our program has involved the chance to meet with and learn from inspiring folks across Nova Scotia who are making strides towards the SDGs in their communities – including many who don't necessarily use the language or framework of them. Alongside team members at Engage, we've deepened relationships and begun new ones in our efforts to raise awareness of and advance the goals.

At Engage, we see the SDGs as a set of opportunities to find common language for talking about the things that matter most to us and to collectively reimagine our futures, while centering equity, sustainability, and belonging. We also see the SDGs as a wellbeing framework, one that overlaps and intersects with the NS Quality of Life Initiative.

At every turn, we've received continuous support from our partners. Thank you for helping us design aspects of this work, for being a sounding board to early thoughts and ideas, for engaging with the tools and resources that we have created, and for sharing your knowledge and experience. We are eager to continue to work with and learn from you in the years to come.

We think that the opportunities within this work are vast – but they will only be realized with people and partners from across different backgrounds, sectors, regions, and perspectives. This first annual report tells the story of what we made happen - together. If you've just joined us, you'll learn about what we've been up to this year and get a good idea of what we're building next.

BEST,

Blair (they/them)
SDG Program Director
bcrawford@engagenovascotia.ca

2021
2022
IN REVIEW
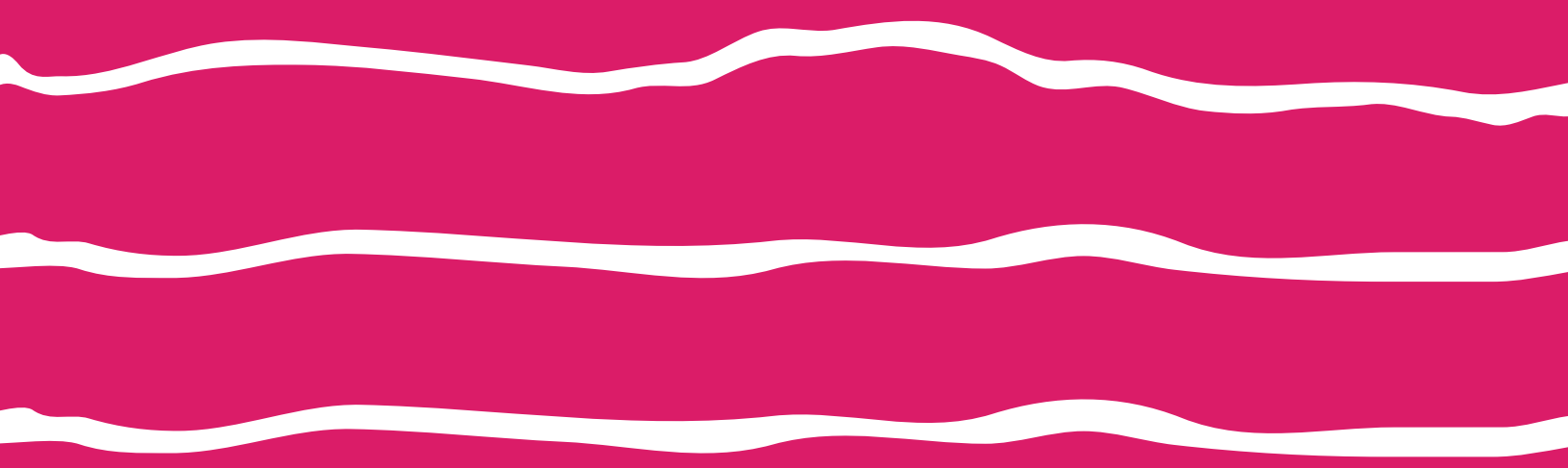
NOVA SCOTIA SDG NETWORK

To connect people who are working towards the SDGs in Nova Scotia, we've established and support the NS SDG Network.

At the end of October, we hosted a gathering of 16 participants who came together to start imagining what the purpose of an SDG Network in Nova Scotia could be. Since that first gathering, the NS SDG Network meets monthly on the third Tuesday. This larger group (10-20 people) is focused on sharing ideas, stories, resources, and best practices.

Under the Network umbrella, there are three focus areas:

|		
1	**2**	**3**
Create and share materials that increase awareness and understanding of the SDGs.	Track SDG activities across Nova Scotia.	Facilitate community projects and engagements that impact the SDGs.

SURVEY SNAPSHOTS: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND THE NS QUALITY OF LIFE SURVEY RESULTS

In February 2022, we released *Survey Snapshots: Sustainable Development Goals and the NS Quality of Life Survey Results* – a robust series of infographics of the 2019 NS Quality of Life Survey results relevant to, and framed by, the SDGs. It is the first, and perhaps only, explicit linking between provincial wellbeing data and the SDGs in Nova Scotia.

Creating *Survey Snapshots* involved mapping the NS Quality of Life Survey's 230 questions onto the 17 SDGs. Decisions on whether a particular survey variable and SDG were aligned was informed by the 76 indicators that comprise the Canadian Indicator Framework for the SDGs published by Statistics Canada.

Available in both English and French, *Survey Snapshots* shares local data in an approachable and visually appealing way. It exists as a useable resource to inform understanding, decision-making, and action. Advancing the SDGs needs all of us and all our efforts are made stronger when we have information about where we are now as we design a path to get where we want to be.
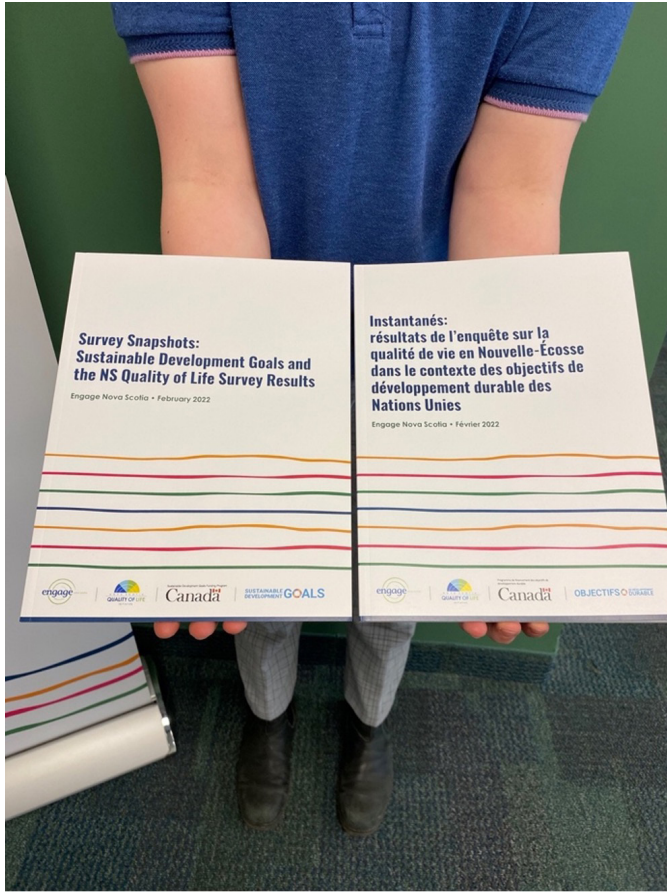
If you'd like a hard copy of *Survey Snapshots*, email Blair: bcrawford@engagenovascotia.ca.

NOVA SCOTIA SDG MAP

In February 2022, we launched an interactive crowd-sourced online map where users can find information about each of the 17 SDGs as well as people, organizations, projects, and resources connected to them in Nova Scotia.

Since launching the map, we've met with folks in every part of the province to talk about what they're doing and interested in related to the SDGs, as well as to share this resource. To date, there are 105 points on the map, and our outreach is ongoing to encourage more people to see themselves and their work as part of it. The map is like a 'field guide' that offers the opportunity for seeing all kinds of work and its impacts in one place.

Current map points span the community, business, and academic sectors and all 17 SDGs. When browsing, you'll find partners like Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) who were one of the first institutions in Canada to sign the SDG Accord, and projects like *Our Communities, Our Voices*, which is led by the Atlantic Council for International Cooperation (ACIC). ACIC's project involves engaging young Indigenous leaders in a series of workshops about harnessing the power of social media to strengthen the voices of their communities. No matter what map pin you land on, you will learn more about how folks around Nova Scotia are working towards the goals.
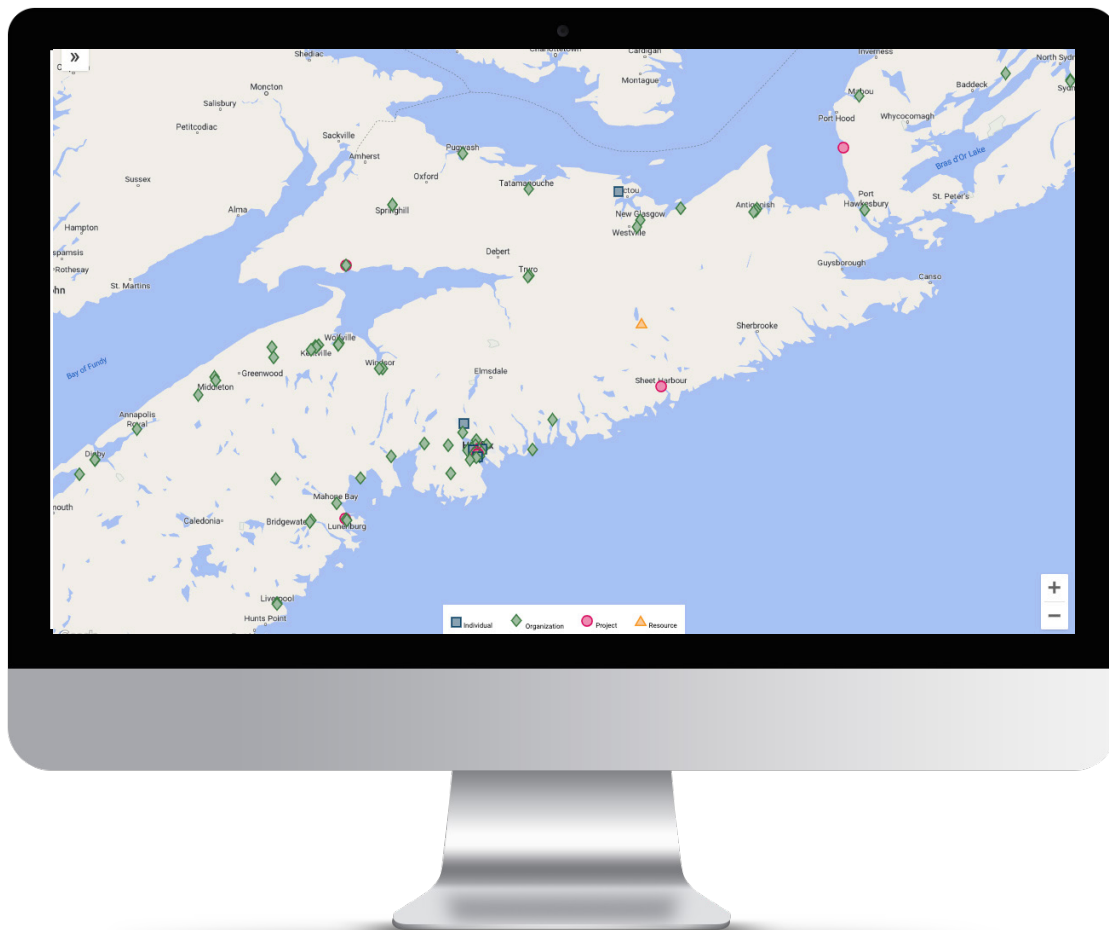
RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

Throughout the year, we shaped distinct academic research opportunities with two partners: Research Nova Scotia (RNS) and Change Lab Action Research Initiative (CLARI).

RNS is an independent, not-for-profit corporation with the mandate to support, organize, and coordinate the funding of research in Nova Scotia. In partnership with them, we issued a funding opportunity that supports two graduate students to undertake projects involving analyses of the 2019 NS Quality of Life Survey results. The focus of the research projects will be time adequacy and wellbeing, and 1) their relationship to mental health; 2) the experiences of single parents; 3) the experiences of youth or, 4) the experiences of those who face housing insecurity.

CLARI supports local research partnerships between community partners and faculty/student researchers. They do this by connecting communities to expertise at their partner institutions and enabling collaboration through grant funding. We have been working with CLARI to co-design a research opportunity that links community organizations who want to undertake research related to quality of life and one or more of the SDGs, with researchers at academic institutions in the province. Research partnerships and projects that are formed will receive funding through our SDG program.

PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITY

A big part of our first year was thoughtfully designing a dynamic partnership opportunity, which became available to all Nova Scotia residents this Winter. The partnership opportunity is an offering of support to springboard community projects and ideas by advancing them through a facilitated process – from visioning to action – that is community-informed, data-driven, and supported by resources.

To bring the idea for this kind of opportunity to life, our team engaged with many close partners. Throughout these conversations, we were reminded of the importance of being responsive to partners' needs and of centering collaboration and relationship-building. What resulted is an innovative approach to partnership and funding. We have multiple conversations with potential partners so that we both can explore fit, there are no deadlines by which to apply to the opportunity, and we determine Engage's financial contributions as part of the partnership development.

Since launching, we've met with 8 potential partners and received 5 project proposals. To determine how best Engage might support the applicants and what they've proposed to do, we assembled a Selections Committee. Officially, we have partnered with four organizations: Spencer House, Proud Pairs, Schools Plus, and New Dawn Enterprises. We are eager to work more with them and help bring their project ideas to life.

THANKS TO OUR SELECTIONS COMMITTEE:
Meghan McMorris, Keaudre Beales, Engage Nova Scotia board member Dr. Gabrielle Donnelly, and Engage's CEO Danny Graham for their support of the partnership opportunity.

INTERNSHIPS
Over the year, we hosted two internship opportunities:

VENTURE FOR CANADA INTRAPRENEURSIP PROGRAM	**ACADIA UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORE TERM PROFESSIONAL PLACEMENT**

Three Venture for Canada Intrapreneurs worked with us from December to January. The trio of undergraduate students, in different programs at different universities, researched effective SDG-related design, data analysis and visualization, and communications. They shared what they learned with us and their recommendations have informed multiple areas of our program.

From March to April, we also had an Acadia University Community Development student complete their placement requirement with us in the role of SDG Community Engagement Strategist. The student led the design of an effective and creative engagement strategy for the SDG program. The purpose of the strategy is to realize one of the goals for the SDG program, which is to co-create what we do with community members so that things are relevant and put to use. The engagement strategy will be essential over the next two years.

PRESENTATIONS AND EVENTS

Our launch of the SDG program involved hosting online lunch 'n' learns about the initiative. The first was with a network of people involved in the NS Quality of Life Initiative in September. Then we hosted two public events in October.

In addition to hosting our own events to share what we're doing, Blair (SDG Program Director) was invited to present at a series of events over the past year.

Blair spoke at the ACIC Symposium, *From Obstacles to Opportunities: Harnessing the Momentum from a Global Pandemic to Inspire a More Resilient and Just Future*, on a panel called "The Implications of Covid-19." Blair shared their perspectives on how the SDGs can help us view the interconnected nature of big issues that were exacerbated by the pandemic, and provided examples of how wellbeing frameworks (like the SDGs) can support us as we reimagine our futures together.

In March, Blair and Engage's Outreach and Participation Lead, Tammy Ewing, presented at Mount Saint Vincent University's 2022 Girls Conference: *A Better Tomorrow: It Starts With You!* Part of the presentation was inspired by one of Engage's projects to foster social connections called *Do a ___ Thing*. Blair and Tammy guided young students through an activity that gave them the tools to do their next thing – big or small – that can help lead to a better tomorrow. They also talked about the value of the SDGs and shared what we do.

Blair and Hailey Vidler, Engage's Engagement and Evaluation Lead, travelled to Ottawa in April to attend the United Nations Association of Canada's Generation SDG Symposium. During the Symposium, the Generation SDG program's 60 youth SDG Ambassadors showcased their innovative solutions to drive community change. The visit sparked relationships in other parts of the country, and Blair and Hailey learned more about how Canadian youth are tackling challenges in their communities.

LOOKING AHEAD

MOVING FORWARD

Our team will continue to welcome new folks into our project fold. We want to learn more about how people around the province engage with *Survey Snapshots* and use local data to inform what they do. We are also eager to grow the SDG Network and foster more connections between people, organizations, and resources related to the goals.

Over the next year we will be embarking on the participatory engagement path with our partners at Spencer House, Proud Pairs, Schools Plus, and New Dawn Enterprises, plus developing new partnerships in the fall. Our current partners' project ideas range in focus and scope. They include: developing a seniors and newcomers pairing program; support to an existing 2SLGBTQIA+ mentorship program; implementation of a school cupboard project; and, creating a Cape Breton/Unama'ki Data Portal.

Something we're really looking forward to is getting back to being in-person. One thing we've worked towards this year will kick off in September. We're hitting the road in partnership with NSCC to host a series of community conversations at campuses provincewide about the SDGs and quality of life in Nova Scotia. Follow Engage Nova Scotia on social media and join our newsletter for schedule announcements, plus, follow our route on the NS SDG Map. We hope to see you at one of the events!

In addition to our road trip with NSCC, we'll be back in person in a big way when we host a pan-provincial forum in March 2023. This forum will be built with partners and inspired by the NS Quality of Life Initiative, the SDGs, and the 2030 Agenda. The details of what this forum will look like is being shaped with partners, and aims to spark new ideas, share information, foster dialogue, critique what exists, and celebrate our strengths.

We've come a long way in the first year with further to go in the year ahead.
THANKS FOR BEING WITH US.