

Strategic Plan

2020-2023

COMMUNITY
SECTOR COUNCIL
of NOVA SCOTIA



April 1, 2020

Executive Summary

The role of the Community Sector Council of Nova Scotia (CSCNS) is pivotal to the success and sustainability of a vibrant network of nonprofit and voluntary sector organizations that collectively contributes \$1.7 billion in direct, indirect and spinoff benefits to the gross domestic product (GDP) of Nova Scotia and a volunteer sector that contributes an additional \$1.5 billion annually¹.

This network extends beyond the more than 6,000 recognized nonprofit and volunteer organizations operating in hundreds of rural and urban communities to also connect with provincial and municipal governments, for-profit businesses and postsecondary institutions. The sector contributes to societal needs by providing inclusive social, cultural, health, recreational and economic programs and services in their communities. All are guided by volunteer Boards of Directors. Combined, these Boards are responsible for the strategic, human resource and operational oversight of more than 20,000 diverse full- and part-time employees. In addition, the nonprofit and volunteer sector is supported by an estimated 74 million volunteer hours annually¹.

The CSCNS helps increase the operational capacity, strength and sustainability of these organizations. The Council supports the professional development of sector leaders

by providing training programs that develop knowledge and skills in areas like human resource management and development, financial administration, diversity, governance, succession planning and other areas where members may not have the formal training. The CSCNS, itself, is one of a network of 13 Sector Councils designated by the Government of Nova Scotia.

The CSCNS has been engaged in a comprehensive process to develop a new three-year Strategic Plan. On behalf of CSCNS, Atlantic Provinces Economic Council (APEC) conducted a confidential workforce survey completed by 445 nonprofits. Working with PONO Consulting, the CSCNS also conducted over 30 stakeholder interviews, and researched trends impacting the nonprofit and voluntary sector. In addition, eight regional consultations, attended by leaders from more than 160 organizations, were also conducted to inform our future direction. These activities allow us to understand the current strengths, contributions and aspirations of the nonprofit and voluntary sector, as well its emerging challenges and longer-term precariousness and potential threats. Being such a critical element of the provincial economy, as well as being central to Nova Scotia's continued health, sustainability, cultural vibrancy and diversity, we are even more aware of the important role that the Council can and must play.

The outcome of the comprehensive consultations, clearly support the following priorities that the CSCNS will focus on during the next three years:

1

Educate and Innovate

Provide the tools, skills and knowledge to increase the capacity of existing and newly forming small- and medium-size nonprofit and voluntary organizations province-wide and ensure they build a flexible and diverse workforce that will thrive in today's innovative digital economy.

2

Collaborate and Activate

Facilitate, support and activate connections across networks and encourage continued and new collaborations between nonprofits, the government and private sectors, in order to inspire systems-change, and to build an inclusive, sustainable, healthy and prosperous Nova Scotia.

3

Advocate and Celebrate

Lead, champion, celebrate, give voice to, and advocate for, the sector.



This report outlines the context of the nonprofit and voluntary sector and the results of the consultation and survey that lead to these priorities. The CSCNS is passionate about building capacity of nonprofit and voluntary organizations, partnering to help activate the growing network of organizational collaborations and leading, championing, celebrating, and giving voice to this critically important sector.

On behalf of the Board of the Community Sector Council of Nova Scotia I would like to express our deep gratitude to all those who contributed to the development of this plan. Our partners at APEC and PONO Consulting, all those who attended the consultations and responded to the surveys as well as the stakeholders who participated in the interviews have all been incredibly generous with their time, experiences, insights and recommendations for the future. We also want to thank our government and academic partners as well as the members of the two Ad Hoc Committees who oversaw the process and provided invaluable guidance. The staff of the CSCNS have done a remarkable job ensuring that everything came together and that we reach a point where we are poised to make a difference into the future as we move to implement this plan. The Sector in this province is leading innovatively through new ways of thinking, networking and collaboration and we are excited to be a part of what is emerging.

Patricia Bradshaw, PhD, ICD.D

Chair of the Board of the Community Sector Council
Professor in Management Department, Sobey School of Business
Saint Mary's University

Background

The economic impact of Nova Scotia's core nonprofit sector is estimated to be \$1.7 billion annually in direct, indirect and induced contributions to the province's gross domestic product (GDP). APEC also estimates the economic value of volunteering is \$1.5 billion annually. Given the sector's significant economic, social, and cultural contributions to the health of the provincial economy, Government has funded the CSCNS since its creation in December of 2012. The CSCNS is one of 13 Sector Councils funded by the Department of Labour and Advanced Education (LAE). The Sector Council Program supports organizations in different sectors in the development of human resources in areas such as employee attraction, retention and training. This government program supports small, and medium-sized, nonprofit organizations by providing access to expertise and resources to address the sector's workforce challenges.

Since 2012, the Community sector has steadily grown in understanding itself as a network. The CSCNS has expanded its mandate from capacity building to becoming a trusted and nonpartisan voice for the Community sector, working to raise awareness of the many contributions rural and urban communities make to the province. In concert, a number of newly government-funded organizations have also been created to provide support to specific community goals.

Now, in 2020, the CSCNS is funded by several government departments, including Labour and Advanced Education, Communities, Culture and Heritage, Departments of Business and Community Services. Government relies on the CSCNS to develop and provide inclusive, sustainable programs and services to assist the portion of the mandate these individual departments have around the Community sector.

Approach to CSCNS **Strategic Plan** 2020-2023

The CSCNS engaged in a robust process to update its Strategic Plan for the next three years, 2020 – 2023. In early 2020, APEC provided an updated economic impact study of Nova Scotia’s nonprofit and volunteer sector. It also conducted a confidential survey, on behalf of the CSCNS, completed by over 445 nonprofit organizations, to better understand the contributions and challenges facing these organizations as employers.

Separately, PONO Consulting worked with CSCNS in the autumn of 2019 and early 2020 to do extensive consultations across the province, interviews with more than 30 key stakeholders, and research on emerging trends. Separately, eight consultations were held across Nova Scotia. These sessions were attended by Community sector leaders from over 160 nonprofit and voluntary organizations.

Sharing what we learned about the sector and how we plan to contribute to its growing impact on the economy and life of the province is important.

Current situation for the nonprofit and voluntary sector

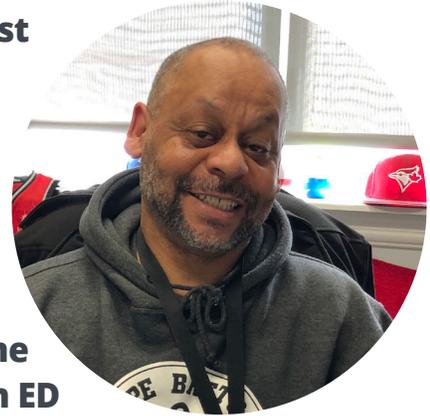
Nova Scotia's nonprofit and volunteer sector are essential partners with the Province and the private sector, offering incredible strengths and opportunities. There is much to celebrate about the more than 6000 nonprofit and voluntary organizations that make up our vibrant and vital Community sector. Over 20,000 people are employed in the core nonprofit sector (excluding hospitals, colleges and universities, municipalities and schools). Fifty percent of the population volunteers 74 million hours annually to the nonprofit and volunteer sector. APEC estimates this translates into 30,000 full-time equivalent jobs. APEC also estimates the sector contributes \$1 billion of direct Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This increases to \$1.7 billion combining direct impacts such as employment, as well as indirect and spin off impacts including spending by the sector.

In addition, APEC estimates the economic value of volunteering is \$1.5 billion annually. These numbers do not reflect the contribution of the Community sector to the province's social, cultural, environmental and other components of our overall health and well-being.

Participants in our consultations and interviews are incredibly passionate, dedicated, skilled, diverse and resilient. The growing spirit of collaboration and partnership across our vibrant network of nonprofit and voluntary organizations is one of the most notable themes to emerge from the consultations.

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I think the greatest challenge is to maintain our sector. People are burning out. They are working a lot of hours and for some reason you pay an ED in a private company or the government more than an ED in the non-profit sector and the poor ED in the non-profit sector is doing 10 times the work. We have to flip the switch on that!



It's like I always tell my workers out there working with the kids 'you've got to teach, teach, teach.' Those of us in the non-profit sector have to teach, teach, teach and advocate on our behalf of the sector with the government to show them what we're doing.

Chester Borden Executive Director,
Boys and Girls Clubs of Cape Breton, Whitney Pier Youth Club

APEC estimates Nova Scotia's core nonprofit sector accounted for \$1 billion of direct Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2017

Nonprofit Segments

- **Core Nonprofit** includes nonprofit activities such as community, social and business focused nonprofits. This segment is the main focus of the APEC report.
- **Government Nonprofit** is not the focus of this report. It is significantly larger than the core nonprofit sector as it includes health care (including hospitals and long-term care homes) and education (including universities and colleges).

The entire nonprofit sector contributed \$4.8 billion to the GDP in 2017 with the majority being from the government nonprofit sector (\$3.8 billion).



Total Impact \$1.7 billion

While facing competition for limited resources, there is a growing recognition by sector leaders of all ages that the nonprofit and volunteer sector will only thrive if we collectively shift to a mindset of abundance, cooperation and collaboration. Some of the exciting examples of collaboration we learned about during recent consultations are highlighted throughout this Strategy.

Nonprofit and volunteer sector leaders are highly educated, with 84% of Executive Directors or CEO respondents to the survey having an undergraduate degree or higher. This compares to 60% of senior leaders outside the sector. They are also highly experienced with 27% being in their roles for 11 years or longer.

Women play a prominent role in the sector and account for 68% of total employees and 67% of the leaders. The sector is also creating diverse and inclusive workplaces. Respondents to the survey reported that their workforce is composed of 7.2% Acadians, 5.3% Black (including African Nova Scotians), 4.0% persons with disabilities, 3.7% people who have immigrated in the past five years and 3.8% Indigenous community members. In almost every category, these percentages are higher than those reported in all industries in Nova Scotia but in the case of Indigenous workers it is lower.

The survey identifies the growth of social enterprises as an important and increasing trend. Social enterprise organizations operate in an entrepreneurial or business-like fashion, with a simultaneous commitment to their mission. The use of generated revenues supports their social, environmental, community or cultural goals. Nearly 30% of respondents in the survey considered themselves to be a social enterprise and an additional 10% felt they were partially a social enterprise. About 18% of the revenues in these responding organizations were generated by social enterprise activities.

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Our biggest challenge is sustained funding so that we can know year to year that we'll be around to do the work we need to do.



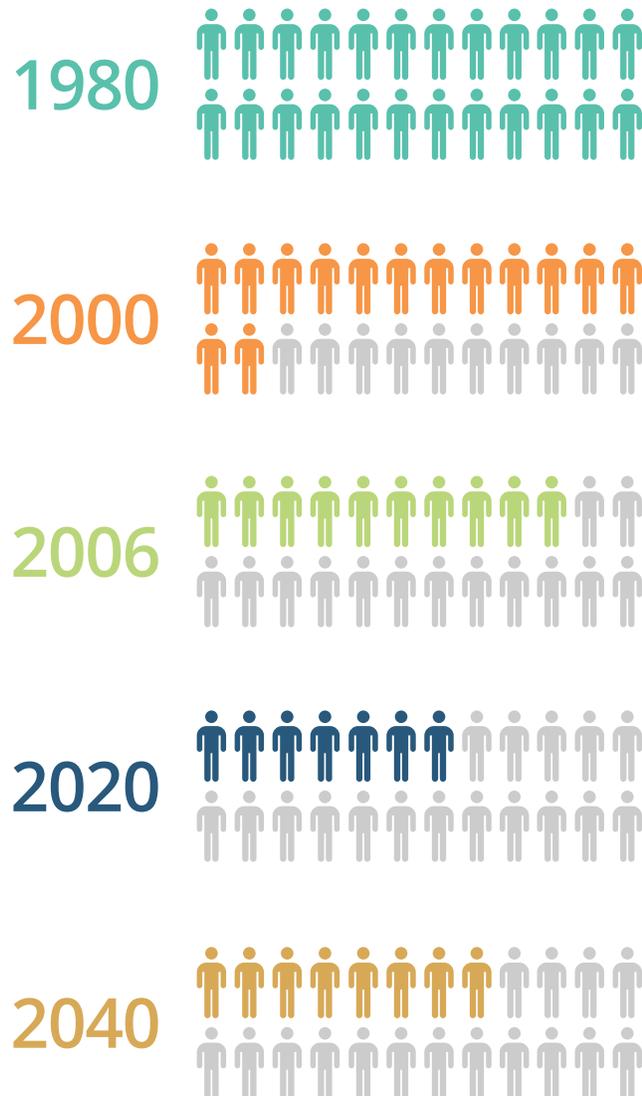
It is quite interesting to see how my thought processes have led to change. I find myself thinking and acting more like an entrepreneur while sitting in the seat of an Executive Director. This is helping me to discover new potential for new revenue sources and partnerships. In doing so, it helps me grow our message and reach. It is an opportunity and a challenge all wrapped into one.

Janet Barlow Executive Director,
Hike Nova Scotia

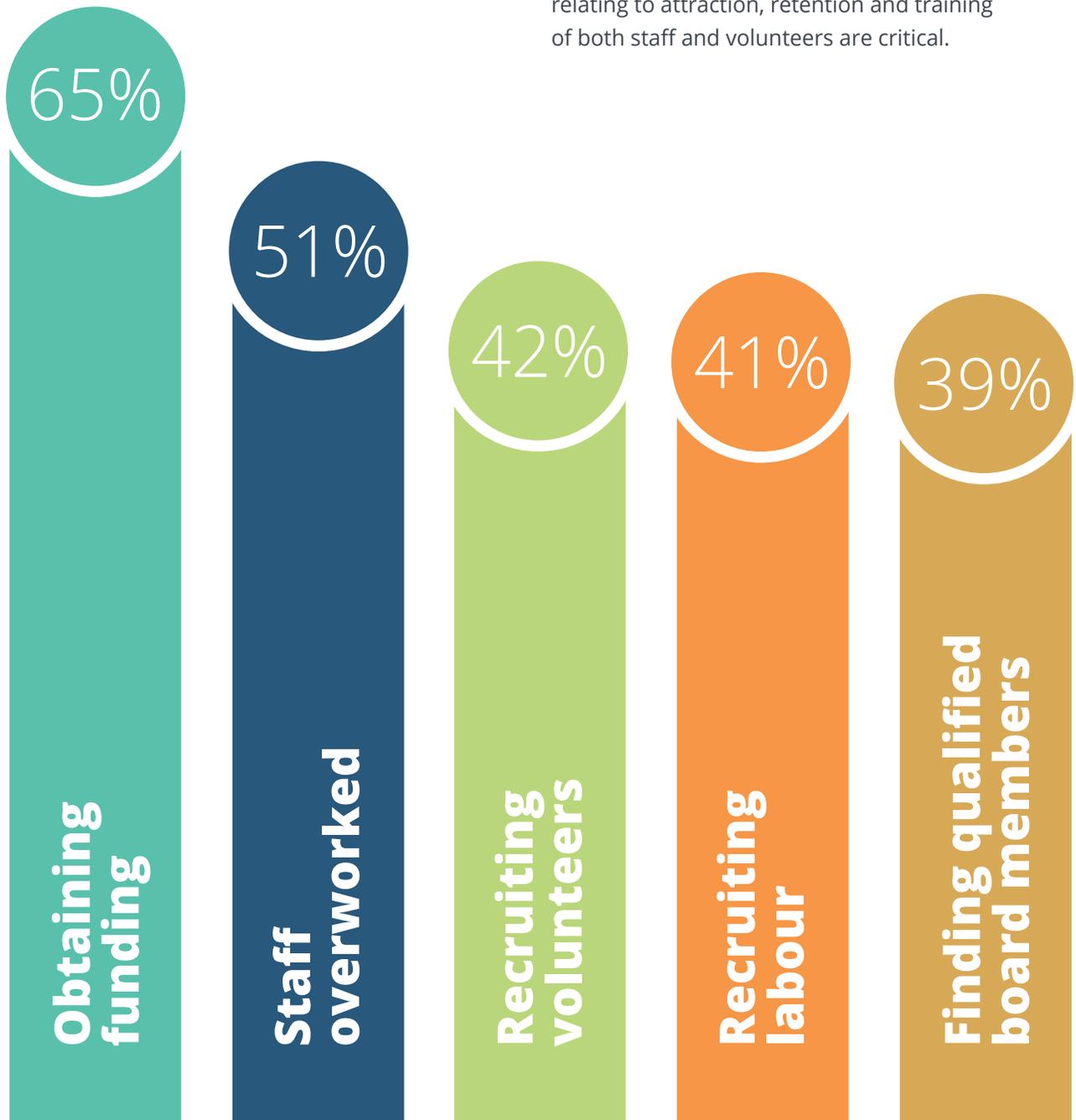
When asked about whether social enterprise activities contributed to them successfully fulfilling their mission, respondents were positive, with 78% rating their satisfaction at 7 or more on a 10-point scale. About 63% of nonprofits with social enterprise activities provide employment opportunities to the individuals they are serving, enabling clients to gain work experience, skills, training and mentoring in order to be successful in the workplace. For example, hiring persons with disabilities or supporting them to work in other organizations. To celebrate social enterprises and their social, economic and cultural contributions to communities, the Province recently announced that the last week of February will be Social Enterprise Week annually.

While there is much to celebrate about the successes and opportunities for the core nonprofit and voluntary sector, there is significant precariousness to employment in the sector. All employers, including business and government, are facing a declining unemployment rate, an aging population and competition for skilled labour. The COVID-19 situation is currently changing Nova Scotia's economic situation, however, in January 2020 data indicated that unemployment rates in Nova Scotia are at their lowest level since the early 1970s at 6.9% in January 2020. There were 13,400 job vacancies in the third quarter of 2019. The main factor behind these vacancies is the province's demographic picture, led by an aging group of baby boomers entering retirement.

The number of young workers available for every 10 retirees, Atlantic Canada



Survey Respondents Reported Significant or Major Obstacles to Growth (%) (n=514)



Responding organizations employed 12,500 full-time employees and 5,100 part-timers. Volunteer workers totalled 17,300, similar to the total number of permanent workers. Volunteers work a limited number of hours per year and play a crucial role in the success of an organization. Recruiting and mobilizing this massive pool of workers is challenging.

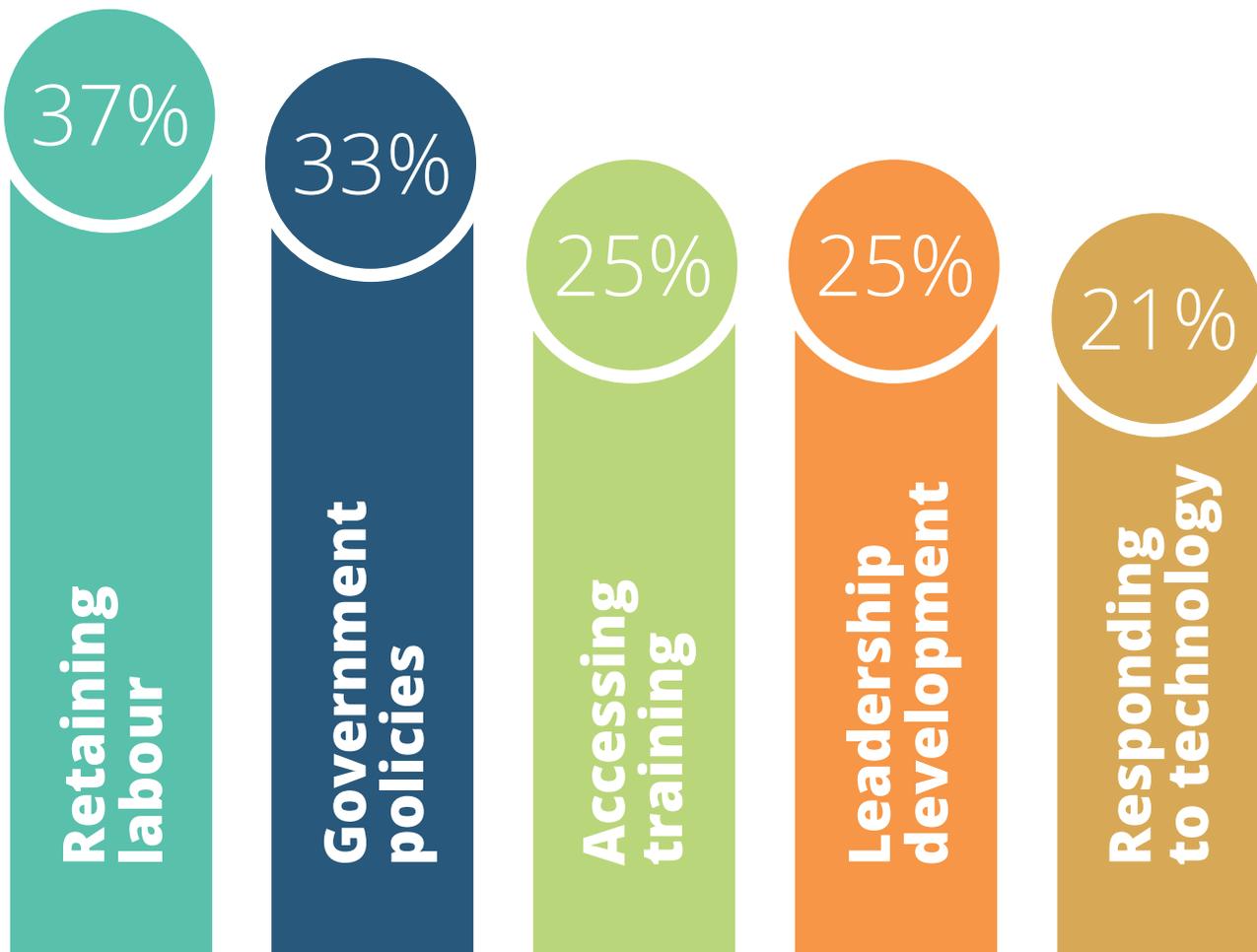
In the survey, APEC asked respondents what are the greatest obstacles to growth. Their responses are reflected in the graph below. Funding was cited as the most significant challenge by the vast majority of survey respondents, the workforce issues relating to attraction, retention and training of both staff and volunteers are critical.

Hourly compensation for paid employees in Nova Scotia's nonprofits averaged about \$24 in 2018, one of the lowest rates in Canada and well below the national average of \$28.50/hour. Average compensation in the nonprofit sector in Nova Scotia is 20% below the average for all industries, which is nearly \$30 per hour.

Consultation participants were asked to vote on what they would like to see the CSCNS provide (using the "dotmocracy" technique where each person votes by placing sticky dots on their top five priorities). The ranking of priorities differed slightly by region.

The top priorities are:

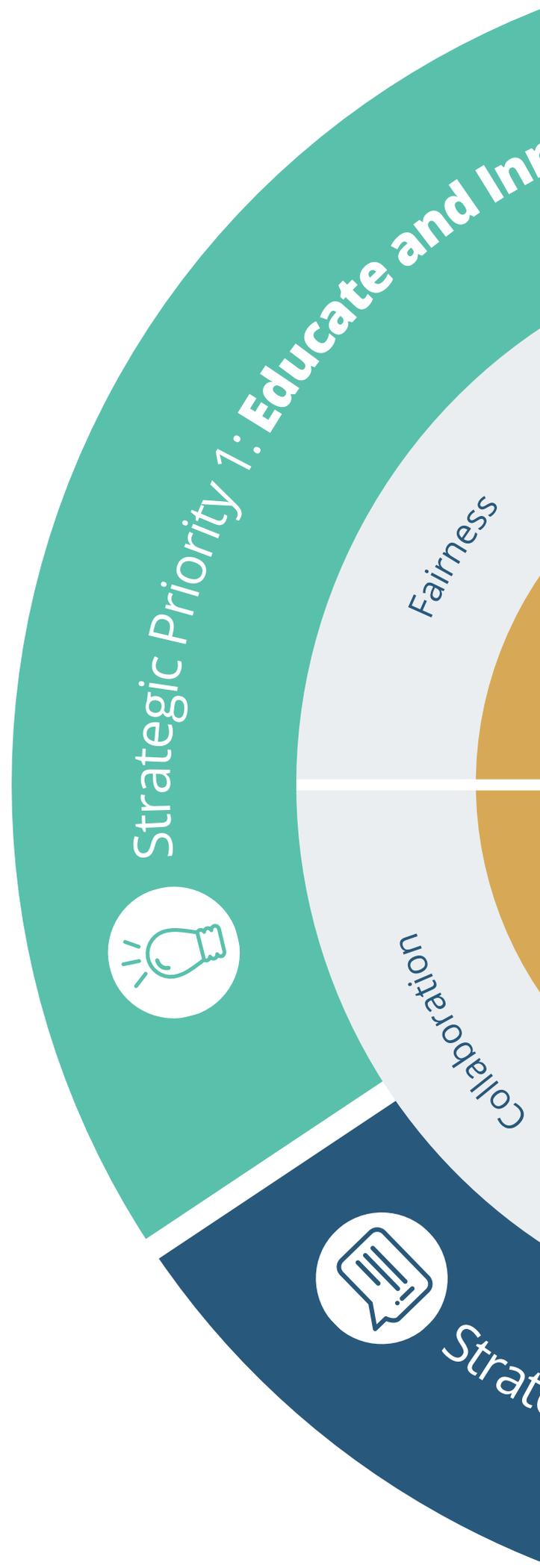
- **Government Advocacy on behalf of the sector**
- **Sharing of best practices and innovations from outside the region**
- **Governance and leadership training and development**
- **Nonprofit management training**
- **Some sponsored training and programming** (i.e. the CSCNS secures the funding to cover programming/training costs)
- **Succession Planning**
- **Diversity Training**



The Path Forward: CSCNS 2020-2023 Strategic Plan

The nonprofit and voluntary sector is vital to Nova Scotia's economy. With strengths and opportunities come challenges. The CSCNS will support the sector to ensure it takes full advantage of the opportunities and builds upon the many strengths, while facing the challenges head on. As a conduit for government, the CSCNS will help this important sector not only survive but thrive, now and into the future.

This Strategic Plan was developed after extensive consultation with the nonprofit and voluntary sector, as well as current and future partners. It is the result of what we heard that is needed to continue to support the growth of the sector. To ensure success, we are taking a focused approach. As such, for the time being, we have maintained our current vision, mission and values with the plan to revisit.





Strategic Priorities



These strategic priorities, as outlined on the following pages, were developed with extensive input from the sector. The feedback from the sector, along with the emerging labour force challenges highlighted through the APEC study, clearly indicates the need for continued capacity building and an innovative approach by organizations in the sector. Building on the suite of programs currently offered by the CSCNS, new programs will be developed to prepare the nonprofit and voluntary organizations for disruption and rapid change. For example, to be competitive in attracting, retaining labour and succession planning, the sector will need to attract and retain newcomers, youth, members of historically marginalized communities while ensuring seniors continue to both work and volunteer. Training is required to explore opportunities that embrace social enterprise activities, as well as building inclusive succession plans as highly-educated and experienced leaders retire. Therefore, the first priority is focused on capacity building and creating a mindset and approach to prepare the sector for innovation and the rapid arrival of the digital economy. Needs assessment and consultation will take place to ensure that new and existing programs remain relevant to the emerging challenges and needed competencies for 6000+ organizations to thrive and excel.

Educate and Innovate

Provide the tools, skills and knowledge to increase the capacity of existing and newly forming small- and medium-size nonprofit and voluntary organizations province-wide and ensure they build a flexible and diverse workforce that will thrive in today's innovative digital economy.



- 1 Build capacity in human resource planning and workforce attraction and retention, guided by a commitment to inclusion, equity and diversity.
- 2 Help organizations address challenges of finding and keeping volunteers through collaborations, such as with Volunteer Nova Scotia.
- 3 Provide training and development, in person and on-line, on priorities identified by the sector.
- 4 Support robust organizations by providing accessible, affordable training in governance, leadership and strategic planning, as well as in financial, management and succession planning.
- 5 Provide guidance through connections and community involvement in building and enhancing social entrepreneurship.
- 6 Partner with schools, universities and colleges to build a strong pipeline of new leaders.
- 7 Support the development of inclusive leadership succession strategies across the sector.

The research conducted highlighted an exciting and growing commitment on the part of the organizational leaders of nonprofit and volunteer organizations to embrace collaboration and networking. This research illustrated examples of partnerships transforming the sector. From sharing of information, to sharing people and spaces, to joint programs and amalgamations, the recognition of the growing inter-organizational connections and collaborations is exciting.

Collaborate and Activate

Facilitate, support and activate connections across networks and encourage continued and new collaborations between nonprofits, the government and private sectors, in order to inspire systems-change, and to build an inclusive, sustainable, healthy and prosperous Nova Scotia.



- 1 Host, convene and facilitate opportunities for engagement, trust building, cooperation, collaboration and strategic partnerships (e.g. conferences, dialogues, round tables, working groups, consultations, Executive Director (ED) Networks). Continue to be flexible, responsive and strategic in responding to issues raised by the sector.
- 2 Facilitate members of CSCNS to share ideas, information, best practices, space, skills and resources, to partner in joint programming and explore possible program or organizational amalgamations.
- 3 Ensure that youth/change makers, senior/ elders, historically disenfranchised communities, newcomers and all those passionate about making a difference in the emerging networks, are included and have a powerful voice in the meaning making and planning processes.
- 4 Collaborate and partner with other organizations and social movement groups who share a vision of a collaborative, networked ecosystem (e.g. Inspiring Communities, Engage NS, SENS and others).
- 5 Research the eco-system through network mapping, academic partnerships (CLARI) and collaborative work with others committed to fostering networks across systems levels (e.g. with the Ontario Nonprofit Network and Imagine Canada).

The second priority is a commitment on the part of the CSCNS to partner in the facilitation and activation of these emerging networks. While the CSCNS has an existing network of convenors across the province, it will evolve how it works with the sector. This will allow for greater impact, flexibility and effectiveness and to find partners in order to model a spirit of abundance and possibility that is inclusive and empowering.

Advocate and Celebrate

Lead, champion, celebrate, give voice to, and advocate for, the sector.



- 1 Research the sector, access volunteers and people to work in and lead the sector.
- 2 Create a dashboard or visual progress report to communicate the challenges and opportunities for the sector and track trends over time (e.g. bi-annual workforce surveys).
- 3 Contribute to policy discussions, share the economic impact of the sector, shape emerging workforce strategies and communicate broadly about the sector through reports, social media strategies, advocacy and story telling.
- 4 Develop recognition events and awards for outstanding leaders in the sector (to be developed by the sector but might include recognition for most inclusive, innovative, collaborative, etc.)
- 5 Liaise, bridge and act as a conduit between the sector and government and potential funders (conduct consultations, issue reports, host round tables and working groups, promote SkillOnLineNS.ca, etc.)
- 6 Partner to communicate accomplishments, aspirations, concerns and contributions of the sector. Work in strategic partnerships provincially, nationally and internationally to ensure that nonprofits, volunteer and social enterprise voices are heard.
- 7 Build the membership of the CSCNS. Understand and respond to the needs of members through listening, convening and consulting.

The final priority is in response to clear and strong feedback from the sector that they want to see the CSCNS give voice to the issues, contributions, opportunities and challenges facing the sector. The 2020 report prepared by APEC was recognized as important and helpful. Policy implications grounded in evidence collected by an independent research group helps the sector be seen for both its incredible contributions but also its growing precariousness. The CSCNS can play a part in ensuring that the sector is heard, valued and supported in policy and practice, particularly in times of uncertainty and disruption.

The fiscal year 2019-2020 has been a year of reflection and transition. We look forward to hiring an Executive Director and mobilizing our resources to accomplish these priorities. Reflection and reassessment are healthy. We are extremely appreciative of all our partners on this journey including government, members of the nonprofits and voluntary organizations who participated in the survey and attended our consultations, partner organizations and our staff.

The CSCNS is passionate about building capacity to strengthen nonprofit and voluntary organizations, partnering to help activate the growing network of organizational collaborations and to leading, championing, celebrating, giving voice to this critically important sector.



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