Dismantling Racism and Hate Act

Annual Report 2025-26

NOVA SCOTIA



Introduction

Under the *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act*, the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism is required to report to the House of Assembly by July 31 each year on the progress the Government of Nova Scotia is making toward achieving equity while addressing racism and systemic hate. Since the Act came into force in 2022, three annual reports have been tabled, each outlining government-wide progress on the Act's key deliverables and accountability measures.

Consistent with last year's report, this report includes all the Office's work by sharing progress under both the *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act* and the Forward Together Plan, which is the Nova Scotia Government's plan to continue creating a stronger, more inclusive public service that reflects and serves all Nova Scotians. Reporting on the Office's work provides a comprehensive view of government action to advance equity for all Nova Scotians.

This year's annual report is divided into two sections based on the focus areas in the Act:

A. Advancing equity and anti-racism through government action

B. Building capacity for equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in the public service



A. Commitment to Advancing Equity and Anti-Racism through Government Action

The *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act* was passed on April 1, 2022. The Act was drafted by an all-party committee and informed by extensive community engagement. The Office of Equity and Anti-Racism met with more than 70 organizations, engaging more than 1,200 Nova Scotians, to learn what underrepresented and underserved communities across the province felt needed to be included in this legislation. The Act, which addresses both equity and anti-racism, is the first of its kind in Canada.

One of the key requirements of the Act was the development of a Nova Scotia Equity and Anti-Racism Strategy that includes specific actions and initiatives to address the needs and concerns identified during engagement. Highlights of progress made under the strategy are included below.

Equity and Anti-Racism Strategy

The government released the provincial Equity and Anti-Racism Strategy on July 6, 2023. The strategy highlights efforts across government aimed at identifying and addressing systemic hate, inequity, and racism. It also outlines how government will work with community organizations, public sector bodies, municipalities, and villages to ensure this work occurs across the province.

The following section presents highlights of progress made related to the strategy in 2025-26.

Office of Equity and Anti-Racism

Nova Scotia's First 2SLGBTQIA+ Action Plan

The Government released its first Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual (2SLGBTQIA+) Action Plan on January 8, 2026. It is a coordinated roadmap to advance equity, improve access to services and supports, and foster safer, more inclusive communities across the province.

The plan was informed by extensive engagement with the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, drawing on the voices and lived experiences of more than 600 individuals who participated in surveys, virtual meetings, and community-led consultations. Through focused actions, the Action Plan identifies opportunities to improve provincial programs and policies, strengthen partnerships with community organizations, and support the full inclusion of 2SLGBTQIA+ people at every stage of life.

Community Impact Grant Program

The first concrete action stemming from the plan was the launch of the 2SLGBTQIA+ Community Impact Grant Program, which provides flexible funding to strengthen the capacity, stability, and long-term impact of community-based organizations that serve 2SLGBTQIA+ Nova Scotians.

Community Network Grants

The Community Network Grant Program empowers community organizations to deliver initiatives that challenge hate, reduce barriers, and strengthen equity across Nova Scotia. In 2025-26, the Province invested about $400,000 through the Office's Community Network Grant Program to support 13 community-driven projects addressing systemic hate, inequity, and racism. To date, 36 projects have received more than $1 million in funding.

Funded organizations share progress reports on the Office's Community Network engagement website.

Environmental Racism Panel

In 2021, under the *Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act*, the government committed to creating an Environmental Racism Panel to provide advice on how to address historic environmental racism. The panel was the first of its kind in Canada and provided draft advice to the government in 2024.

In December 2025, ministers from the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism, Environment and Climate Change, L'nu Affairs, and African Nova Scotian Affairs met with the former panel members, who recommended that the next step involve direct engagement with affected communities. In response, the government announced $935,000 in its 2026–27 budget to support this engagement, to be coordinated by the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism over the next two years.

Prescribed Public Sector Bodies

Under the *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act* General Regulations, all municipalities and villages in Nova Scotia were required to develop and begin implementing plans addressing systemic hate, inequity, and racism by April 1, 2025.

The Office of Equity and Anti-Racism has provided $1.185 million in funding to the Association of Municipal Administrators of Nova Scotia over a four-year period (2024–28) to support plan development and implementation under both the *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act* and the *Accessibility Act*.

To date, 88% of municipal units have completed and publicly released their Equity and Anti-Racism Plans, while 98.6% have completed Accessibility Plans.

Approved plans, along with an interactive map, are available on the Office's Community Network engagement website.

Equity and Race-Based Data Standard

The *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act* requires the development of an equity and race-based data standard for use within government. The standard will govern how equity and race-based data is collected, interpreted and used within government. In 2025-26, the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism continued to develop the standard, engaging with departments throughout government to ensure the standard is practical and user-friendly for departments. This work is ongoing.

Department of Advanced Education

Advancing Inclusive Post-Secondary Education

The Province entered into new bilateral agreements for 2025–27 with each university. These agreements require institutions to create inclusive and equitable learning environments for underrepresented groups, including Mi'kmaw, Indigenous, and African Nova Scotian students.

Now most post-secondary institutions waive application fees for L'nu and Indigenous applicants. Many universities offer designated seats for Mi'kmaw and Indigenous students in programs such as nursing at Acadia, St. Francis Xavier, Dalhousie, and Cape Breton University.

Some examples of university-specific initiatives include:

- The Atlantic School of Theology has a dedicated policy called A Path Forward. It is focused on Advancing Mi'kmaw and Indigenous recruitment, retention, and accessibility.
- Cape Breton University offers scholarships and supports for Black and Indigenous Nursing students to better equip them for thriving in the program. This is part of targeted funding related to diversity.
- An exemption from the bilateral policy directive was granted to Dalhousie Medicine to enable them to continue their Indigenous and Black Learners Pathways for out-of-province applicants with formal ties to Mi'kmaw or African Nova Scotian communities and to maintain seats for three Indigenous and three Black applicants from outside the Maritime provinces.
- Dalhousie University offers the Transition Year Program, which prepares Indigenous and Black students for university studies and, upon successful completion, provides a pathway and fee waivers toward a Bachelor of Arts degree. Dalhousie also administers the Indigenous Blacks and Mi'kmaq Initiative, which supports Indigenous and Black students pursuing law degrees.
- Dalhousie runs Promoting Leadership in Health for African Nova Scotians to provide mentorship, programming, and resources to current post-secondary and secondary students interested in health professions.
- Mount Saint Vincent University partners with the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre on the Aboriginal Academic Access to Post-Secondary program which supports Indigenous students in achieving their education and career goals. This initiative has a 3-year funding agreement with the Department through 2027-28.

Department of Agriculture

Creating Equitable Access to Career Development and Education

The Department of Agriculture continued to support pathways into agriculture for African Nova Scotian and Indigenous youth through employment, education, and skills development initiatives.

Through the Black Youth Planting Their Future program, 17 African Nova Scotian students received paid summer employment, mentorship, and opportunities to learn about careers in agriculture in 2025. Participants were placed across seven government departments in the Colchester and Cumberland regions. A dedicated Student Coordinator and Community Mentor provided additional support to help address systemic barriers to entering both the public service and the agriculture sector.

The Department also continued to create opportunities for youth to explore agricultural education and careers by hosting the fourth annual Grow Where You're Planted event at the Dalhousie Agricultural Campus for African Nova Scotian high school students and the fifth annual Dalhousie Awtiket Indigenous Youth Camp. In 2026, two Grow Where You're Planted scholarships and summer internships were awarded to African Nova Scotian students pursuing agriculture-related university studies.

In 2025, the Department delivered the fourth Bridge into Agriculture program, a 22-week horticulture and food production training initiative for African Nova Scotians.

Advancing Inclusive Access to Agriculture Business Development and Programs

The Department renewed its annual $750,000 Equity-Focused Lending (Diverse Futures in Agriculture) allocation in 2025. The program supports farms and agri-businesses led by underrepresented and underserved groups through flexible loan-to-value ratios, tailored risk assessments, and supports for early-stage ventures.

In addition, the Department invested more than $242,000 through grant programs that supported seven community-based projects serving underrepresented and underserved communities across Nova Scotia.

Cyber Security and Digital Solutions

Sponsored GEO Forum 2025

Cyber Security and Digital Solutions provided one-time funding of $30,000 to sponsor GEO Forum 2025. GEO Nova Scotia is a nonprofit working across the province with community, public, and private partners to improve digital inclusion for low-income and underserved groups by offering affordable internet, devices, and digital skills training.

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Guides for Responding to Unacceptable Behaviours

The Provincial School Code of Conduct and Guide for Responding to Unacceptable Behaviours, released in September 2025, guides practice across the education system in collaboration with education partners, including Regional Centres for Education and the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial.

The Code of Conduct requires administrators to apply important considerations—including trauma, cultural and linguistic responsiveness, age and stage of development, and the impact of exclusionary practices—before determining responses to behaviour, supporting equitable and context specific outcomes for students.

Partnering with African Nova Scotian community-based organizations

Collaboration with African Nova Scotian communities continues to be a key priority for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to provide additional supports to children and families to address and prevent further harm and trauma experienced as a result of systemic barriers within the education system. Notable examples of these ongoing partnerships include:

- 2026 marks the 20th anniversary of the African Nova Scotian History Challenge. This initiative provides students with the opportunity to research and present projects that showcase the significant contributions African Nova Scotians have made to the province's history, heritage, and culture. In the past year alone, there were more than 450 individual and group submissions.
- The Department has partnered with the Black Educators Association of Nova Scotia to offer a series of workshops aimed at supporting parents in their efforts to assist their children's educational journeys. This year's workshops focused on supporting children as developing readers in grades Primary to grade 2. The Supporting Your Child workshop series is delivered in community centres across Nova Scotia and addresses a range of educational topics relevant to families.

Advancing Inclusive and Culturally Responsive Early Learning and Child Care

The Province continues to build a more accessible, inclusive, and culturally responsive early learning and child care system. Through the revised Early Learning Curriculum Framework and related professional development opportunities, early childhood educators are better equipped to create learning environments that reflect the cultures, identities, and experiences of children, families, and communities across Nova Scotia.

This work is complemented by targeted investments to expand access to regulated child care in communities that have historically faced barriers to service. In 2025, the Province invested about $2.1 million to support the creation of up to 48 new toddler and preschool child care spaces at the East Preston Day Care Centre. This expansion will improve access to regulated child care for families in East Preston, one of Nova Scotia's historic African Nova Scotian communities.

Department of Emergency Management

Strengthening Emergency Preparedness and Community Resilience

In 2025-26, the Department of Emergency Management and the Department of African Nova Scotian Affairs partnered to plan a series of emergency preparedness workshops for eight African Nova Scotian communities: Kentville/Kings, Digby, Shelburne, Greenville, Glace Bay, Whitney Pier, New Glasgow, and Truro.

Scheduled for delivery in 2026-27, the workshops aim to promote emergency preparedness, strengthen community resilience, and foster connections among residents, community leaders, Regional Emergency Management Organizations, and local organizations. Hosted in trusted community spaces, the sessions will provide practical, culturally relevant information on emergency alerts, evacuation procedures, comfort centres, and local emergency response systems.

To encourage household preparedness, 11 families in each participating community will have the opportunity to receive a starter 72-hour emergency kit containing essential supplies and emergency planning resources. Through this initiative, residents will be supported in taking practical steps to prepare for emergencies while building stronger, more resilient communities.

Department of Energy

Low Carbon Grant Community Program

In 2025-26, the Department of Energy funded six projects totaling $388,108, which were either led by or directly supported underrepresented groups through it's Low Carbon Communities grant program. The program provides funding for community projects in Nova Scotia that support cost-effective clean energy and low carbon solutions in the buildings, electricity, and transportation sectors.

Department of Environment and Climate Change

Climate Capacity Building Initiatives for Underrepresented and Underserved Communities

Direct funding from the Department of Environment and Climate Change to the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq and the Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources strengthened local climate capacity. The Department advanced Climate Plan initiatives to support Mi'kmaw, African Nova Scotian, racialized, and youth communities. It expanded inclusive adaptation research, planning, and outreach, and invested in youth workforce development through the Clean Foundation's Clean Leadership Summer Internship Program. Additional tailored supports, culturally specific training, and learning resources strengthened community capacity through African Nova Scotian climate initiatives, community-based climate change coordinators, and the Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund.

In total, the Department invested about $2.176 million through granting programs to support community-based projects supporting underrepresented and underserved communities. This funding supported Mi'kmaw climate capacity-building initiatives, African Nova Scotian community climate action, youth employment and skills development in the green economy, and expanded local capacity through climate change coordinators and the Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund.

Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture

Black Youth Mentorship and Black Youth Planting Their Futures Program

The Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture participates in the Black Youth Development and Mentorship Program and Black Youth Planting Their Futures, by inviting students to join the department over the summer for work placements. The program is offered in the summer and provides 8-week, paid summer jobs (work experiences) for Black youth in grades 11 and 12 who are planning to attend university or college. Students earn a salary, get real-world work experience, learn how the government works and explore different jobs.

Department of Justice

Support for the Mi'kmaw Legal Support Network

The Department of Justice continues to work with the Mi'kmaw Legal Support Network, directly through the department's Victim Services and Restorative Initiatives Unit, and through federal partnerships and federal, provincial and territorial committees. The network is a community-led organization that works to ensure the fair treatment of Mi'kmaq and other Indigenous People in the criminal justice system, and an important Department partner. For the five-year period ending March 31, 2028, the department's financial contribution to network's programs and services will total $4.12 million.

African Nova Scotian Justice Institute

The 2026-27 budget provides $2.062 million in annual funding for five years to continue the work of the African Nova Scotian Justice Institute. Since 2021, the department has invested a total of $8.9 million in provincial funding in the community-led institute to help develop policies and programs that address overrepresentation and anti-Black racism in the justice system.

Government Accessibility Commitments

All government departments have worked with the Accessibility Directorate to develop and implement accessibility commitments under the Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan (2025-28). Departments, with support from the Accessibility Directorate, are currently completing their annual reports for 2025–26 and implementation plans for 2026-27. Information on the government's accessibility progress will be included in the 2025-26 Minister's Annual Report on Accessibility.

The Accessibility Directorate is also supporting departments in implementing their commitments through the Accessibility Interdepartmental Committee.

Department of Growth and Development

Supporting Housing Programs and Services

The Department of Growth and Development has provided funding through the Community Economic Development Fund to support community enhancement projects serving underrepresented and underserved communities, including:

- **$400,000** to the Africville Heritage Trust
- **$315,000** to Hope Blooms
- **$119,000** to Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Society

Cape Breton Island Centre for Immigration also received $450,000 to assist recent immigrants with career supports.

Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration

The Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration has continued to support immigrants and newcomers to Nova Scotia, as illustrated by the examples below:

Settlement Services

Under funding agreements that concluded on March 31, 2026, the Department supported 25 service provider and community organizations across the province to deliver a wide range of services aimed at fostering the successful settlement, integration, and long-term retention of newcomers. Over the three-year period (2023-26), these agreements funded 168 activities – such as language training, community integration initiatives, and needs assessments – through investments totalling nearly $29 million.

Following the conclusion of these agreements, 19 organizations delivering core settlement services were extended under new funding agreements for a two-year period from April 1, 2026 to March 31, 2028. These extensions support 114 activities focused on facilitating newcomer integration and retention, with funding of $8.625 million annually.

Immigration Pathways

The Department continues to administer the Provincial Nominee Program and the Atlantic Immigration Program, supporting skilled foreign workers and international graduates from Canadian institutions to establish permanent residence in Nova Scotia.

In 2025:

- The Department nominated 4,609 candidates for permanent residency.
- Of these, 949 were Nova Scotia international graduates, representing 21% of all approvals.
- The Department participated in two missions for a total of six in-market recruitment events, engaging 327 candidates, and hosted three virtual recruitment events in bilingual target markets.

Under the Atlantic Immigration Program:

- The Department designated 142 new employers in 2025.
- By year-end, the total number of designated employers reached 1,543.

Workplace Trades Practical Assessment program

Nova Scotian Apprenticeship Agency funds Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia to provide a Workplace Trades Practical Assessment program for internationally trained workers living in Nova Scotia. The program assesses an individual's skills to enable recognition of prior learning and training and connects participants with paid employment that leads to a continued apprenticeship opportunity and, ultimately, trades certification.

Skilled Trades Strategy for African Nova Scotians

In partnership with the PREP Academy, the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency invested $480,000 to launch the African Nova Scotian Skilled Trades Strategy. It is a provincial-level initiative to increase engagement, persistence, and success for African Nova Scotian youth and apprentices in Nova Scotia's skilled trades. This program will run until 2027.

Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey Youth Skilled Trades Fair and Engagement Activities

This initiative includes a three-day annual event and week-long camps designed to engage Indigenous youth from Mi'kmaw communities in exploring skilled trades. The three-day event connects participants with Indigenous skilled trades professionals and incorporates cultural teachings from community Elders. The week-long camps provide youth aged 13–18 with the opportunity to explore a specific skilled trade in a cohort-based, immersive learning environment.

Enhanced Direct Entry Programs

In partnership with the African Empowerment Academy and the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre, this program represents a targeted workforce development approach designed to create sustainable pathways into the skilled trades. Unlike traditional pre-employment or pre-apprenticeship programs, the Enhanced Direct Entry model is directly aligned with current industry demand, ensuring participants gain practical, job-ready skills that support Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency designated trades and curriculum standards.

Skilled Trades – Newcomers

In partnership with the Department of Growth and Development, the agency has extended the Workplace Trades Practical Assessment Program for newcomers in the Halifax Regional Municipality until March 31, 2027.

The Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia also delivers this program to newcomers in rural areas across the province, supported through the agency's Actions to Accelerate Skilled Trades Growth in Nova Scotia initiative.

Growing Nova Scotia's Francophone Population: An Action Plan for Success

In 2025, Nova Scotia completed the delivery of Growing Nova Scotia's Francophone Population: An Action Plan for Success (2022-25), a collaborative initiative led by the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration and the Office of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie, in partnership with community partners. The plan aimed to support francophone immigration and strengthen the vitality of Acadian and francophone communities. Nova Scotia welcomed 260 French-speaking permanent residents in 2025.

Following the conclusion of the action plan, the Department and the Office continue to work with partners to advance francophone immigration as a priority, building on the progress made and the strong partnerships established between 2022 and 2025.

In February 2026, the Immigration and Population Growth Branch partnered with the Office of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie to participate in Destination Canada, an international recruitment event held in France and Tunisia, to attract francophone talent. Throughout 2025–26, they also participated in a federal-provincial-territorial working group on francophone immigration, sharing best practices and leveraging opportunities in collaboration with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

The Department continues to support francophone newcomers by funding three key organizations: la Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse, le Conseil de développement économique de la Nouvelle-Écosse, and Université Sainte-Anne. Together, these organizations received more than $1.2 million through three-year funding agreements for the 2023-26 cycle.

Department of Municipal Affairs

Supporting Municipalities in Equity plans

The Department of Municipal Affairs continues to support municipalities in the development, implementation, and renewal of Equity and Anti-Racism, and Accessibility plans. Internally, the department's senior executive team is advancing a work plan aimed at building a culturally competent and supportive workplace that fosters a deeper understanding of equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility.

Through the Municipal Flood Line Mapping Program, the Department is partnering with Mi'kmaw organizations via 50/50 cost-sharing agreements with the federal government:

- **Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaw:** The Department is providing $500,000 over three years (April 2024 to March 2027) to support engagement with mainland Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw communities.
- **Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources:** The Department is providing $1 million over four years (April 2023 to March 2027) to engage Mi'kmaw communities in Cape Breton and complete coastal flood mapping for the Bras d'Or Lakes.

In 2025-26, these efforts resulted in engagement with three mainland Mi'kmaw communities in the South Shore and southwest Nova Scotia, as well as all five Mi'kmaw communities in Cape Breton.

Additionally, under the Municipal Stormwater Management Program, the Department has provided a $250,000 grant to the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities over three years (April 2024 to March 2027). This funding supports the development of two guidance/resource documents:

- One for municipalities addressing stormwater management in African Nova Scotian communities; and
- One for municipalities managing stormwater issues adjacent to Mi'kmaw communities.

Department of Opportunities and Social Development

Supportive Housing and Homelessness

Work under the Supportive Housing Action Plan continued to advance equitable access to housing supports for underrepresented and underserved communities across Nova Scotia. Key initiatives included the development and operation of 25 supportive housing units serving Indigenous communities and 90 supportive housing units serving African Nova Scotian communities. These investments contribute to addressing housing insecurity and homelessness while supporting culturally relevant, community-based approaches to housing stability and well-being.

Child and Family Well-Being

The Department's Strengthening Children, Youth and Families programs continued to support underrepresented and underserved communities through culturally responsive services and supports. This included two designated Strengthening Fathers Programs, one serving African Nova Scotian fathers and one serving Indigenous fathers. The Department also continued to offer parenting programs tailored to the needs and experiences of African Nova Scotian parents and members of the newcomer community, helping to strengthen family well-being, parenting capacity, and positive outcomes for children and youth.

Employment Support and Income Assistance

Work on the Employment Support and Income Assistance Africentric Review is ongoing, with continued efforts to implement the recommendations identified in the 2022 review. This includes updates to several policies within the Employment Support and Income Assistance policy manual aimed at reducing systemic barriers and improving equity.

Key updates include:

- Revisions to the Quit/Fire policy, ensuring that individuals who leave employment due to racism or discrimination are no longer unfairly penalized.
- Changes to land title requirements, addressing barriers that have historically disadvantaged African Nova Scotian individuals who may lack formal property documentation.

These and other policy updates came into effect on August 18, 2025, alongside revisions to related policies and procedures.

Overall, Employment Support and Income Assistance is reinforcing its commitment to a human-centered and empathetic approach, focused on reducing barriers, eliminating disparities, and supporting individuals with dignity, respect, and fairness.

Youth Development Initiatives

The Youth Development Initiative provides eligible youth who are connected to the Department and are aged 12 to 20 with access to work placements, volunteering, leadership development, community projects and more, to help them reach their educational and career goals.

- The Indigenous expansion of the program serves Mi'kmaw and Indigenous youth who live in Indigenous communities. Supports are provided in partnership with the Native Council of Nova Scotia. In 2025-26, 89 Mi'kmaw and Indigenous youth participated in this program.
- The Africentric expansion of the program serves youth who are of African descent and live in African Nova Scotian communities. Supports are provided in partnership with the Association of Black Social Workers. In 2025-26, 1,250 Africentric youth participated in this program.

Nova Scotia Human Rights Remedy

The implementation of the Remedy is required by 2028. Human rights principles and anti-discrimination guide the implementation of the Remedy.

On May 30, 2025, the Province submitted its second annual progress report to the parties and the Expert Monitor, providing its assessment of compliance and progress with the Remedy indicators, timeframes, targets, and outcomes for that year. This included key outcomes such as the end of new admissions to residential facilities, a reduction in the number of people waiting to be connected to Disability Support Program services, the implementation of the School Leavers Program and the Service Evolution Fund, and extensive staff training.

The Expert Monitor submitted a report on July 31, 2025, assessing the Province's progress and identifying recommendations for year three and beyond. These recommendations included a targeted recruitment campaign to increase staffing, update policies and procedures to incorporate human rights principles, and an increase in the number of community-based housing options.

Progress on the Remedy may be found on the website: The Timeline | Nova Scotia Transforming Support.

Status of Women

The Council's work under the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence has continued since its implementation in December 2023, supporting efforts to prevent and address gender-based violence across Nova Scotia.

Targeted investments have helped advance equitable access to programs and services for communities that experience disproportionate impacts of gender-based violence. In 2025–26, funding supported 19 NAP-GBV projects focused on the needs and priorities of Indigenous, Black and African Nova Scotian, 2SLGBTQIA+, and other underrepresented and underserved communities.

Department of Service Nova Scotia

Development of Anti-Discrimination Course

Service Nova Scotia has completed the course development phase of *Anti-Discrimination in Customer Service*. The online course is scheduled for launch in the fall of 2026 and is designed to strengthen employees' ability to provide equitable, respectful, and inclusive service.

By the end of this course, participants will be able to:

- Recognize discriminatory behaviour and identify common examples of unfair treatment in customer service interactions.

- Explain unconscious bias and understand how personal assumptions and biases can influence decisions and interactions with customers.
- Apply appropriate communication techniques and organizational policies to address and respond to discriminatory incidents in a professional manner.
- Deliver equitable, customer-focused service that demonstrates respect and fairness for all individuals.
- Implement inclusive customer service approaches that create a welcoming, positive, and accessible experience for diverse customers.

Office of Addiction and Mental Health

Community Funding for Mental Health and Addiction Programs

The Office of Addictions and Mental Health provides multi-year funding to support mental health and addictions services across Nova Scotia. Through this funding framework, the Office supports approximately 50 community-based organizations, including several that deliver programs and services specifically designed to meet the needs of underrepresented and underserved communities.

In 2025-26, OAMH provided $20.6 million in funding to approximately 50 community-based organizations through a range of funding streams, including Community Wellness Grants, Project Stream Grants, Recovery Houses, and Clinical Community Programs. These investments support a continuum of community-based mental health and addictions services, helping to improve access to care, strengthen recovery supports, and advance culturally responsive and community-led approaches across the province.

Department of Health and Wellness

In 2025-26, the Department of Health and Wellness continued to prioritize advancements in the health of underrepresented and underserved communities. Key advancements include:

Advancement of the implementation of the Tajikeimɨk Strategic Health Partnership Action Plan

Tajikeimɨk and the Department advanced the implementation of the Tajikeimɨk Strategic Health Partnership Action Plan. Negotiations for a trilateral Agreement in Principle continue, aligning with the Province's commitment to health transformation as signatories to the 2023 Memorandum of Understanding.

All but one of the 14 designated Mi'kmaw positions are now filled across the Department, Nova Scotia Health, and IWK Health.

Expansion of prideHealth

prideHealth is a partnership between Nova Scotia Health and IWK Health supporting Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual (2SLGBTQIA+) people by improving their access to safe, coordinated, comprehensive and culturally appropriate primary health care.

During 2025–26, prideHealth expanded staffing and delivered services across all health zones. Activities included regular community engagement events, ongoing validation exercises with 2SLGBTQIA+ partners, and the integration of prideHealth supports within Nova Scotia Health and IWK primary care pathways, supporting patients province-wide.

Newcomer Health Clinic

The Newcomer Health Clinic provides preventive health and primary medical services for government-assisted refugees, privately sponsored refugees, and refugee claimants in the greater Halifax area. The clinic operated at enhanced capacity this fiscal year with a full interprofessional team, serving a steadily increasing roster of 7,293 newcomer patients as of January 2026 and delivering thousands of primary care visits over the fiscal year. The clinic maintained embedded social work and care coordination supports, in partnership with the IWK, to address complex health, settlement, and navigation needs for newcomer families.

Equity and community engagement

Through its Equity and Engagement Division, the Department provided funding totalling $40,197 in 2025-26 to support equity-focused community initiatives across Nova Scotia.

The majority of these funds supported community-led events aimed at promoting health, wellness, and cultural connection among underrepresented and underserved populations. Key investments included:

- **Black Men's Health Wellness Summit –** a flagship annual, multi-day event focused on wellness, education, and community-building for men of Black and African ancestry in Nova Scotia.
- **ZamNova (Zambians in Nova Scotia) Community Wellness Day –** an initiative promoting health awareness, cultural connection, and community engagement.
- **Black Cultural Centre African Heritage Month Gala –** a culturally significant event celebrating African Nova Scotian heritage and contributions.

Funding also supported three students through the Department's Equity Youth Health Experience Program. This program connects high school and undergraduate students with community-based organizations, providing hands-on experience in culturally centered health and wellness work. It aims to build pathways into health careers while strengthening community capacity. Participating host organizations included the Africadian Empowerment Academy Society and the Cape Breton Island Centre for Immigration.

B. Commitment to Advancing Equity and Anti-Racism within the Public Service

The Office of Equity and Anti-Racism is ensuring that all Nova Scotia Government employees are taking an equity and anti-racist approach to their work. The Office leads training for all public servants in this area, requires accountability from departments across government on their progress and leads the implementation of the Forward Together Action Plan, government's plan for diversity and inclusion in the public service.

Ahead of the release of the Forward Together Action Plan, work was already being done to advance equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility (EDIA) within the Nova Scotia Government, under the same pillars that had been maintained from *All Together: An Action Plan for Diversity and Inclusion in the Public Service*. Some common highlights under the four pillars include:

Senior Leadership Accountability

- **Formalization of EDIA governance and accountability frameworks**
  Departments are embedding EDIA into strategic plans, HR plans, and performance management (e.g., Diversity Strategies, LEADS Framework, Inclusion-Diversity-Equity-Accessibility (IDEA) Strategy), with clear expectations for leaders and structured reporting mechanisms.
- **Strong executive leadership and visible commitment**
  Senior leaders (e.g., deputy ministers, associate deputy ministers, executive directors) are actively championing EDIA through committees, regular communications, and participation in initiatives, ensuring alignment across divisions and sustained engagement.
- **Embedding EDIA lens into decision-making and operations**
  Departments are increasingly applying EDIA principles across policy development, workforce planning, service delivery, and program design. This includes integrating equity considerations into funding programs, infrastructure planning, and public-facing services to support more inclusive and responsive government decision-making.

Leadership Development

- **Expansion of inclusive leadership training and learning opportunities**
  Departments are building cultural responsiveness through mandatory and advanced learning opportunities focused on unconscious bias, anti-racism, accessibility, and Truth and Reconciliation. These efforts are reinforced through forums, workshops, speaker series, and other learning opportunities that support inclusive leadership across the public service.

- **Strengthening equitable hiring and leadership pipelines**
  Departments are strengthening equitable hiring and leadership pathways through diverse hiring panels, designated positions, mentorship and sponsorship programs, and targeted initiatives such as student programs and leadership development opportunities for underrepresented groups.
- **Embedding EDIA into leadership expectations and development planning**
  Leaders are required to include EDIA goals in performance and development plans, supported by practical tools, resources, and structured learning opportunities such as SharePoint hubs, leadership forums, and equity-focused development programs.

Barrier Identification & Solutions

- **Adoption of structured and evidence-based approaches to identifying barriers**
  Departments are using structured tools, including employment systems reviews, equity impact assessments, surveys, and workforce data, to better identify systemic, cultural, and accessibility barriers across policies, programs, and workplace practices.
- **Implementation of inclusive recruitment, workplace, and service practices**
  Departments are strengthening inclusive recruitment, workplace, and service practices by improving physical, digital, and program accessibility; applying equitable hiring processes; and ensuring accommodations and inclusive workplace policies are consistently in place.
- **Initiatives tailored to address both systemic challenges and the unique barriers experienced by diverse communities**
  Departments are advancing targeted programs and partnerships that address systemic and community-specific barriers, including Africentric programs, Indigenous partnerships, youth mentorship initiatives, and culturally responsive service delivery.

Measurement of Progress

- **Increased use of data-driven monitoring and reporting**
  Departments are expanding data-driven monitoring and reporting by tracking training completion, participation rates, workforce trends, and other measures to support evidence-informed decision-making and accountability.
- **Use of benchmarking and evaluation tools**
  Departments are using benchmarking and evaluation tools, including the Global Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Benchmark assessment, Employment Systems Reviews, and internal reporting frameworks, to assess progress, identify gaps, and guide future action.
- **Integration of quantitative and qualitative feedback mechanisms**
  Departments are combining quantitative measures, such as training completion and hiring data, with qualitative input from employees and communities to support continuous improvement and adjust strategies based on emerging needs and lived experience.

Equity Data within the Public Service

To measure the progress of diversity and equitable practices within the public service, EDIA data has been collected using the Global Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Benchmark assessment tool and the Self-ID tool.

In 2022, 20 departments participated in the first Global Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Benchmark workplace assessment. It is a measurement tool used to understand where departments and offices are on their equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility journey. It provides clear standards to help departments and offices move from basic compliance to meaningful, strategic, and inclusive practices.

In 2026, the same 20 departments, along with several additional offices, participated in a second iteration of the assessment. This follow-up provided an opportunity to measure progress over time, highlight areas for improvement, and identify where continued effort is needed. The results offer a clearer picture of how departments and offices are advancing equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility, while reinforcing a shared commitment to building more inclusive, equitable, and accessible workplaces across government.

Forward Together 2025-30: An Action Plan for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Public Service

Forward Together 2025-30 represents the third provincial strategy dedicated to advancing equitable and inclusive public service workplaces. *Raising the Bar: A Strategy to Build Diversity and Inclusion in the Public Service* was the first strategy released in 2014, followed by *All Together: An Action Plan for Diversity and Inclusion in the Public Service* in 2019. Each iteration has built on the previous plan, incorporating feedback from employees and partners across Nova Scotia.

The four foundational pillars of Forward Together – senior leadership accountability, leadership development, barrier identification and solutions, and measurement of progress – remain central to achieving meaningful EDIA outcomes and are retained in this plan.

In response to departmental feedback requesting greater clarity and direction, the 2025-30 action plan introduces four sub-categories:

1. **Communication** focuses on fostering transparency, shared understanding, and ongoing dialogue by ensuring that EDIA priorities, initiatives, and progress are clearly and consistently communicated to all employees.
2. **Policy and planning** emphasizes embedding EDIA principles into decision-making processes, organizational policies, and strategic priorities to drive systemic change.
3. **Learning, training and development** supports building the knowledge, skills, and competencies required across all levels of the public service to advance inclusive leadership and equitable practices.
4. **Evaluation** ensures that progress is tracked, outcomes are assessed, and continuous improvement is enabled through data-informed insights and accountability mechanisms.

These sub-categories establish a structured framework for the planning, implementation, and evaluation of EDIA initiatives, ensuring that efforts are coordinated, sustainable, and measurable across government. They also reinforce the existing pillars by providing departments with clear and actionable pathways to advance a cohesive and impactful approach to equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility across the public service.

Advancing EDIA is a shared responsibility. This action plan provides a clear and practical roadmap to support all public service employees in fostering a more equitable, inclusive, and accessible workplace.

Conclusion

This year reflects continued progress in dismantling systemic hate, inequity, and racism across Nova Scotia. Through the leadership of the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism and sustained collaboration with departments, communities, and partners, the government has taken meaningful steps to translate the commitments of the *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act* and the Forward Together Action Plan into concrete action.

From focused investments in community-led initiatives and culturally responsive services to strengthened accountability through data driven monitoring, this year's work demonstrates a growing, whole-of-government approach to equity and anti-racism. While important progress has been made, this work remains ongoing. The Office of Equity and Anti-Racism remains committed to listening, learning, and working alongside communities to ensure policies, programs, and public services are inclusive, responsive, and reflective of the diverse experiences of Nova Scotians.

Together, these efforts continue to lay the foundation for a safer, fairer, and more inclusive province for everyone.