

# Physician Recruitment Strategy



NOVA SCOTIA.  
More than  
Medicine. +



2024 - 2027



# Message from Dr. Nicole Boutilier



As I reflect on our journey, I find it incredible to think that it all began not long ago in 2019 with a strategic vision that laid the foundation for our approach to physician recruitment in Nova Scotia. Little did we know that the world would soon be faced with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, forcing us to adapt swiftly and navigate uncharted waters. This crisis pushed us to embrace the power of digital marketing and virtual platforms for our recruitment efforts. Now that things are back to some semblance of normal, we have kept some of these new approaches in our work.

In the time covered by our last strategy, our achievements in resident recruitment and the attraction of International Medical Graduates stand out, solidifying our reputation under our **More than Medicine+** branding. It's truly gratifying to see how this brand has grown to be recognized and respected on a global scale.

In 2021, Action for Health was developed to pave the way for even greater commitment to healthcare recruitment within the province, aligning with our goals and principles. The establishment of the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment (OHPR) is a testament to this commitment, designed to reduce bureaucratic obstacles and facilitate the recruitment and retention of all healthcare professionals.

Our dedication to our mission remains unwavering. We are committed to bringing the best healthcare professionals to Nova Scotia, ensuring that the people of our province receive top-quality care. Together, let's shape the future of healthcare.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nicole". The signature is fluid and cursive.





*“Wherever the art of medicine is loved,  
there is also a love of humanity.”*

*— Hippocrates*

# Introduction

We cannot and will not take our foot off the gas. If there is a theme for this report, these words would perhaps best summarize our attitude to and feelings about moving forward and keeping the momentum we have built. Yes, our efforts to recruit more physicians to Nova Scotian communities have been incredibly successful. We're all proud of the difference our work has made. And we begin this report with a summary of our successes to date. But there's more work to be done. Much more. And since we've learned much through our efforts thus far, we're able to leverage our experience to create an evidence-based, concrete strategic plan for the future. After all, if we're going to live up to our mandate of ensuring quality, reliable healthcare for every Nova Scotian, we need to continually evaluate our efforts, and maximize our strategic approach to recruitment.

## In this document, we will discuss:

- **Our recruitment-related successes to date.**
- **The evidence-based approach that defines our commitment to improvement.**
- **Efforts underway to improve recruitment results.**
- **Concrete plans and ideas for how we will further identify, recruit and retain even more physicians.**

# More than 580 New Physicians: Our Recruitment-related Successes.

Since 2021, we have made great progress toward our goal of ensuring that every Nova Scotian has access to the healthcare they need. We have expanded and strengthened our physician recruitment team; we have grown and expanded our capacity to recruit and retain physicians; and we have actively recruited an impressive number of physicians to Nova Scotia communities. Indeed, our continuous and dedicated effort has been rewarded with measurable results.

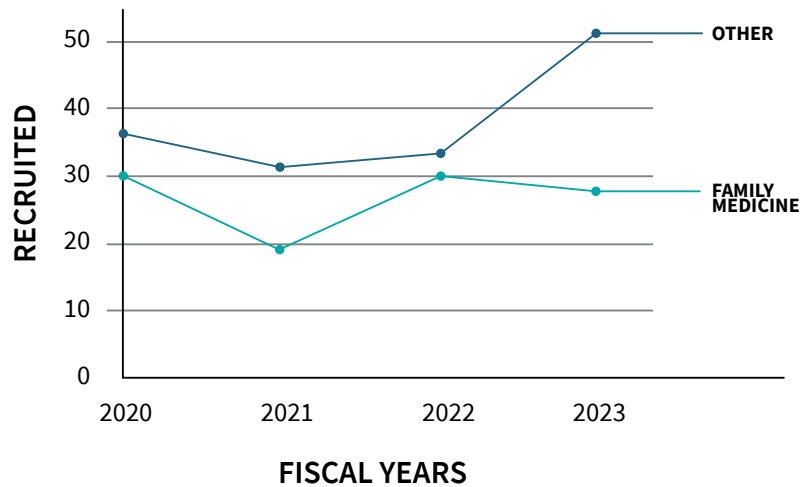
## We are pleased to celebrate our achievements.

- Successfully recruited 142 medical residents for positions in high-need areas, demonstrating a 50 per cent year-over-year increase from 2020 onwards.
- Participated in more than 260 events, including conferences, fairs and campus tours, with the aim of connecting with individuals at various stages of their journey, reaching them wherever they are in their journey to practice.
- Rolled out the red carpet for 351 site visits with greater than 70 per cent correlation between site visits and physicians who chose to start their practice in Nova Scotia!
- Attained a level of international recruitment that now constitutes a significant 20 per cent of our total annual recruitment targets.
- Worked with partners to develop the Nova Scotia Practice Ready Assessment Program and welcomed 30 physicians who started practice in under-served communities across the province.
- Implemented creative and innovative recruitment strategies including a webinar series, virtual site visits, WhatsApp interviews and more.
- Established meaningful relationships and forged partnerships with local communities, while also ensuring that new physicians and their families experienced a genuine sense of being at home, helping them to secure suitable housing and stock their fridges.

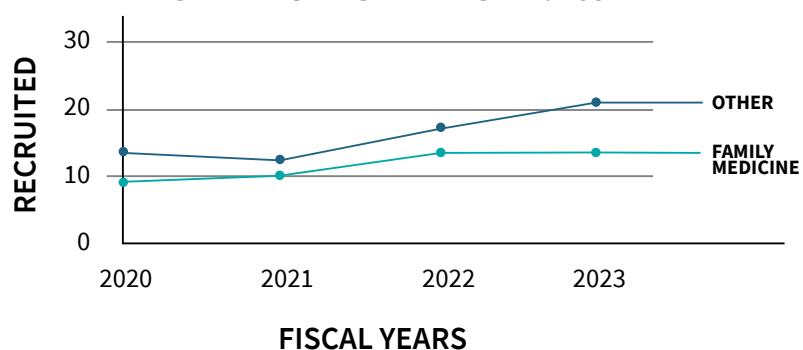


Over the past three years,  
we have welcomed  
**587 physicians**  
who started practice  
in Nova Scotia  
(2019 – 2023).

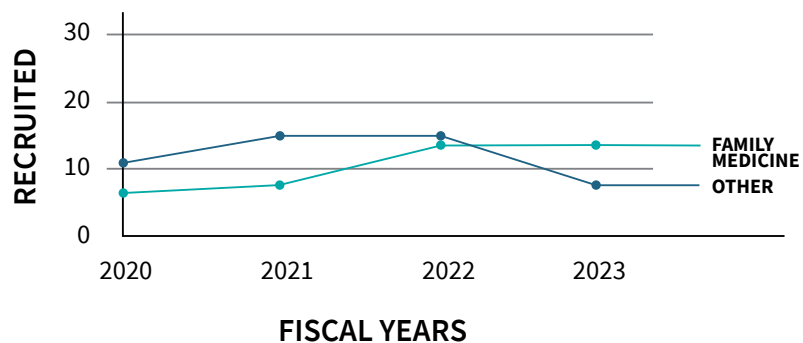
**CENTRAL ZONE GRAND TOTAL: 258**



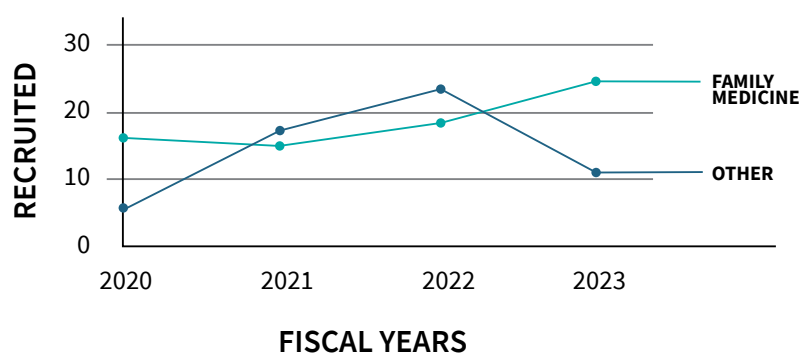
**EASTERN ZONE GRAND TOTAL: 109**



**NORTHERN ZONE GRAND TOTAL: 90**



**WESTERN ZONE GRAND TOTAL: 130**





# Actionable Insights and Perspectives: Our Foundation for Improvement.

We're very proud of our successes to date. We tackled what was a daunting challenge and created real change. But we remain driven by the challenge. We remain unsatisfied. After all, our province continues to experience a real need for even more medical professionals. And so, we're laying a foundation for improvement. And that foundation is knowledge and understanding.

To set the course for our next strategic plan, it was extremely important to us that we began with a collection and assessment of the relevant facts. Physician recruitment is too important to our province to create a strategy based on conjecture and assumptions. Rather, we are dedicated to creating and executing a strategy that's based on and rooted in evidence. Aside from our hands-on recruitment experience thus far, that evidence has come to us primarily from two sources: feedback from recruited physicians, residents and key partners; and a jurisdictional review of physician recruitment efforts undertaken by other provinces.

## Feedback Surveys

Over a six-month period, we conducted surveys, interviews and feedback requests with physicians, residents, medical learners, and our key partners and stakeholders. We asked physicians to provide us with their unfiltered feedback, including both positive and challenging experiences. We encouraged our partners and key stakeholders to highlight areas of success and areas in need of refinement. Our approach extended to meeting with residents and various medical learners' groups, enabling us to gain deeper insights into their unique needs and perspectives. Our efforts surfaced considerable data that will inform our strategic approach going forward.

### *A summary of what we heard from physicians, medical learners and stakeholders:*

- Physician Recruitment Consultants have positive connections with physicians already practicing in Nova Scotia. Physician Recruitment Consultants are more visible in each zone. And, our streamlined process management has been met with positive feedback.
- Our site visit program is a shining example of the team's achievement. Physicians who have participated in our site visits consistently report positive experiences. These collaborations ensure that we present the best of what Nova Scotia has to offer to physicians and their families. The correlation between the site visit program and physicians choosing to begin their practice in Nova Scotia remains at 70 per cent.



- Ongoing communication with the physician recruitment team and our partners has improved significantly. As we introduce new roles and establish new community and government partnerships each year, we know it is important to continue our ongoing partnership and periodically revisit discussions on role clarity and responsibilities. We have been improving our processes by implementing Standard Operating Procedures and refining our team structure.
- Regular evaluation on how we communicate as a greater system and how we ensure role clarity in a changing environment continues to require attention for our continued success. We need to build relationships with those involved in physician recruitment and help them understand the recruitment environment and our processes and goals.
- Although we have attracted international medical graduates to practice in Nova Scotia, it is evident that ongoing support is essential to ensure a smooth settlement. This includes assistance in securing accommodations (such as purchasing a home), addressing childcare needs, facilitating spousal employment and fostering a sense of belonging within the community, with a focus on equity, diversity and inclusion.
- Hiring a designated recruiter for medical learners has significantly bolstered our strategy to enhance the involvement of our best resource: those already studying medicine with a connection to Nova Scotia. In the past three years, we have expanded our efforts with medical residents locally and across Canada.

Recently, our focus expanded toward Canadian students studying abroad who express a desire to return home. Recruitment of medical learners remains a central priority of our recruitment strategy, and we anticipate its expansion in the future.

- The requirement for onboarding, orientation and settlement support remains prevalent in communities throughout the province. Physicians and their families often face the challenge of acclimating to their new home. For many, Nova Scotia is vastly different than the place they are moving from.

They seek essential guidance and assistance to navigate various aspects of settling in, from understanding local processes and resources to establishing connections within the community. We recognize the significance of ensuring a seamless transition and fostering a sense of belonging for all individuals who choose to relocate and practice in communities across the province.

- We require a greater emphasis on retention efforts, with a focus on maintaining continuous support for physicians throughout their professional journeys and careers. It is imperative that we remain dedicated to their long-term success and well-being, offering ongoing guidance and resources to ensure that they not only begin their careers in our community but also thrive and find fulfillment in their chosen path.

# Comprehensive Jurisdictional Review

Other provinces have demonstrated success in addressing healthcare workforce challenges through comprehensive approaches. We reached out to all provinces and heard back from Manitoba, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick. All three have established resources specifically focused on physician recruitment. Our review has provided valuable insights into physician recruitment strategies. These insights will inform our ongoing efforts to enhance healthcare workforce planning and ensure we are staying competitive in the recruitment environment.

## *The following are key lessons we learned from the jurisdictional review:*

- No single strategy will solve staffing shortages and recruitment and retention issues for healthcare professionals.
- In our literature review, financial incentives were used predominately in recruitment to rural and remote settings.
- Quality of life and community supports/activities are important factors for recruitment and retention of physicians in rural and remote settings (Sendanyoye et al., 2019). Targeted initiatives need to consider a community's unique values.
- Exposure to rural/remote settings in the form of residencies and other forms of training may increase recruitment and retention, and may lead to higher satisfaction and preparedness for this type of practice (Koebisch et al., 2020).
- There is a need for increased training opportunities for International Medical Graduates with systematic strategies for connecting individuals to the communities in which they train.
- Provincial Nominee and federal pilot programs require pre-and post-arrival settlement supports.
- Increase the content of training programs through bridging programs that focus on rural and small community healthcare.
- Establish a network for ongoing collaboration and continuing education of these professionals.





## Blazing a Path to Better Results

We are constantly assessing our performance and adjusting our strategy accordingly. Over the past three years, we have instituted and adopted a number of specific strategies that enable us to maximize our performance and streamline our efforts. In this section of our report, we present the concrete actions we have taken, and are taking, to improve our recruitment efforts across the province.



## Current Initiatives & Actions:

### The Creation of the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment

Since its inception in 2021, the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment (OHPR) has been pivotal in addressing long-standing health workforce shortages in Nova Scotia. Their focus has extended beyond recruitment and retention by assisting their partners, including physician recruitment consultants, to provide comprehensive support in navigating the full recruitment process lifecycle. OHPR has expanded the scope of its work in response to the Action for Health strategic plan. This includes:

- Facilitating health workforce innovation and knowledge sharing across federal, provincial and territorial tables.
- Collaborating with Nova Scotia Health on the multi-year expansion of the More than Medicine+ website, thereby creating a centralized hub for healthcare professionals.
- Implementing a Client Relationship Management (CRM) tool to enhance engagement.
- Launching year two of the \$2 million Community Fund and hosting annual conferences to support retention initiatives.
- Administering and revising the Province's Nursing Strategy.
- Expanding educational opportunities in partnership with academic institutions, such as increasing seats in nursing and other critical programs at Dalhousie University and other institutions.
- Coordinating and leading international recruitment missions; enhancing Nova Scotia's global presence and attracting a diverse workforce.
- Supporting the Nova Scotia's International Community of Healthcare Workers Engagement Program (NICHE) project and leading an Internationally Educated Nurses (IEN) Network, working with Nova Scotia Health (NSH) and other partners to ensure seamless immigration, community integration, and streamlined licensure pathways for internationally educated workers.
- Developing analytical models that forecast the provincial supply of healthcare professionals, supporting our move towards a needs-based workforce planning approach.



# New MD Recruitment and Retention Leads

The OHPR provided funding that enabled us to welcome a new role to our physician recruitment team: MD Recruitment and Retention Leads. These positions were transferred to Nova Scotia Health in summer 2021 and have been integrated into the recruitment team to enhance recruitment efforts in each zone.

The role of MD Recruitment and Retention Leads is to leverage the experiences of physicians already living and practicing in the province to attract more medical professionals to Nova Scotia.

We currently have seven doctors serving as MD Recruitment Leads, actively participating in site visits and engaging with potential candidates to share their firsthand insights into living and working in Nova Scotia.

MD Recruitment and Retention leads bring a clinical perspective to the local recruitment process. They collaborate with community organizations, Nova Scotia Health's recruitment team, and the OHPR to facilitate the transition for new doctors as they establish their practice and become part of their new community.





# An Expanded Team

Our interest has surpassed our capacity, and we need more people to support our work. We're adding new recruiters as well as people and processes to support immigration, marketing, onboarding and relocation initiatives for physicians starting to practice in Nova Scotia.

- In partnership with Nova Scotia Labour, Skills and Immigration, we established express entry pathways to support physician recruitment. We heard from physicians and learned that the process can be difficult to navigate. In response and in collaboration with the OHPR, we are offering an immigration consultant to support physician recruits from outside Canada. The role advises physicians on the necessary paperwork and processes required to apply for work permits and eventually permanent residency in Nova Scotia.
- Over the past three years, we have dedicated some test-and-try efforts to marketing activities and learned that there is value in these activities to support lead generation of physician candidates. Our next steps will include building a dedicated in-house marketing team that will focus on strategic marketing activities to align with our physician recruitment needs and strategy. Establishing key performance indicators will be critical to our success in further development of marketing opportunities.





- Recruited physicians shared their experiences around onboarding and retention. While a Standard Operating Procedure for onboarding has been developed and implemented, there continue to be opportunities to improve and enrich the process of onboarding. A dedicated physician onboarding team is being implemented to assist new physicians' transition to practice in Nova Scotia. From space setup to IT needs, this service will strive for a seamless approach and improved physician experience when entering practice.
- Many communities wrapped their arms around new physicians and their families upon arrival to Nova Scotia through various community-created "community navigator" programs that support newcomer physicians with tasks such as finding accommodations, childcare, schooling, spousal employment, establishing roots in the community, and much more. The role of the community navigator has grown across many of our communities and is an invaluable resource to our physician recruitment team, where available. Since the roles and responsibilities of the community navigator have been carefully tailored for their specific community, differing from place to place, we will continue to develop our partnership with them and focus on the best opportunities for community navigator programs to assist and complement the process of recruitment and settlement (site visit, relocation support, recognition and appreciation events). We also need to consult communities that don't have this dedicated role and see how we can partner in a different way to support recruitment in these areas.



# Networking and Partnership Development

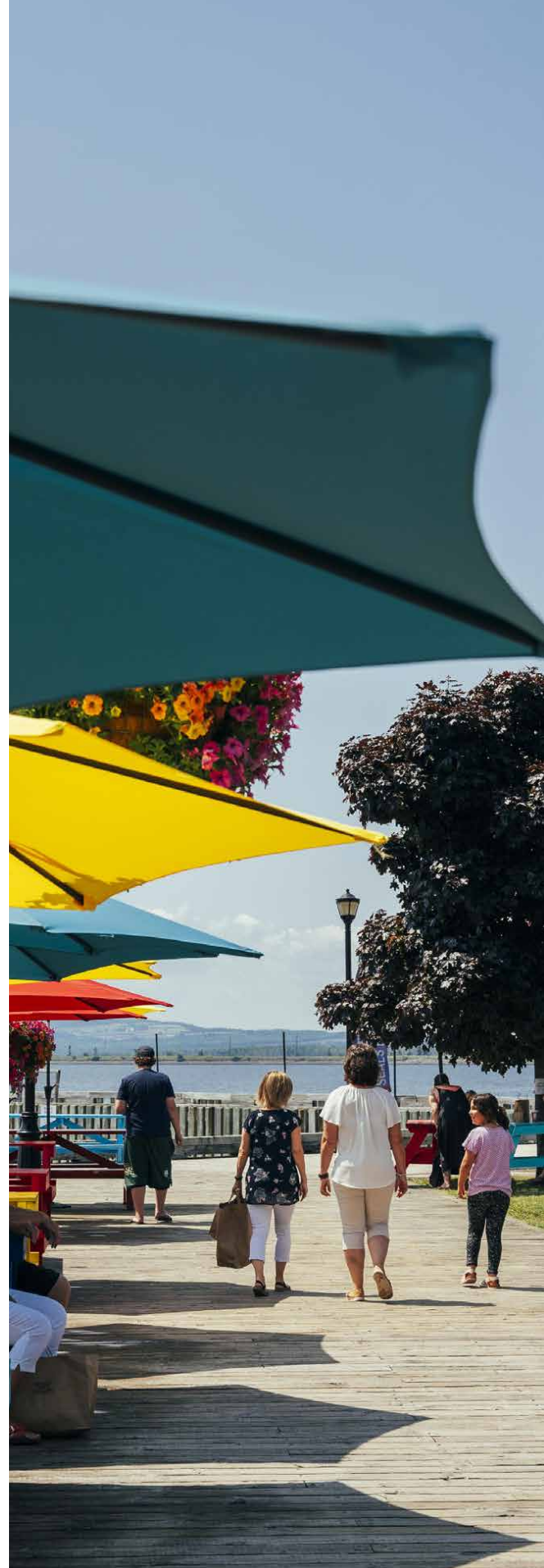
Our work with the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment (OHPR) is new and we continue to learn ways that we will interact and work together to impact recruitment initiatives. Through this work, we are meeting health system partners that are new to recruitment and there is an opportunity to learn from each other as well as collaborate on initiatives that make sense for Nova Scotia.

## *Examples of our networking efforts include the following:*

- Communities have been at the heart of our success, and we rely heavily on our partnerships with community stakeholders to support our practices. With new funding initiatives available through the [Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment \(OHPR\) Community Fund](#), we are leveraging these partnerships with a more strategic view to align the project proposals for a community with the work of physician recruitment.
- Our continued work with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia has led to significant policy changes that have dramatically changed the landscape of recruitment in Nova Scotia. We will continue to work together to better understand how these changes will impact the candidate's pathway to practice here and move together on opportunities in specific jurisdictions for recruitment. [Welcoming Physicians - CPSNS Access to Care Report 2023](#)
- We will continue to work with Dalhousie University Medical School undergraduate and Post Graduate Medical Training programs to strengthen our relationships and engagement plans with medical learners. We want to better understand what information medical learners are looking for and at which critical points of their journey to practice medicine. We will continue to collaborate with Maritime Resident Doctors (MARDOCS) on initiatives where we bring residents together to learn about career opportunities.
- We will continue to explore the development of new pathways to practice that include bridging and competency evaluation and assessment. As an example, we are currently piloting a program in the Northern Zone where Associate Physicians will undergo training and assessment for hospitalist work to progress to licensure as the most responsible physician after two years.



- We will continue our partnership with IWK Health to share opportunities and collaborate in recruitment conferences and events.
- The establishment of the Nova Scotia Practice Ready Assessment Program saw 30 physicians start practicing in Nova Scotia. Based on our experience, we are working with our key stakeholders to evaluate and identify opportunities to improve and expand the program. For example, offering express entry to the program for prospective candidates who are interested in practicing family medicine in Canada. Providing additional opportunities for Emergency Medicine training for those candidates that are successful upon assessment and live in communities that have level 3 and level 4 Emergency Departments.
- We will continue to advocate with our partners in government and academic institutions for the further expansion of IMG Residency seats for areas of high need, including Family Medicine, Emergency Medicine, Internal Medicine, Anesthesia, and Hospitalist Medicine. This will be coupled with our relationships with international medical schools that have Canadians studying medicine in the US, Ireland, Australia, and the Caribbean.



## A New CRM System

Collaborating with OHPR, we implemented and developed a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, creating a unified platform for recruitment. This shared platform will not only streamline the recruitment process but also promote operational efficiencies among all our partners. This system also supports better reporting, candidate follow-up, and data sharing across all system partners.

## Enhanced Planning and Evaluation

We will continue to align with Action for Health priorities for reporting and developing recruitment measures that align across the system. With the implementation of a new CRM, we will evaluate our reporting metrics and add new ones that will assist in evaluating our efforts from lead generation to hire. We will continue to evaluate our efforts by way of jurisdictional reviews, feedback from candidate experience, and surveys to help us learn from our past and propel forward toward improved efforts each year. We are developing new metrics of evaluation with our new CRM system around workload and activities.

## EDIRA Embedded in Recruitment Processes

Mindful incorporation of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Reconciliation and Accessibility (EDIRA) is crucial to ensuring equitable access, culturally-responsive care, and ethical decision-making. It's why we are embedding EDIRA in our recruitment processes and initiatives. Ensuring EDIRA considerations enhances overall patient well-being as we support and grow a diverse workforce. We are committed to providing advanced training for physician leadership in the context of EDIRA, and are actively participating in Physician Leadership Development Programs that specifically emphasize EDIRA Initiatives. We also advance the efforts of physicians who embody the EDIRA lens, with a specific focus on those from diverse communities practicing within our province.







# New Ideas, New Efforts: Bold Plans for Even Better.

We introduced this report with a promise—that though we’ve been successful, we will never stop expanding and improving towards our goal of being the best recruitment organization possible. This section of the report is perhaps the best evidence of this promise in action. Here, you are able to explore our plans and ideas for the future—the initiatives that we believe will help us boost our physician recruitment numbers.

**We present our new initiatives to you in three different categories of strategy:**

- 1. How we’ll identify opportunities for improvement**
- 2. How we’ll recruit more doctors**
- 3. How we’ll retain the doctors we attract**



## IDENTIFY

1. Expand our More than Medicine+ brand
2. Dedicate in-house marketing strategy and supports
3. Focus on Medical Learners here and EVERYWHERE
4. Expand to new jurisdictions to recruit
5. Understanding our Physician Resources

## RECRUIT

1. Increase our resident recruitment from here and beyond
2. Grow our International Medical Graduate recruitment to 30% and expand our new markets
3. Create focused plans for high needs such as Family Medicine, Hospitalists and Emergency Medicine
4. Evolve recruitment process with focus on follow-up and efficiency

## RETAIN

1. Focus on community connection
2. Identify relocation supports
3. Broaden onboarding resources
4. Create Nova Scotia Health retention strategies for all healthcare workers, including physicians

# IDENTIFY: Opportunities for Improvement

New ideas take out-of-the-box thinking that considers less obvious avenues for improvement. We've identified a number of creative ways that we can improve our efforts over the coming years—and they're presented below.

## We Will Take our Brand to the Next Level.

A strong brand is worth its weight in gold when it comes to connecting meaningfully with an audience.

OHPR is leveraging the “**More than Medicine+**” brand to extend its reach across all healthcare sectors for recruitment purposes. The initial investments in building this brand have yielded positive results, increasing recognition and association with Nova Scotia. Our ongoing collaboration will further expand this powerful brand's presence across diverse healthcare markets, with a specific focus on enhancing its appeal within the physician recruitment sector.

- We have successfully shown our ability to be present at numerous conferences, events and campus tours, reaching a wide audience even in times when physical travel was limited. This hybrid approach, combining in-person and virtual experiences, will remain a key component of our strategic direction.
- We will invest in an in-house marketing team and collaborate with OHPR to craft a comprehensive digital marketing strategy and invest in the development of collateral materials for our campaigns. This approach will help us effectively reach and engage with our target audience. The collateral materials will include videos of physicians that chose Nova Scotia as a place to practice and live.
- We recognize the importance of maintaining dedicated and consistent follow-up with all candidates who have engaged with us, whether through in-person or virtual events and campaigns. We receive regular inquiries from potential candidates. Implementing a structured follow-up plan and dedicated team will ensure that these individuals remain engaged and well informed about our opportunities and offerings now and into the future.
- We will expand the **More than Medicine+** brand across the OHPR. Our strategy involves fostering collaborative opportunities to extend the brand's presence and developing various collateral materials that showcase diverse healthcare professionals working in tandem in Nova Scotia.



# We Will Focus on Medical Learners Here and Beyond.



- We will renew our engagement plan with Dalhousie Medical School to facilitate consistent and timely interactions with students and residents at critical points in their academic journey for career development. Dedicated time in academic calendars as well as an established feedback loop with medical learners will inform our planning and lead to successful and meaningful interactions.
- We will identify and support students studying outside the Maritimes who express a desire to return home for medical practice, including those who have attended international medical schools. We will offer resources and guidance to assist them in navigating their journey back to their home region. We learned of many Canadians who are studying medicine abroad and have a desire to practice in Canada.
- We will maintain an ongoing connection with medical learners throughout their educational journey. We will provide continuous support and pertinent information as they progress toward readiness for medical practice or undergo transitions in their medical careers.
- As a part of the engagement plan, our team will meet with residents for one-on-one interactions so that we can craft an individual recruitment plan specifically for them. This will assist in building our relationships with residents as well as ensuring that they have the information that they need in time to explore potential opportunities in other regions across our province. (For example, completing electives in another region of the province to get to experience living and working in that region).
- We will create a resident advocacy group to be able to engage and ask medical residents questions about what they want to hear from us and when. This group will also help us engage residents when planning resident events.



# We Will Explore New Opportunities

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia (CPSNS) has made significant changes to policy that will allow more physicians to be eligible for licensure in Nova Scotia. [Policy Highlights - CPSNS Access to Care Report 2023](#)



- We will explore potential new jurisdictions and markets, given licensure changes. Collaborating closely with the CPSNS, we are engaged in developing new initiatives and opportunities to gain insights into these markets and assess how they compare to the training received by Canadian professionals. The objective is to identify any gaps in training that may require additional support or guidance from Nova Scotia Health.
- Physicians holding the equivalent of a Full License in UK, Australia and New Zealand are eligible for licensure in Nova Scotia without the need for Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada eligibility. We will continue to build a presence in these markets with more direct messaging around the need for certification exams. With recent CPSNS changes, Nova Scotia is currently the only jurisdiction in Canada to offer defined licensure without further examination for those that meet eligibility criteria.
- Now American Board-certified physicians have a pathway for full licensure in Nova Scotia. We will continue to build a presence in the US market with a focus on primary care, emergency medicine, and internal medicine specialties as the best opportunity to recruit.
- We have partnered with CPSNS to start a pilot in the Northern Zone, exploring associate physicians transitioning to hospitalist practice. We will evaluate and learn from the pilot and consider for future assessment and training programs to be developed and implemented provincially.
- We will create a campaign that is physician-driven to share testimonials, photos and videos about why they chose Nova Scotia and how Nova Scotia is **More than Medicine+** to them. This campaign should showcase the number of different communities that we support and represent from an EDIRA lens.



# RECRUIT: Strategies for Attracting Physicians

Over the past three years, we successfully recruited over 587 physicians. Our strategic approaches, including conference attendance, webinar series creation and events in previously untapped locations, have proven effective. By generating interest and inviting prospective physicians to site visits, our program has become a resounding success, boasting a remarkable 70 per cent return on investment. When physicians visit Nova Scotia, they choose to practice with us.

## We Will Recruit More of Our Own Residents.

Year after year, we have improved our resident recruitment by 50 per cent; we expect to continue to see improvement and have a focused approach to resident recruitment.

- We will take a focused and planned approach to recruitment of residents from Dalhousie Medical School Post Graduate Medical Education Program.
- We will work to embrace and retain graduates from the new Cape Breton Medical School across rural Nova Scotia.
- We will put in place a comprehensive and highly focused strategy, tailoring specific resident recruitment actions and needs to keep those residents practicing in Nova Scotia.
- We will engage each Family Medicine resident early on and provide them with a commitment letter to practice in Nova Scotia to ensure that they know that we want them to stay and practice in Nova Scotia.
- We will continue to seek out and follow Nova Scotians who have trained outside the Maritimes to bring them back home to practice. We will engage with international medical schools that have high enrolments of Canadian medical graduates and work with them through the process to practice in Nova Scotia. Focus will be on UK, Ireland, US, Caribbean and Australia.
- We will host regular webinars for these groups based on specialty interests to keep them informed and up to date on changing practices, licensing pathways, and opportunities.

# We Will Recruit More International Medical Graduates (IMG).

In the past three years, International Medical Graduate (IMG) recruitment made up 20 per cent of our recruitment efforts. We will continue to work toward growing these results to 30 per cent. With the CPSNS changes to licensing and the opening of all jurisdictions from the Royal College, we expect to have more interest and more candidates recruited from more jurisdictions than ever before.

- Implement a dedicated physician recruitment consultant role who will work in partnership with the Royal College of Surgeons of Canada to better understand the current licensing pathways available to International Medical Graduate candidates.
- All incoming physicians that require immigration support will be referred to a dedicated Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) representative through our partnership with OHPR to help navigate the immigration process and make it seamless.
- Learn and leverage opportunities in new markets to create pathways for candidates to practice in Nova Scotia.





# We Will Focus On High Needs Specialties.

We have seen a trend across the province in high needs for Family Medicine, Emergency Medicine, Hospitalists and Internal Medicine. We will take a focused approach to recruitment for these areas.

## ***Family Medicine:***

- Leverage the new physician agreement Longitudinal Family Medicine (LMF) model; fair remuneration for balanced work and reasonable patient loads.
- Use the TIP TOP program where physicians that are ready to retire have the ability to support and work alongside a new entering physician to transition their practice to them. This supports the incoming physician as well as the one that is transitioning out.
- Practice Ready Assessment Program evaluation and review. Explore opportunities for growth and expansion, specifically around supporting Emergency Medicine practices in rural communities.

## ***Hospitalist Medicine:***

- Implement new governance structure and more defined funding guidelines.
- Assign dedicated leadership in each zone.
- Test-and-try programs for Associate Physicians to work as Most Responsible Provider.

## ***Emergency Medicine:***

- Convene partners to review the emergency medicine physician workload modelling (Murray Hybrid Formula) and payment methods to ensure adequate physician resources for Nova Scotia Emergency Departments.
- Develop a Regional and Community Emergency Department Service Program where physicians may join the program and provide service to several Emergency Departments across a region/zone.
- Incentivize physicians that participate in the program with annual payment of up to \$16,000.
- Collaborate with the province as they make changes to Emergency Department support through the Physician Agreement process.





## We Will Enhance the Recruitment Process.

- Support the Red Tape Reduction initiative by aligning our efforts to reduce administrative burden at every opportunity.
- Enhance recruitment process efficiencies by implementing an updated pipeline process through the introduction of a new Candidate Management System.
- Expand EDIRA activities, including policy development and actions.
- Establish a standardized approach to engagement. Our goal is to consistently involve our contacts throughout their recruitment journey. This includes implementing enhanced follow-up planning after each candidate encounter and devising strategies for specific high-needs candidate pools, such as family medicine, emergency medicine, internal medicine, etc.
- Collaborate with physician leaders from all zones to create dedicated plans for recruitment of specific high-needs areas (e.g. hospitalist, emergency medicine).
- Review and reevaluate our Standard Operating Practices (Physician Recruitment, MD Replacement, Onboarding).
- Establish tools (or a toolkit) for the physician leader to be able to use to identify the best candidate—for example interview guide templates, reference checks, checklists by specialties, case studies.

# RETAIN: Strategies for Physician Retention

While we've had success in recruiting physicians, retention is equally important. Physician retention is crucial for the success of any healthcare organization. A happy and satisfied medical workforce can lead to better patient outcomes, higher productivity, and improved financial performance. Retention of a physician past three years also greatly contributes to the return on investment that was used to initially recruit that physician.

Every year, we have a net gain of physicians. There are more physicians starting practice in Nova Scotia than there are leaving. When we look at the numbers, over half of our departures are from retirements and the rest are leaving for a variety of reasons. The most common reason for leaving outside of retirement is personal or family circumstances, which includes spousal employment and family supports. Having support in the community to help with a growing family and ensuring that a spouse finds employment in their field is critical to retaining physicians.

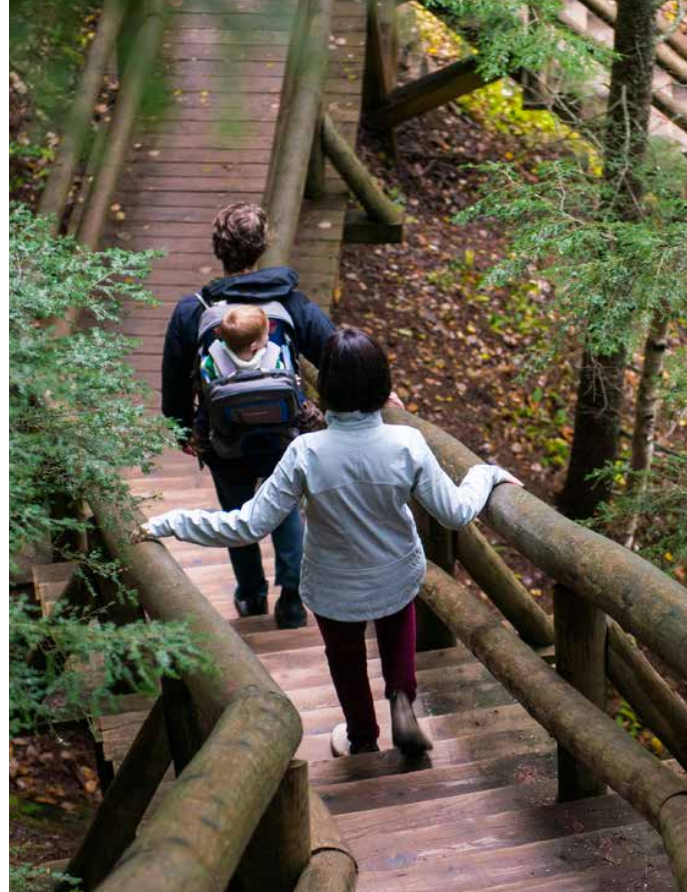
A robust retention strategy sends a strong message that Nova Scotia Health is an organization that values our physicians, both newly recruited and long tenured, and amplifies their integral role of providing a high standard of care to Nova Scotians.

## *Our focus on retention will include the following strategies:*

- Offer Executive/Leadership and Conflict Management Coaching.
- Foster Learning and Development opportunities that will bolster physicians' sense of connectivity to Nova Scotia Health, organizational culture integration and enhanced professional development (CME credits can be claimed) above and beyond ongoing clinical practice training.
- Dedicate an Onboarding Team that will provide provincial oversight and operational supports/resources at the zone level that will support new physicians as they integrate into their teams and roles.
- Collaborate with partner organizations to provide initiatives and programming (i.e partnering with Doctors Nova Scotia on Wellness Navigator referrals, knowledge and information sharing via webinars/communications etc).
- Foster career development and advancement via leadership development training, peer mentoring and a dedicated LMS as a repository of resources, interactive relevant materials and learning/engagement opportunities that are "just in time".
- Define performance evaluation structure and process (via continuous dialogue and feedback between physician and leader) and milestone meetings (on a bi-annual basis) to underpin the clearly defined accountabilities of the physicians. Provide timely feedback and appreciation for physicians' work, which in turn will help drive workplace satisfaction.

# We Will Provide More Relocation and Settlement Supports.

Physicians have shared that they need more support when relocating and settling into our province. From airport pick-ups to childcare spots to helping to secure accommodations (short-term or long-term), physicians and their families need help in securing these needs. We know that our communities have some items in-hand, while we rely on other agencies for support. There are different funding envelopes at the municipal, provincial and federal levels that offer support for relocation and settlement. Having a better understanding of these options, as well as what our communities have in place to offer on the ground, will help us build a more coordinated effort.



# We Will Offer More Dedicated Physician Onboarding Support.

We established a framework for onboarding in our Standard Operating Procedures. Our procedures are an easy-to-follow guide that include role descriptions for several key partners to ensure that a physician transitions to practice effectively. We will expand our onboarding resources to ensure that every aspect of the physician practice is met—such as IT Services and EMR training.

- We will work with physician leaders and local teams to ensure more regional orientations are established and are tailored to the needs of incoming physicians.
- Collaborating with various Nova Scotia Health partners, such as Primary Health, Programs of Care, Doctors Nova Scotia, DHW, Dalhousie and others, our onboarding process involves assisting physicians in their transition to practice. While a standardized approach has been established through Standard Operating Procedures, we also acknowledge the necessity of developing more localized orientations to meet the unique needs of each incoming physician.
- The College of Physicians and Surgeons has recently introduced the [Welcome Collaborative](#), aimed at facilitating the onboarding process for International Medical Graduate (IMG) physicians into the Canadian healthcare system. In the initial six months, this initiative has garnered positive reception, with more than 30 IMG physicians participating. This three-day event brings new physicians together in person to cover a range of topics, including legal and ethical considerations in the Canadian landscape, documentation practices, pharmaceuticals, and more.



# We Will Leverage Partnerships to Enhance Community Connectedness.

Community strongly influences a physician's choice as to where they decide to settle their family and establish their career. Nova Scotia Health has the opportunity to help them build a strong support network, be welcomed as part of a talented and supportive community of physicians, and join the Nova Scotian community at large. We have built successful relationships and partnerships across agencies and communities, and we can leverage them to creating a more welcoming environment for physicians, with a robust support system.

- Working with our community partners, we can help a new physician and their family establish roots within a community by engaging the community to provide a Nova Scotia welcome to all physicians. This includes organizing welcome events, appreciation or recognition celebrations; offering family transition assistance; and reviewing ideas within the community toolkit.
- We are in the process of securing a relocation agency to provide comprehensive support for all new healthcare workers arriving in our province. This initiative is a collaborative effort with People Services, encompassing all of us, including Nova Scotia Health. The service offers candidates the flexibility to choose the level of support required for their respective regions, spanning short-term to long-term accommodations, apartments to freestanding homes. This assistance ensures that newcomers can find the right fit for themselves and their families.
- We are capitalizing on our connections with communities to aid spousal employment through our community groups, navigators and partnerships.
- Communities have been pivotal in the work around retention. We know that we need continued partnership and supports to be successful. We cannot do this alone.



- Work has already started in asset mapping across our communities through OHPR. What resources are currently available in a community? What are the additional supports required specific to healthcare providers and their families? Is there an opportunity to deliver these resources in alternative ways? With this work identified, we will collaborate with our partners to develop a relocation and settlement operational plan for each of our communities with our communities.
- We will partner with OHPR to align Community Fund priority areas with the needs of incoming physicians. This may involve the creation of relocation guides, the provision of dedicated supports such as navigators, and opportunities for cultural awareness education within communities.
- Action for Health has a specific mandate focused on the attraction of healthcare providers by offering streamlined recruitment experiences in healthy workplaces and fostering welcoming communities.
- We will work with our partners in government to enable system partnership in retention.
- With our People Services partners, we will formulate retention strategies that incorporate physicians, acknowledging the potential of a positive work environment as a compelling recruitment tool.
- Alignment with Health Human Resourcing planning and KPI development of retention measures specific to physicians.
- System-wide partnership in retention with the development of key resources to support healthcare providers across Nova Scotia.
- We initiated an exit survey/interview process to gain valuable insights into opportunities for improvement. As this process becomes more routine and we accumulate additional data, we will leverage these insights to continuously enhance the work environment and proactively address potential issues.
- Implementing retention plans will be a key focus, encompassing various perks, including continuing education allowances.





# We Will Implement Other Ideas for Boosting Retention.

- Integrate academic opportunities into the practice by leveraging the expansion of distributive learning and the introduction of new medical seats at Cape Breton University. This initiative is designed to foster more partnerships and broaden academic opportunities throughout the province.
- Establish a system for dedicated support and connection with MD Recruitment and Retention Leads. This involves regular check-ins with new physicians in a peer-to-peer role, facilitating the identification and resolution of any potential barriers to practice early on.
- The new Physician Agreement offers a comprehensive package, including incentives for rural specialists, preceptorship opportunities, and other additional benefits aimed at enhancing the overall experience for new physicians.
- Focus on implementing a strategic succession planning approach, with an emphasis on ensuring a smoother transition for physicians both into and out of practice.
- Gradually establish additional onboarding supports over time, including regular check-ins. This approach aims to provide ongoing assistance and facilitate the adjustment process for new physicians.
- Emphasize community involvement, directing attention toward physicians and their families as they set down roots in the local community. This focus aims to foster a sense of belonging and connection for healthcare professionals and their families.



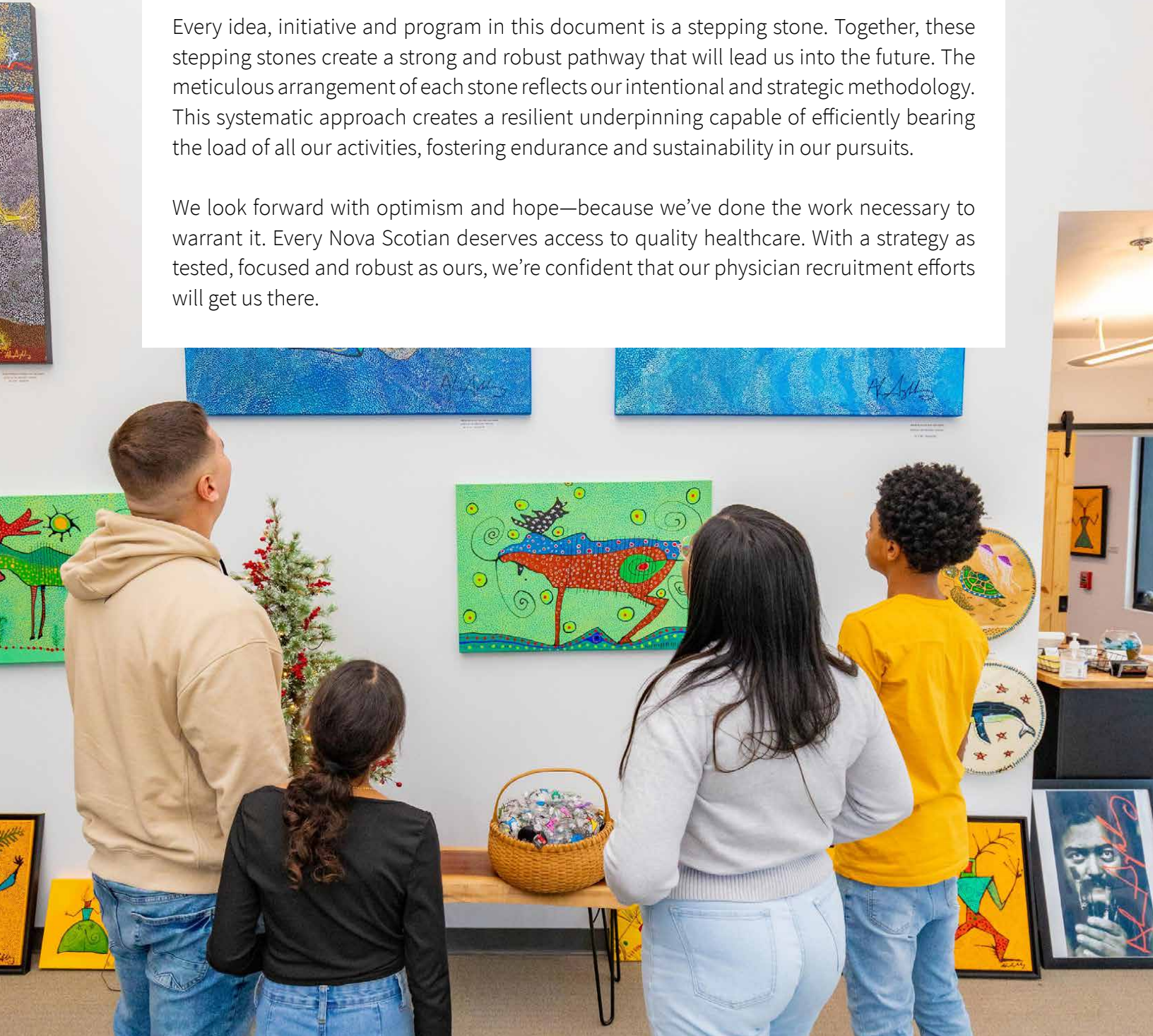


# Conclusion

We are excited—and prepared—to build upon the achievements of our previous strategy. The continuous expansion and evolution of our initiatives are a critical part of our overall strategy, and the only way we will effectively improve our physician recruitment performance over time.

Every idea, initiative and program in this document is a stepping stone. Together, these stepping stones create a strong and robust pathway that will lead us into the future. The meticulous arrangement of each stone reflects our intentional and strategic methodology. This systematic approach creates a resilient underpinning capable of efficiently bearing the load of all our activities, fostering endurance and sustainability in our pursuits.


We look forward with optimism and hope—because we’ve done the work necessary to warrant it. Every Nova Scotian deserves access to quality healthcare. With a strategy as tested, focused and robust as ours, we’re confident that our physician recruitment efforts will get us there.





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