



Engage Nova Scotia Quality of Life Municipal Investment Plan



Engage Nova Scotia (<https://engagenovascotia.ca>) is an independent registered charity that has, with its many partners, created a ground-breaking approach to improving quality of life for all.

Almost 13,000 Nova Scotians responded to a 230-question survey administered by Engage in cooperation with the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (University of Waterloo) in 2019, making it one of the largest single quality of life data sets anywhere.

With Dalhousie University, they have also built ground-breaking new tools to easily extract the findings of the survey at hyper-local (<https://www.nsqualityoflife.ca>) and demographically intersectional levels (<https://engagenovascotia.ca/wellbeing-analysis-tool>).

Partners at the local, provincial, national and international levels are recognizing this approach (broad and deep data, plus nimble and compelling tools) as a break-through for making more effective strategy, policy, evaluation and budget decisions.

What's ahead

The potential for this approach to, over time, improve the lives of all Nova Scotians is significant. The applicability of this approach to municipalities is limitless. A next comprehensive quality of life survey is planned for fiscal 2024/25. The breadth and depth of the data will give municipalities a “pre and post-pandemic” body of comparative information. Data will be available in the tools within just months of survey completion.

Doing the survey thoroughly, and in every corner of the province, requires a collaboration with municipalities to promote resident-awareness when the survey is in the field. This is especially important for under-represented and marginalized communities that continue to face barriers to participating in surveys of this type. It also involves meticulous design and administration of the survey itself, including, for example, mailouts to 100,000 randomly selected Nova Scotia households on multiple occasions. Total costs for outreach, design, promotion, administration, mailing, and data integrity are approximately \$1,000,000.

Support

Support for Engage has come from many sectors. It has productive working relationships with the governments of Nova Scotia and Canada, with whom it has multi-year funding agreements. In a December 4, 2023, workshop for mayors, wardens and CAOs Engage set out the value proposition of the survey to municipalities, highlighted a “use case” where CBRM is already using the data to advance policy and actions, and **invited municipalities to contribute 50 cents a resident toward the cost of administering the survey in 2024/25**. Mayors, wardens and CAOs of municipalities of all sizes, and from all regions of the province, have already signaled their intention to support Engage in their upcoming budgets.

By supporting Engage, Nova Scotia municipalities set themselves up for five years of accessible evidence-based decision making that leaves fewer residents behind.

Testimonial

“If you look at the Strategic Vision before Engage Nova Scotia started working with CBRM Council, compared to now, you can see what a long way we’ve come to making social inclusion a major part of our plan going forward. It really shows the impact of having the depth and breadth of data that Engage is able to provide. I am grateful to Engage for this. It really feels like we are heading in a direction where no one will be left behind when making municipal decisions.” – Mayor Amanda McDougall, Cape Breton Regional Municipality.

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