



Strategy & Action Plan

2023–2026



2023–2026 Strategy

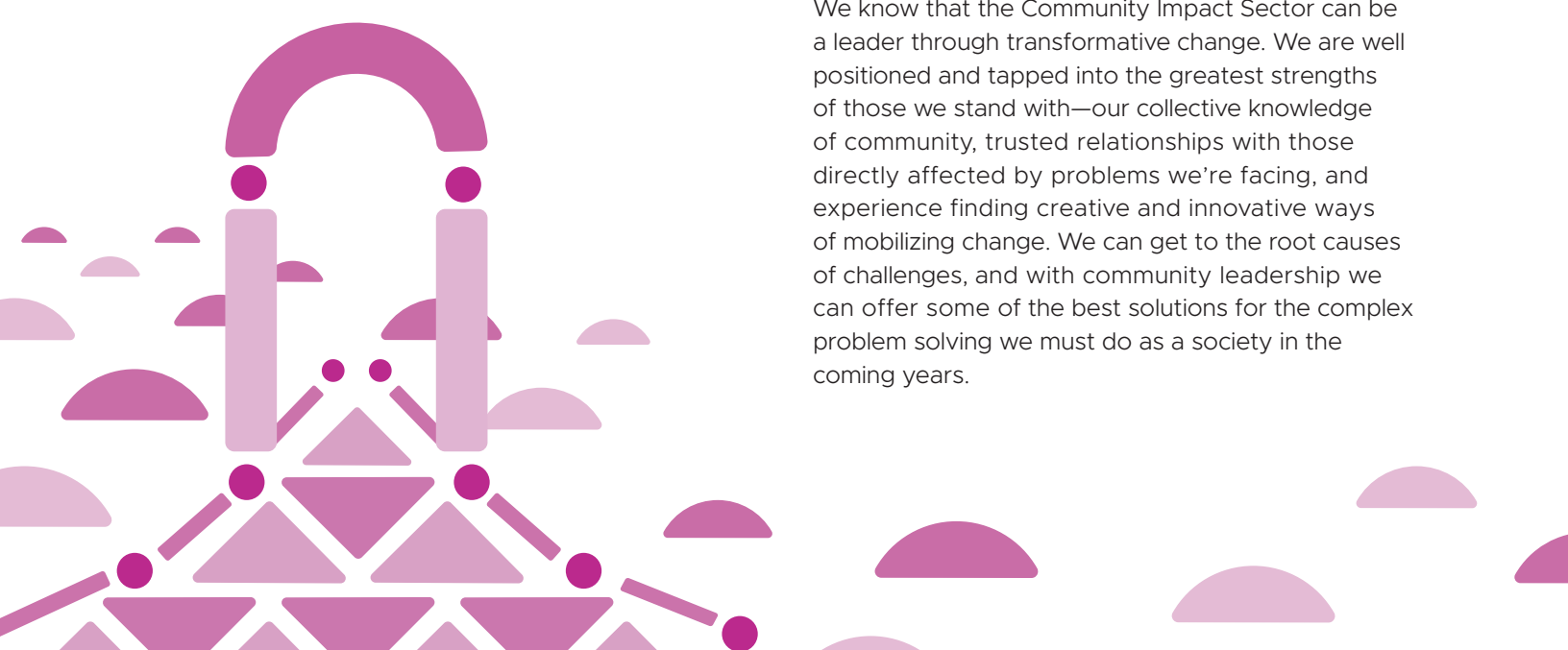
Impact organizations exist to make positive change in our community. **At Impact Organizations of Nova Scotia (IONS), we seek to support the volunteers and staff who are organizing and working to build a more just and equitable society in Mi'kma'ki.**

Impact organizations provide critical services and solutions for our most pressing social and environmental challenges and the people affected by them. Our sector is crucial to the functioning of our society. We support survivors of domestic and gender-based violence leave harmful situations and help people displaced by environmental disasters rebuild their lives. We provide food and shelter to those in need, resources for families in crisis, and medical transport for older Nova Scotians in remote communities. We help newcomers feel settled and at home in Nova Scotia. We counter anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism and celebrate the action, legacy, and wisdom of community leaders. We strengthen communal connections, clean up and maintain our many parks and beaches, offer access to the arts and cultural events, and make sports and recreational activities more accessible.

Impact organizations do all of these things and more—services that Nova Scotians rely on every day.

From the individual to the family, groups and community, we affect systemic change at multiple levels. But as a sector, we are lacking the supports, resources, and relationships needed to have our greatest impact. Across Nova Scotia, impact organizations are being asked to do much more with much less. We are facing mounting challenges with the threats of climate change, pressure on our public systems, inflation and affordability crises, and other emergencies that worsen as they layer upon one another. People are feeling burnt out, isolated, and under immense pressure to provide simple solutions to complex problems. We are at a moment where great change and transformation is necessary and possible.

We know that the Community Impact Sector can be a leader through transformative change. We are well positioned and tapped into the greatest strengths of those we stand with—our collective knowledge of community, trusted relationships with those directly affected by problems we're facing, and experience finding creative and innovative ways of mobilizing change. We can get to the root causes of challenges, and with community leadership we can offer some of the best solutions for the complex problem solving we must do as a society in the coming years.



This is why IONS is committed to supporting those working for positive change in our province to have the **greatest possible impact**.

To meet the needs and challenges of our sector, IONS is forming new, collaborative networks across diverse community groups. We're bringing people together to share ideas and redefine what's possible. We lead through experimentation by working to model change from within. We are developing our ability to advocate for what's needed and supporting the formation of a province-wide sector coalition. We are encouraging the development of new long-term funding sources within the sector, reimagining governance to be more inclusive and less burdensome, and giving greater power to lesser-heard voices across the sector. We are planning creative and reciprocal

ways of building our collective capacity for change. We are practicing what it means to embody justice and equity in everything we do and supporting others in their journeys. And we are widening our social impact in the process.

Only by coming together and reimagining how we work, can we address complex barriers and build healthy communities.

IONS Values

We seek to live and embed our organizational values into our work. These concepts are meant to guide how we relate to one another in our team and with our greater network.

ABUNDANCE

COURAGE

TRUST



IONS Filters for Accountability

Inspired by the Mi'kmaw concept of "Netukulimk", we seek to use values of sustainability and stewardship to guide decisions related to our work. Our "4 Rs" provide a lens for reflection and accountability.

RELATIONAL

We create spaces and opportunities to connect that intentionally build trust, alignment and mutual care.

RECIPROCITY

We make sure that information, opportunities, and impact flows in both directions.

RESPONSIVE

We seek to deepen our understanding of what people need and act on it with our networks.

REIMAGINING

We look inward and outward to spark new ideas for change that meets what we need now, and what we need to create a just future.

*"Netukulimk begins when a person learns to weave **respect, responsibility, relationship, and reciprocity** into every aspect of his or her life. It is more than a mental concept because it is a profound way of **being and knowing** that guides one's understandings of how to live within Wskitqamu and how to live in harmony."*

Province of Nova Scotia (2020).

Accessed at: https://curriculum.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/documents/resource-files/Netukulimk_ENG.pdf

It's time to reimagine what's possible in, with, and for **communities**.

We are committed to a more just and equitable society by empowering people in the Community Impact Sector to be leaders of transformative change.

IONS can play an important **bridging role** in this change.

We model new ways of working to demonstrate new possibilities and inspire change, supporting organizations to implement just and equitable practices. We encourage collaboration and inclusion by bringing people together to connect, share ideas, and transform their work.

We support changemakers in caring for others and themselves. We know that if we center reciprocity in community, provide the tools, and help remove barriers, people can realize their potential and have their greatest impact.

Like ions, we form bonds that strengthen society, keep energy, knowledge and resources flowing, and bring each other together to act as a force for positive change.

To get to the change we want to see, in the long term we are working toward:

- Policy decisions that reflect priorities, needs, and ideas generated by impact organizations.
- Funding and resources for impact organizations that is adequate, keeps pace with rising costs, and is equitably distributed.
- Workplaces that are accessible, healthy, safe, equitable and inclusive.
- Activating community-led change through connecting people, deepening relationships, and spurring collaboration.

We'll know we're on the right track if over the next 4–5 years:

- The Community Impact Sector is at the table shaping public policy.
- Individuals and organizations have the knowledge, skills, networks and resources to activate community-led change.
- More impact organizations are committed to implementing practices that center justice and equity.
- People in the sector are tackling big challenges through coordination and collaboration.

To start with, over the next 2–3 years we’re focusing our efforts toward making sure that:

- The needs and goals of impact organizations are better understood.
- The work and people in the Community Impact Sector are recognized and celebrated.
- Impact organizations are learning and practicing how to better center justice and equity, as well as understanding decolonizing and anti-capitalist values and practices.
- Relationships and strategic partnerships between impact organizations and across sectors are strong and active.
- Organizations are connected and resources are shared through networks aimed at developing capacity for leadership and implementing change.

Our theory about how we’re going to realize the change we want to see is rooted in our beliefs that:

- Real transformation is impossible without justice and equity considered in all aspects of our work. Decolonizing and anti-capitalist values are an integral part of a just society.
- Making space for and prioritizing relationships and collaborations lead to innovation.
- People working to improve the conditions of their communities understand what’s needed and are full of ideas for how to make things better.

When opposite charges come together, they form a crystal lattice—ionic bonding—which is one of the strongest compounds in nature. This can be a metaphor for the energy of relationships building structure for change and transformation.



Four Main Elements

Our strategy is grounded in four main elements based on our intended impact, the unique role we play, our strengths, and the needs of communities. We treat these elements as design principles for all the work we do.

Long Term Outcomes



Funding is adequate, sustainable, and equitably distributed



The sector works collaboratively for change



Workplaces are healthy, safe, equitable, and inclusive



Policy decisions reflect sector priorities and ideas

Practice justice and equity in all our work

- We believe relationships and reciprocity are at the heart of all that we do.
- We value different ways of being and uplift leaders of diverse identities to build power within community.
- We support organizations in their journeys toward just workplaces and in implementing equitable practices.
- We are committed to future generations by reimagining and transforming systems to enable a more just world.

Model change from the inside out

- We engage intentionally in new ways of working within our organization and share what we learn to inspire others
- We inspire change through experimentation and storytelling

Create spaces for connection and generating new ideas for action

- We believe that increased collaboration and knowledge sharing will help with problem solving and innovation
- We take a 'network of networks' approach and work intentionally with a wide range of partners

Connect the dots to someplace new

- We help people and communities move from what's not working to a better state that is inclusive, collaborative and impactful.
- We build bridges within the sector, across sectors, and with government.
- We shine light on the sector's value in society.

2023–2024 Action Plan

In the spirit of responsive and iterative planning, we are focusing on a **one-year Action Plan**. Going forward, we will update our action plan on an annual basis. We are aiming to complete the following in 3 Activity Areas by September 2024:

1 Building Community Capacity for Change

This year we seek to deepen our understanding of how we nurture networks and communities of practice. We will aim to develop resources and training opportunities that are informed by the needs of the Community Impact Sector.

Deliverables include:

- Hosting a **Digital Transformation Community of Practice** involving 20 organizations in a year-long supported learning journey to improve the effectiveness of their digital systems.
- Working in partnership with the provincial department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage on the **“Pathways to Action” Project** to develop navigation supports and resources for people to move toward actioning just, equitable practices in their organizations.
- Hosting **ED ConnectIONS**, a monthly online gathering with Executive Directors and senior sector leaders to share learnings and resources related to welcoming and inclusive workplaces.
- Hosting a **“Roadshow”** of in-person community gatherings around the province to strengthen networks, share learnings, and distribute resources related to our campaign.
- Introducing at least one **Self-Paced Online Course** on topics relating to our campaign.
- Prioritizing **Network Building** in a variety of engagement activities focused on relationships and reciprocity.
- Building from our recent **2SLGBTQIA+ Learning Journey** in partnership with the Youth Project - Cape Breton, develop resources for the queer community and organizations seeking to support the community.
- Working with partners to evolve the **Black History Learning Journey** so it is accessible to even more learners.

2 Research and Advocacy

This year we will launch our first “campaign-style” approach to external communications and engagement activities on the overarching theme of “Beyond Decent Work.” The goal is to highlight challenges and inspire change related to our subtheme: Welcoming Workplaces—specifically implementing human-centered policies and practices for recruitment and retention. We will support the development of the Nova Scotia Nonprofit Coalition to develop strategic priorities for leaders in the Community Impact Sector.

Deliverables include:

- Releasing **Possibility Briefs** on topics related to our campaign and labour market information.
- Creating original **Multimedia Content and Resources**—including blogs, articles, podcasts, videos, webpages, templates, and newsletters—to explore our campaign topics in depth.
- Engaging with **Traditional Media** outlets to gain visibility for our campaign topics.
- Supporting the **Nova Scotia Nonprofit Coalition** to develop a strategy for addressing priority issues in Nova Scotia’s Community Impact Sector.
- Hosting a **Multi-Day Sector Gathering** to celebrate our sector and support collective action and movement building in the Nova Scotia Community Impact Sector.
- Presenting an **Award** to recognize an organization in the Nova Scotia Community Impact Sector that is doing exceptional justice and equity work within their workplace culture.

3 Living Our Values

This year we will continue to build our work holistically with internal and external activities that align with our commitments for justice and equity. This includes adjusting our organizational design, experimenting with new practices, and sharing our learnings with our network.

Deliverables include:

- Developing an **Evaluation Framework** with targets aligned to our strategy that feeds into our annual **Impact Report**.
- Releasing a new **IONS Employee Handbook** document with updated policies and procedures that we will share as a model and template for the sector.
- Co-creating a **Governance Strategy and Board Engagement** that embodies our values for learning, relationship, justice and equity.
- **Improving Accessibility** in our internal and external work, including conducting an **Accessibility Audit**.
- Practicing **Structures for Team Processes** that support learning, growth, feedback, clarity in roles, and flows of information.
- Building an **Updated Website** that prioritizes accessibility, engagement, and organizing our work in alignment with our strategy.
- Promoting **Shared Services** including a sector-specific Employee Group Benefits Program and an Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP).
- Participating in **Team Learning** opportunities including equitable and accessible workplace training.



**Impact Organizations
of Nova Scotia**

Improving Lives by Empowering Community

ions.ca | join the conversation at @ionscanada

