

**NOVA SCOTIA  
COLLEGE OF  
NURSING**

**2021**  
ANNUAL REPORT

# WELCOME TO NSCN

We are the Nova Scotia College of Nursing and we ensure the public that all nurses in Nova Scotia have the education and skills to provide safe, competent, ethical and compassionate nursing care.

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# PURPOSE. VISION. MISSION.

**PURPOSE:** We lead to inspire excellence to uphold public confidence.

**VISION:** To be the leader in regulatory excellence.

**MISSION:** Protecting the public of Nova Scotia through regulating nursing services by:

- Setting practice standards
- Providing registration and licensure
- Approving education programs
- Intervening to preserve safe practice
- Governing and operating with the highest integrity.



# VALUES



## ACCOUNTABILITY

- Being courageous and committed to making evidence-informed decisions
- Being accountable and responsible for the decisions we make



## TRANSPARENCY

- Engaging in a participatory, collaborative and respectful way
- Disseminating clear, relevant and useful information and guidelines



## INTEGRITY

- Being truthful, honest and engaging in respectful dialogue
- Performing all activities in a fair and consistent way, precluding bias against anyone



## AGILITY

- Anticipating and responding with an open mind
- Fostering a mindset of collaboration, openness and innovation



## RELATIONAL

- Cultivating and sustaining relationships by being respectful, inclusive, genuine and consistent
- Behaving in a manner that encompasses diversity and reflects professionalism

# NURSES IN NOVA SCOTIA

**4,852**

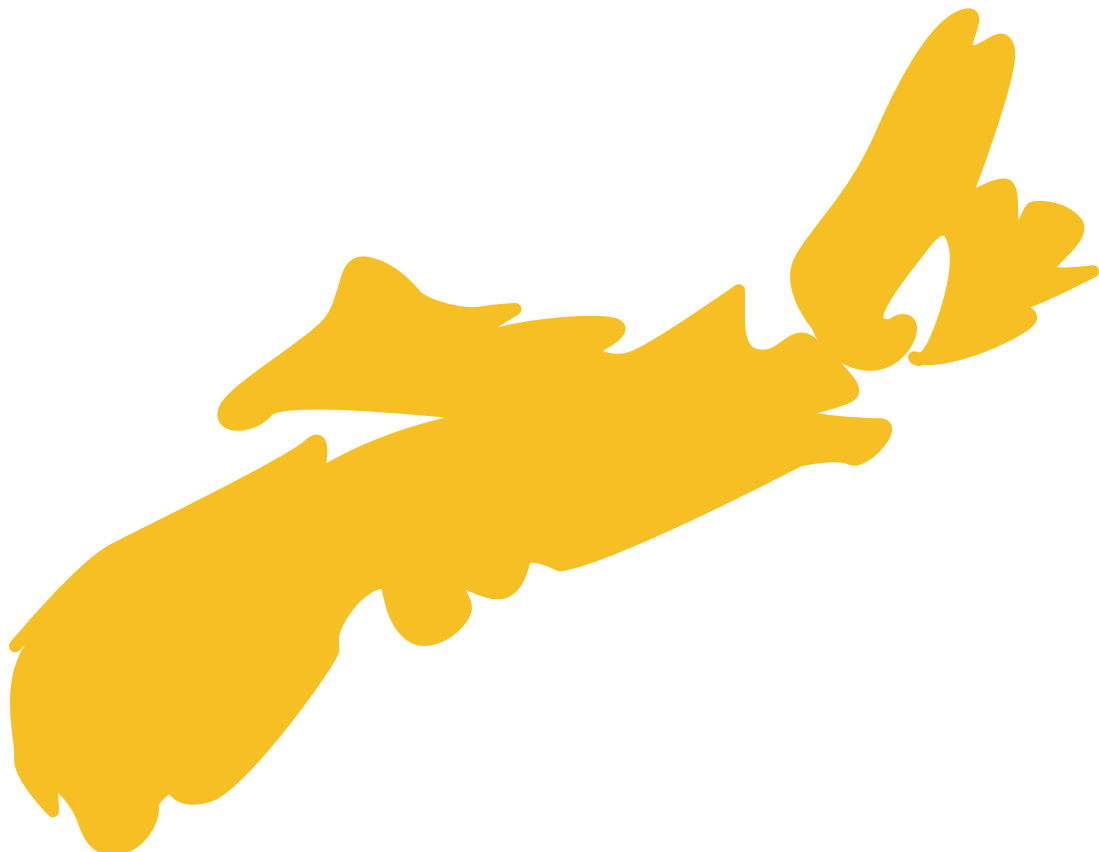
Licensed Practical Nurses

**10,795**

Registered Nurses

**289**

Nurse Practitioners



# JOINT MESSAGE FROM BOARD CHAIR AND CEO & REGISTRAR

We are pleased to share with you NSCN’s Annual Report for 2021. It has been said that the catalyst for innovation and change often comes from the emergence of extraordinary events. This certainly describes the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the response from the health care communities in Nova Scotia and around the world. As we reflect on 2021, we are struck not only by the unrelenting impact COVID-19 had on the lives of all Nova Scotians and our health care system but also by how nurses continued to overcome extraordinary challenges to provide care to the public.

Like our partners in the nursing community, NSCN was called upon in new and unprecedented ways during the second year of COVID-19. We built upon our learned experiences as the one nursing regulator for Nova Scotia and were proud to work collaboratively with our partners to align approaches and strategies to strengthen our collective actions. As the regulator for the largest group of health care professionals in the province, NSCN continued to work with others to prioritize the needs presented by COVID-19 while balancing our ongoing services on behalf of the public we serve. As an evolving new regulator, we viewed the challenges presented over this past year as opportunities to continue to “think outside the box” on how we deliver on our mandate while implementing solutions that had an immediate impact for Nova Scotians. What we do as a regulator on behalf of the public has not changed, however how we regulate the nursing profession presents an opportunity for positive change.

Amidst the challenges last year, the NSCN Board and staff continued to demonstrate commitment to our cultural competence and inclusion journey. Our work included the ongoing implementation of NSCN’s ‘Diversity and Inclusion Roadmap’, which lays out NSCN’s comprehensive plan for learning and education. Our learning provides the staff and Board with the resources to identify and help address systemic barriers in order to build a diverse and inclusive workforce in addition to providing the means to integrate diversity and inclusion values and practices into existing organizational processes, policies and decision-making.

We are also proud to report that the NSCN Board held its first Board elections, welcoming new faces to the NSCN Board table. The Board approved a new two-year governance plan, which includes a governance review and a new process for recruitment of regulatory committee members. This two-year plan allows the Board to build on the governance plan that was first introduced when NSCN was created and it acts as the instrument that will enable the Board to continue to enhance governing on behalf of all Nova Scotians. We would like to acknowledge and thank Charmaine McPherson, for her guidance and leadership as she fulfilled her two-year term as the first Board Chair of NSCN.

Thank you to NSCN registrants and our partners in health care for the perseverance you have shown during such challenging circumstances and for the role you have played in NSCN’s accomplishments last year.

And, finally, to the public of Nova Scotia - thank you for being the inspiration and driving force behind all that we do as Nova Scotia’s nursing regulator.



Jason Reeves, LPN  
Board Chair (June 2021 – present)

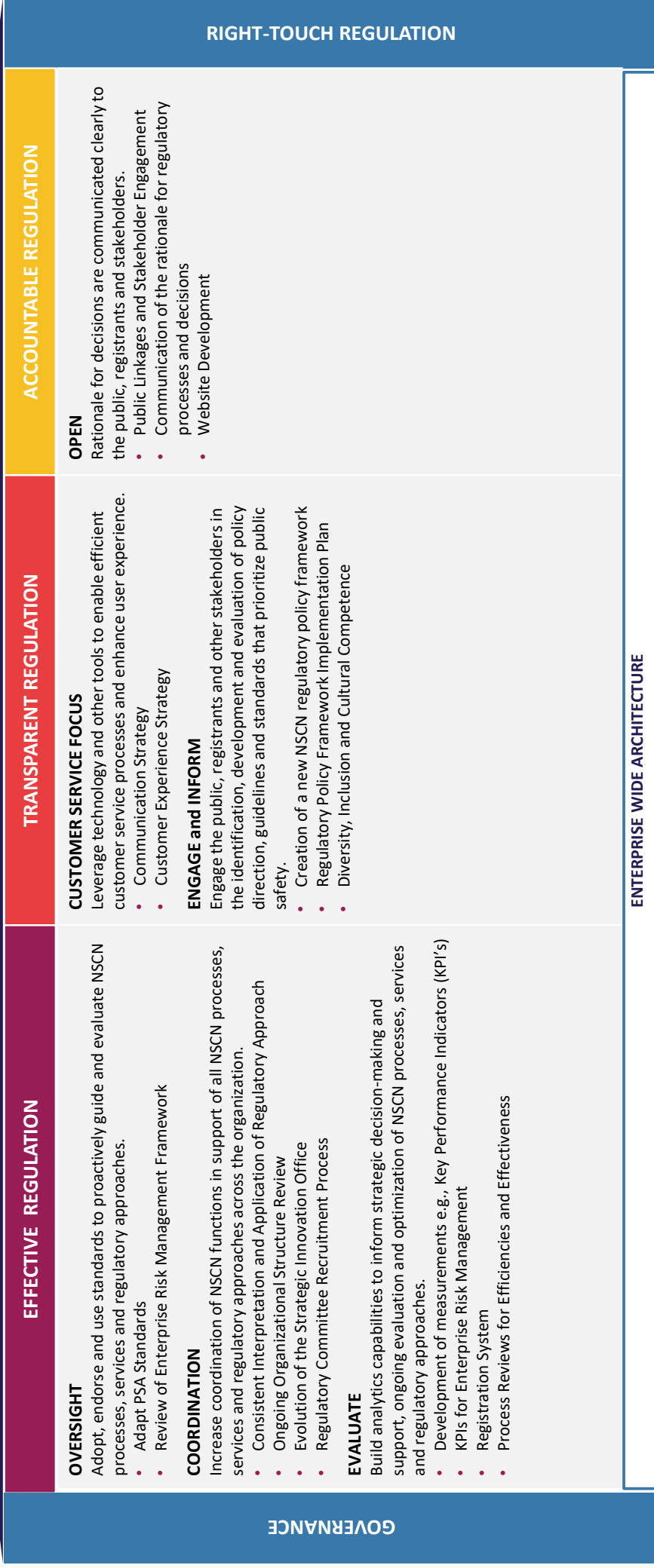


Sue Smith, RN, BN, MAOL  
Chief Executive Officer and Registrar

# NSCN STRATEGIC PLAN

## NSCN Vision

To be the leader in regulatory excellence



## OBJECTIVE 1

# EFFECTIVE REGULATION

## OVERSIGHT

Adopt, endorse and use standards to proactively guide and evaluate NSCN processes, services and regulatory approaches.

# 3

The first three registered nurses completed their RN prescriber education in December 2021.

# 40

Over 40 nurses submitted their name for an opportunity to join the NSCN Board.

## Highlights of how NSCN delivered on 'oversight' as a demonstration of effective regulation in 2021.

The roles and responsibilities of health care professionals are always evolving to meet the needs of the public. Since 2016 NSCN has been a part of a provincial committee, "Improving Access to Care: RN Prescribing Committee", with other stakeholders. The goal is to improve access to health care services by enabling RNs with specialized education and skills to prescribe medications within their specific area of expertise, practice setting and client population. The RN prescriber provides care independently within the health care team and is responsible for their prescribing decisions. The NSCN Board approved new By-laws, which enabled RN Prescribing for qualified registrants and set out the requirements for the approved education RNs must complete in order to prescribe. The first RN prescribers graduated in December 2021 and NSCN developed new processes and practice support tools for RN prescribers.

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The NSCN Board held its first nominations and elections process to successfully welcome new registrant members to the Board. Over 40 registrants put their names forward for three registrant positions seeking an opportunity to be part of the NSCN Board, which speaks to the level of commitment to nursing in Nova Scotia. The process resulted in the introduction of three new registrant Board members who began their terms June 1, 2021. The Board also selected the new executive - Chair, Jason Reeves, an LPN, and Vice-Chair, Anne-Marie DeLorey, a public representative. Selecting a new executive comprised of both registrant and public representatives demonstrates the Board's ongoing commitment to regulating in the public interest, and underscores the importance of public representatives to the Board and NSCN as a whole.

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## OBJECTIVE 1

# EFFECTIVE REGULATION

## COORDINATION

Increase coordination of NSCN functions in support of all NSCN processes, services and regulatory approaches across the organization.

# 370

NSCN issued 370 licences to nursing applicants coming to Nova Scotia for the first time from within Canada and 151 licences to international nursing applicants.

# 248

NSCN added 248 Emergency conditional licence holders to the health system.

## Highlights of how NSCN executed on 'coordination' as a demonstration of effective regulation in 2021.

NSCN is accountable for ensuring those who are granted a nursing licence are qualified and prepared to be a safe and competent nurse in Nova Scotia. Committed to the ongoing assessment of processes and quality improvements, NSCN leveraged our nimble and innovative Nursing Act to modernize and streamline the way applicants are able to demonstrate that they meet registration requirements for licensure. The enhancements are creating innovative pathways to licensure. As our primary mandate is public protection, our focus was on creating opportunities that also ensured public safeguards to enable qualifying applicants to have earlier:

- access to their registration exam;
- entry to the profession; or,
- re-entry to practice.

Our approach is used with both internationally and domestically educated applicants and engages employers of these individuals as well.

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When COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020, NSCN quickly adapted to the changing needs of the health system by developing a registration process to rapidly re-instate qualified former nurses by granting an Emergency Conditional Licence (ECL). This process was discontinued in June of 2020 as COVID-19 cases decreased.

When needs in the system began to re-emerge in early 2021, NSCN, building on previous learnings, collaborated with stakeholders and developed another innovative solution to support the supply of nurses. The introduction of Nova Scotia's provincial vaccination program last year presented an opportunity for NSCN to expand the ECL requirements to include former nurses who had been out of practice longer than those added to the system in 2020. These former nurses had valuable skills to contribute and were granted emergency conditional licences with conditions and restrictions (CR), a second type of conditional licensure developed by NSCN. ECL/CR holders were able to practice in COVID Support Roles and played a key role in providing relief where required during the pandemic.

This innovative solution supported the health care system while ensuring safeguards were in place protecting the public.

## OBJECTIVE 1

# EFFECTIVE REGULATION

## EVALUATE

Build analytics capabilities to inform strategic decision-making and support ongoing evaluation and optimization of NSCN processes, services and regulatory approaches.

Staff identified key functional requirements that the new regulatory information system must have to meet the needs of stakeholders, enhance user experience and support protection of the public.

NSCN established 9 key performance indicators to measure how effectively NSCN achieves its key strategic objectives.

### Highlights of how NSCN contributed to the ongoing 'evaluation' and optimization of processes, services and approaches as a demonstration of effective regulation in 2021.

In 2021, NSCN began the important work of defining a new regulatory information system that will assist in meeting our mandate of public protection. Last year, we thoroughly evaluated our processes and identified the technical requirements to support a solution that will evolve with the needs of our stakeholders. The new system will replace the separate databases transitioned from the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Nova Scotia (CLPNNS) and the College of Registered Nurses of Nova Scotia (CRNNS) and create one new platform to support NSCN's operations and strategic objectives.

NSCN created its first key performance indicators (KPIs), providing a focus for strategic and operational enhancements and enabling the measurement of the organization's progress on critical indicators. The work to establish KPIs involved assessing the strategic objectives contributing to NSCN's regulatory mandate, identifying the data required, identifying the intended results of the objectives in a quantifiable manner and assigning ownership of the KPIs at the operational level. The KPIs were developed along with a 'scorecard' that will allow NSCN to report performance results in 2022.

## OBJECTIVE 2

# TRANSPARENT REGULATION

## CUSTOMER SERVICE FOCUS

Leverage technology and other tools to enable efficient customer service processes and enhance user experience.

# 100%

100% of NSCN staff have participated in cybersecurity training.

# 87%

87% of survey respondents were very satisfied with the information they received during individual consultation and 85% stated they were satisfied or very satisfied with the information provided as part of group consultations.

### Highlights of how NSCN delivered on our 'customer service focus' as a demonstration of transparent regulation in 2021.

With the increase of cyber threats worldwide, NSCN implemented an updated cybersecurity program with a number of safety components for added security to protect the integrity of NSCN systems and confidential information. These enhanced security measures established a more secure connection between NSCN systems and the internet, reducing the risk of cyber attacks and ensuring that our systems would be accessible to the public, registrants and other stakeholders. Cybersecurity training was rolled out for all NSCN staff to assist in recognizing potential red flags and reduce the risk of data breaches at the individual level.

Committed to ongoing enhancement of NSCN processes, NSCN staff sought feedback last year from registrants that would help us to better understand the experiences of our customers. The goal was to determine if customers were satisfied with their experience and the resources provided by NSCN Practice Consultants. NSCN developed an online survey that evaluated NSCN practice support tools, consultation advice, consultation sessions, webinars and online education modules. The evaluation period took place over six months and 776 registrants shared their feedback through the online tool.

## OBJECTIVE 2

# TRANSPARENT REGULATION

## ENGAGE AND INFORM

Engage the public, registrants and other stakeholders in the identification, development and evaluation of policy direction, guidelines and standards that prioritize public safety.

In 2021, NSCN welcomed representatives from the Black community, Indigenous peoples and communities, 2SLGBTQI+ community to share their lived experiences with NSCN staff and Board.

NSCN engaged with stakeholders conducting seven consultations via NSCN's online Public Consultation Forum. Stakeholder feedback helps to ensure our work is collaborative, reflective of the current environment and in the best interest of the public.

### Highlights of how NSCN delivered on our 'engaged and informed' as a demonstration of transparent regulation in 2021.

As part of NSCN's diversity and inclusion journey, NSCN implemented the comprehensive 'Diversity and Inclusion Roadmap' in 2021, which enabled staff and the NSCN Board to take ownership of learning and education focusing on identified equity seeking groups. As part of the three-phase plan, NSCN's Diversity and Inclusion Working Group facilitated four breakout sessions to explore and discuss key learnings related to racism, bias and privilege in relation to the identified groups. Last year, NSCN also welcomed three guest speakers from various diverse communities to support staff to learn from the lived experiences of others. Finally, we partnered with local diversity, equity and inclusion consultant, 'Crayon Strategies' who conducted their 'Change Canvas Workshop' to assist all staff in identifying areas for possible change at the operational level.

Input and feedback from our stakeholders is very important to NSCN and we consider all perspectives and factors before we make decisions. In 2021, NSCN conducted seven consultations with stakeholders for a minimum of 30-days; each about matters ranging from NSCN's Quality Assurance Program to By-law amendments. This included By-laws modified to adopt and reflect revised Standards of Practice for Licensed Practical Nurses and Entry-Level Competencies for Licensed Practical Nurses.

## OBJECTIVE 3

# ACCOUNTABLE REGULATION

## OPEN

Rationale for decisions are communicated clearly to the public, registrants and stakeholders.

# 5

5 Chairs and Vice-Chairs of NSCN's Regulatory Committees and 6 NSCN staff members participated in a regulatory decision writing workshop.

# 189

In 2021, NSCN Practice Consultants received 189 COVID-19-related stakeholder calls for information and resources.

## Highlights of how NSCN contributed to clear and 'open' communication with stakeholders as a demonstration of accountable regulation in 2021.

Regulatory committees and NSCN staff issue regulatory decisions on a regular basis. As part of our commitment to ensure that our decisions are communicated clearly, several regulatory committee Chairs, Vice-chairs and NSCN staff members participated in training provided by the regulatory legal expert Richard Steinecke, on the skill of writing reasons for decisions. The outcome of this training is that it has assisted regulatory committees and NSCN staff in drafting regulatory decisions that provide clear and comprehensive reasons for the decision. This contributes to recipients of the decision, such as applicants, registrants and members of the public in understanding the rationale for these decisions.

Ensuring the public, registrants and other stakeholders have access to up-to-date, credible and comprehensive information during the COVID-19 pandemic has been crucial for the largest group of health professionals in the province. At strategic times in 2021, with COVID-19 precautions debated in the public realm, NSCN developed and disseminated factual statements with respect to mandatory vaccinations and the importance of public health measures for nurses. These statements reinforced the vital role nurses play in the delivery of safe, competent, ethical and compassionate nursing services to Nova Scotians, and demonstrated NSCN's accountability to the public to ensure that its registrants were following evidence and science-based advice with respect to COVID-19.

AUDITED  
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

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**EXCELLENCE FOR ALL**