REACHING SIX:
Working Towards a Collective Action Approach to Action for Health

Summit Impact Report
December 2023

Canadian Cancer Society
Health Populations Institute
Dalhousie University
Nova Scotia Health
Alliance for Healthy Eating & Physical Activity
About the Nova Scotia Alliance for Healthy Eating and Physical Activity

The Nova Scotia Alliance for Healthy Eating and Physical Activity (the Alliance) was established in 2001, with a long history of driving positive transformations in the province's health landscape. Over the years, the Alliance has played a pivotal role in shaping policy through impactful initiatives like the Healthy Eating Nova Scotia Strategy (HENS) and the Case for a Comprehensive Physical Activity Strategy for Nova Scotia. While the Alliance has deep roots in promoting healthy eating and physical activity, it has shifted its focus towards a more comprehensive approach encompassing the mental and physical health and overall well-being of Nova Scotians.

This evolution aligns closely with Solution Six of the Action for Health plan, outlined by the Nova Scotia government, which seeks to address the multitude of factors influencing the health and well-being of Nova Scotians. By prioritizing active engagement and collaboration with diverse communities across Nova Scotia, Solution Six is dedicated to strengthening population health and addressing the social determinants of health.

Today, more than ever, Nova Scotians are more aware and concerned about their health and well-being. The impacts of the pandemic, along with the growing cost-of-living crisis, are creating more vulnerabilities in our health system.

On October 18th, 2023, the Nova Scotia Alliance for Healthy Eating and Physical Activity hosted a one-day summit aimed at igniting a province-wide dialogue on health and well-being. The summit brought together a diverse array of participants, including researchers, non-profit leaders, public health professionals, community health boards, and individuals with first-hand experiences, fostering a robust discussion on how best to support Solution Six of the Action for Health plan. During this summit, stakeholders from various sectors collaborated to exchange insights, identify gaps, and uncover avenues for concerted action in aiding the government's goals towards implementing Solution Six.
Nova Scotia is experiencing a surge in population, with estimates indicating that over 1 million individuals will call the province home in 2023. This population growth requires Nova Scotia to adapt and innovate to ensure that the province is a safe and healthy place for people to live, learn, grow and play.

Promoting a happier and healthier population in Nova Scotia is an ongoing process. Our health system faces challenges from a growing population that also has higher rates of chronic diseases, like cancer and heart disease, to a lower life expectancy than our Canadian counterparts. Nova Scotia has an aging population that is more likely to live with one or more chronic diseases – like heart disease, cancer and arthritis. Living with more than one chronic disease is linked to social deprivation. People who experience social deprivation are also more likely to live with one or more chronic diseases or develop a chronic disease at a younger age, which further increases pressure on the health care system. The social determinants of health, encompassing areas such as education, income, gender, culture, and ability, hold significant influence over these health conditions and the overall well-being of Nova Scotians. Poverty, systemic racism or discrimination and precarious housing all impact health, but have their roots in economic or social policies.

In the face of these challenges, it is more important than ever to work together and take collective action to improve the health and well-being of Nova Scotia’s population.
Approximately 100 people attended this one-day summit, designed to re-energize the Nova Scotia Alliance for Healthy Eating and Physical Activity. The day began with a land acknowledgement by facilitator, Corrie Melanson, and opening remarks by current Alliance Chair, Dr. Sara Kirk.

Next, three presentations were delivered by expert speakers in their respective fields. Dr. Gaynor Watson-Creed, from the Faculty of Medicine at Dalhousie University, initiated the proceedings with her insightful talk on "The Need for Upstream Action." This was followed by Nick Jennery from Feed Nova Scotia, who presented an enlightening assessment on "Investing in Health - Stories and Trends from the Grass Roots." The final presentation of the morning, "Solution Six: A Plan to Improve the Health and Well-being of Nova Scotians," was delivered by Jennifer Heatley from the Government of Nova Scotia, who is the Executive Lead for the Solution Six Initiative.

Following the presentations, a brief question and answer session provided an opportunity for audience members to engage with the speakers, seeking their feedback and expertise on comments and concerns. The graphic recordings below provide highlights of the summit activities.

**Summary of Activities at the Reaching Six Summit**

**Why are we here?**
- What first inspired me in this work is...
- Personal passion to help others
- “The people”/the team
- Love for this place

**What I find challenging in the current situation is...**
- Bureaucracy/unforeseen circumstances
- Accessibility/communication
- What keeps me going in this work is...
- Family/community
- “We’re all in this together” outcomes/opportunities
- The ongoing need

**Developing a Plan to Improve the Health and Well-being of Nova Scotians**

- **Solution One**: Become a magnet for health providers
- **Solution Two**: Provide the care Nova Scotians need and deserve
- **Solution Three**: Cultivate excellence on the frontlines
- **Solution Four**: Build accountability at every level
- **Solution Five**: Be responsive and resilient
- **Solution Six**: Address the factors affecting health and well-being

**The Need for Upstream Action**
- "The roots of public health are more important today than ever."
- "We are concerned with preventing illness in public health."
- "Our unique mandate: Preventing root causes from existing."
- "People’s problems are health’s problems."
- "It’s the questions we’re not asking.""What’s the most important?"

**Innovating in Health**
- "We’re in the business of shipping out healthy & non-processed food."
- "$2 million worth of food purchased to feed the hungry."
- "15,000 unique individuals serviced, 437% annually!"
- "And they keep coming in!"
- "2,000 people in need supported during end-of-year holidays."
- "Mental health support for staff/volunteers."
- "The community is amazing!" -> Finishes 100% of Feed NS."
- "We need: Succession planning."
- "It’s a very inspiring thing."

**Solution Six: A Plan to Improve the Health and Well-being of Nova Scotians**
- "We want to tap into the wisdom & experience in this room."
- "Largely, we know what the evidence says but how do we get a move on it?"
In the afternoon session, participants engaged in a collaborative group activity, where they were encouraged to share their own solutions to Solution Six within small groups. These small groups then presented some of their ideas to the group at large, which fostered a collective exchange of feedback and reflection from various perspectives. The subsequent focus was on developing a collective action plan and engagement strategy for the future, for both the Alliance and Solution Six. The event concluded with reflections on the day and a discussion on the steps required by the Alliance to ensure the successful implementation of Solution Six within communities across Nova Scotia.

**Feedback on the Day**

- 64% reported an improved understanding of current research, health promotion, and barriers to health.
- 58% reported an increased understanding of their role or their organization’s involvement in Solution Six.
- 74% reported an enhanced sense of priorities for collective action regarding the health and well-being of Nova Scotians.

Not everyone is in the room today. There will be more events in the future. This is the first of these types of events that will create connections.

- Jennifer Heatley, Government of Nova Scotia
## Objectives and Outcomes

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<th>01</th>
<th><strong>EXPLORE CURRENT RESEARCH AND PROMISING PRACTICES:</strong></th>
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<td>The summit aimed to provide a platform for participants, including researchers, non-profit leaders, public health professionals, community health boards, and individuals with lived experiences, to delve into current research and promising practices. This exploration contributes to a comprehensive understanding of health promotion and barriers to health, aligning with the broader goals of the Alliance.</td>
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<th><strong>OUTLINE GOALS OF SOLUTION SIX:</strong></th>
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<td>A key focus of the summit was to delve into the objectives outlined in Solution Six of Nova Scotia's Action for Health plan. This included a detailed examination of how Solution Six intends to &quot;address the factors affecting health and well-being&quot; for Nova Scotians. Understanding and discussing these goals is essential for effective implementation and support.</td>
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<th>03</th>
<th><strong>IDENTIFY PRIORITIES FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION:</strong></th>
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<td>Representatives from various sectors collaborated during the session to identify and prioritize specific actions that would contribute to the health and well-being of Nova Scotians. This involved addressing the multifaceted factors influencing health, as outlined in Solution Six, and coming up with collective strategies for effective implementation.</td>
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<th><strong>CLARIFY NEXT STEPS FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH THE NS ALLIANCE:</strong></th>
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<td>The summit sought to clarify and define the subsequent steps for engagement with the Nova Scotia Alliance. This includes establishing a road map for ongoing collaboration, communication, and collective efforts to support Solution Six and the broader objectives of the Action for Health plan.</td>
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Establish a dedicated task force with assigned roles within the Alliance to further explore relevant data and research on health promotion and barriers to health in Nova Scotia.

- Foster collaborations with researchers, institutions, and professionals and form ongoing working groups.
- Establish a platform for regular collaboration and exchange of ideas.
- Encourage continuous dialogue to identify emerging needs, gaps, and opportunities for collective action.

**THE POWER OF WHY**

When we ask revealing questions, we can uncover the real issues that need a solution.

- Gaynor Watson-Creed, Dalhousie University

**OPEN COMMUNICATION & OUTREACH**

- Openly disseminate information about Solution Six and the Alliance's goals.
- Use multiple channels, including social media, newsletters, and community engagement events, to keep the public and partners informed about ongoing efforts and progress.
- Cultivate partnerships with community leaders, organizations, and influencers to amplify the Alliance's message and broaden its reach.

**PRIORITY SETTING & ACTION PLANNING**

- Build on the momentum generated by the event to continue to work towards the goals underpinning Solution Six.
- Use the insights gained from the summit to set clear priorities for the Alliance's collective action.
- Develop an action plan that outlines specific steps and timelines for implementing initiatives aligned with Solution Six.
What was Said

How, if at all, will I use what we talked about today?

Being informed about shared priorities, wisdom of how to work towards solutions (asking why, primordial prevention), and who I can connect with to further my work.

Remind myself my work is a part of a large provincial goal.

What surprised me today?

The number of cross-sector organizations that hold space for this work and have a desire to collaborate and are solution-focused.

The transparency behind solution six and the breadth of passion, knowledge and experience.

Most common words to describe people’s experiences:

- Informative
- Engaging
- Inspiring
- Energizing

What will you Remember from this Experience?

Collective impact is the way forward to establish and maintain effective and long-term change.

Nearly everyone suggested universal basic income as a direct way to impact Solution Six. This is big. I don’t think 5 years ago people would suggest such boldness.

Solution Six is a new rallying point for existing work.

Acknowledgements

We extend our sincere appreciation to the organizations and individuals whose dedication and collaboration made the Solution Six: Working Towards a Collective Action Approach to Action for Health event a resounding success. Thank you to Dalhousie’s Healthy Populations Institute, the Nova Scotia Cancer Care Program, the Canadian Cancer Society, and the Nova Scotia Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage. Your unwavering support and dedication have been instrumental in fostering a platform for meaningful dialogue and collaboration.

Give kids a platform and support and they can do amazing things!

- Nick Jennery, Feed Nova Scotia
References


