



ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

2024-25

Office of Healthcare Professionals
Recruitment

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Accountability Report 2024–2025

ISBN: 978-1-77448-804-1

Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment

2024-25 Priority Results in Support of Government’s Accountability Report

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Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment for the year ended March 31, 2025, is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. The reporting of the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments, and opinions by the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment management.

We acknowledge this Accountability Report is the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment management's responsibility. The report is, to the extent possible, a complete and accurate representation of outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in the Office of Healthcare Professionals 2024-25 Business Plan.

Original signed by:

Hon. Michelle Thompson
Minister

Original signed by:

Dana MacKenzie
Deputy Minister

Introduction

In 2024-25, the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment (OHPR) continued to advance a collaborative approach with system partners to strengthen Nova Scotia's health workforce, including increased recruitment and retention of healthcare professionals.

To ensure a system-wide approach, OHPR worked alongside the Department of Health and Wellness (DHW), the Office of Addictions and Mental Health (OAMH), the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care (SLTC), the Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA), the IWK Health Centre, Department of Advanced Education (DAE), Labour, Skills, and Immigration (LSI), Department of Municipal Affairs (DMA), Department of Growth and Development (DGD), health profession regulators, professional associations, academic institutions, and other key partners across the health system.

This report outlines the initiatives implemented over the course of 2024-25.

Measuring Performance

As outlined in the 2024-25 Business Plan for OHPR, new solutions and workforce strategies are needed to attract and keep healthcare professionals and improve access to services.

[Action for Health](#) has outlined a vision and plan to transform the health system, including increased efforts to recruit and retain needed healthcare professionals, with a focus on innovation and finding new ways to address long-standing issues within Nova Scotia's health system, while positioning our province as a leader among Canadian jurisdictions.

A whole-of-government approach is being taken to deliver on, and integrate, system-wide solutions and investments to change the trajectory of our health system in Nova Scotia.

[Implement health workforce interventions responsive to current and future needs:](#)

In 2024-25, working with its partners, OHPR led the implementation of workforce interventions to enable immediate and ongoing health system transformation. This included:

- Continuing work with the DAE to monitor the impacts of recent investments in expanding existing education programs for nurses, physicians, paramedics, medical laboratory technologists, medical imaging and radiation therapy professionals, and respiratory therapists, as well as new programs for nurses at Acadia University, physician assistants at Dalhousie University, and emergency medical responders at Medavie HealthEd.
- Having become the funding department in 2024-25, OHPR continued implementation of a partnership with the Michener Institute to provide continued access to its bridging program for internationally educated Medical Laboratory Technologists.

- Engaging in close collaboration with health system partners (NSHA, IWK, SLTC, the Nova Scotia College of Nursing and community partners) to support recruitment, settlement, and transition to practice for internationally educated nurses (IENs).
- Supporting health system partners in the implementation of public-sector collective agreements with the province's nurses, paramedics, and physicians by identifying and providing advice on relevant workforce and system implications.
- Continuing to work with our health authority system partners to rebuild the non-union and management compensation framework for those respective positions at NSHA and the IWK.

Enable the conditions to attract and retain healthcare providers to our diversifying health workforce that will support our growing and aging population:

OHPR continued a system-level approach to health sector labour relations and carried out attraction activities for health professionals through community identified and led recruitment and retention initiatives and government advancement of workforce policy priorities. This included:

- To continue positioning Nova Scotia as a destination of choice for healthcare professionals, OHPR implemented a suite of digital strategies throughout 2024-25. This included enhanced digital marketing campaigns, the deployment of new online tools, and targeted advertising. These tools emphasized both professional opportunities and the Nova Scotia lifestyle, leveraging analytics to refine outreach across key markets.
- OHPR delivered a series of attraction-focused webinars and virtual events in collaboration with healthcare employers, regulators, and Canadian embassies. These events targeted high-priority international markets, including the United Kingdom, United States, Qatar, Philippines, Ireland, and Australia. Additionally, a dedicated campaign in the US sought to attract physicians and allied health professionals to Nova Scotia, leveraging partnerships and digital outreach to promote the province's healthcare employment opportunities.
- OHPR advanced efforts to recruit internationally educated health professionals (IEHPs) through multiple new initiatives. This included launching a formal partnership with the Lebanese American University (LAU), underpinned by a new MOU (2024-25 to 2031-32) that will bring 10 ready-to-practice family medicine physicians to Nova Scotia over eight years, each committing to a minimum three-year term. A complementary partnership with the American University in Beirut (AUB) also yielded physician recruitment success.
- In October 2024, OHPR announced the establishment of the Physician Assessment Centre of Excellence (PACE), in collaboration with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia and Nova Scotia Health. PACE provides an expedited licensure pathway for internationally trained physicians through a 12-week, clinic-based assessment model - significantly reducing the previous 18-month evaluation timeline. The Centre began patient services in February 2025 and is projected to assess up to 40 physicians and support more than 2,600 patients in its first year. At full capacity, it is expected to provide care for approximately 6,500 Nova Scotians annually.

- OHPR continued to empower local communities through the Community Fund, which distributed \$1.4 million in grants to 24 organizations across the province. These grants supported welcoming and integration activities for newly arrived healthcare professionals. An evaluation of the fund began in 2024–25 to identify gaps and inform improvements for the 2025–26 cycle, with results expected in 2025–26. Concurrently, OHPR amplified success stories from these communities through social media, video content, and the [More Than Medicine](#) website, highlighting both healthcare professionals and community-led recruitment and retention efforts.
- Through a coordinated communications strategy, OHPR continued to spotlight healthcare professionals across digital platforms. These efforts included welcome messages for new recruits, stories celebrating recent healthcare graduates, and features on healthcare champions within communities. By sharing these narratives, the Office reinforced Nova Scotia's value proposition as a welcoming and supportive environment for healthcare workers.
- OHPR continued to play a leadership role in developing and implementing targeted strategies to support Internationally Educated Health Professionals. This included co-leading the Internationally Educated Nurses (IEN) Action Team and collaborating with the DAE to provide initial funding for the L'nu Nursing Office. This office aims to increase the participation of Mi'kmaq and Indigenous peoples in nursing education and practice. A five-year funding agreement is being developed to support this work through OHPR beginning in 2025–26. In addition, OHPR supported a pilot of an internal travel nurse program, innovatively working to reduce reliance on external agencies.
- OHPR played a central role in the successful negotiation and ratification of healthcare collective agreements in 2024–25. This included a two-year agreement between NSHA and IWK and the Council of Health Care Unions, representing approximately 9,100 healthcare workers across more than 180 job classifications. These agreements provide the stability and clarity necessary to strengthen the province's recruitment and retention efforts.
- OHPR contributed to the modernization of healthcare compensation frameworks to ensure equity and market competitiveness for leadership and management roles across NSHA and the IWK. These efforts aim to enhance the province's ability to attract and retain qualified leadership talent and ensure sustainability of key roles.
- In 2024–25, OHPR oversaw the public sector implementation of the Health and Related Workers Incentive Program for publicly funded nurses. The Office coordinated the program rollout to ensure timely and efficient delivery of financial incentives. These efforts reinforced government's commitment to supporting and retaining the nursing workforce at a critical time for the healthcare system.

[Collaborative and coordinated whole-of-system health workforce planning:](#)

To enable effective short-medium and long-term strategic health workforce planning in the province, in 2024-25 OHPR:

- Convened a provincial Academic Health Partnership Table to determine the best manner of aligning the efforts of health system and post-secondary education partners towards

workforce innovation and expansion. After preliminary meetings of this overarching table, it was determined that the most effective and nimble pathway forward was to establish profession and sector-specific tables going forward as needed.

- Updated the provincial health workforce database with the most recent registration data and began discussions with regulatory bodies to enhance workforce data collection processes for physicians, audiologists, speech language pathologists.
- Forecasted supply and demand for priority health professions at the provincial level. Priority professions include family physicians, nurses, paramedics, continuing care assistants, medical laboratory technologists, medical imaging professionals and radiation therapists, psychologists, respiratory therapists, pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, and social workers.
- Continued work with partners to implement needs-based health workforce planning in priority sectors such as continuing care (e.g. continuing care assistants, licensed practical nurses, and registered nurses), primary care (e.g. family physicians, nurse practitioners, registered nurses and licensed practical nurses), and addictions and mental health (e.g. psychologists and social workers).

Financial Summary and Variance Explanation

Departmental Expenses Summary (\$ thousands)

| <u>Programs and Services</u> | <u>2024-2025 Estimate</u> | <u>2024-2025 Actuals</u> | <u>2024-2025 Variance</u> |
|--|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| General Administration | 719 | 332 | (387) |
| Strategic Direction and Accountability | 7,379 | 6,130 | (1,249) |
| Total – Departmental Expenses | 8,098 | 6,462 | (1,636) |
| Additional Information: | | | |
| Ordinary Revenues | --- | --- | --- |
| Fees and Other Charges | --- | --- | --- |
| Ordinary Recoveries | --- | 17 | 17 |
| Total: Revenue, Fees and Recoveries | --- | 17 | 17 |
| TCA Purchase Requirements | --- | --- | --- |
| Funded Staff (# of FTEs) | | | |
| Department Funded Staff | 27.0 | 21.2 | (5.8) |

Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:

The Office of Healthcare Professional Recruitment's expenses were (\$1.6) million lower than estimate primarily due to decreased professional fees, decreased travel and temporary vacancies.

Revenue, Fees and Recoveries Variance Explanation:

Ordinary recoveries were \$17 thousand higher than budget due to miscellaneous recoveries.

TCA Purchase Requirements Variance Explanation:

N/A

Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:

The Office is reporting a variance of 5.8 FTEs under budget due to temporary vacancies.

Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act

The *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act* was proclaimed into law on December 20, 2011.

The Act provides for government employees to be able to come forward if they reasonably believe that a wrongdoing has been committed or is about to be committed and they are acting in good faith.

The Act also protects employees who do disclose from reprisals, by enabling them to lay a complaint of reprisal with the Labor Board.

A wrongdoing for the purposes of the Act is:

- a) a contravention of provincial or federal laws or regulations;
- b) a misuse or gross mismanagement of public funds or assets;
- c) an act or omission that creates an imminent risk of a substantial and specific danger to the life, health or safety of persons or the environment; or,
- d) directing or counselling someone to commit a wrongdoing.

The following is a summary of disclosures received by Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment

| Information Required under Section 18 of the Act | Fiscal Year 2024-25 |
|---|---------------------|
| The number of disclosures received | None |
| The number of findings of wrongdoing | None |
| Details of each wrongdoing | N/A |
| Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing. | N/A |