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Peer Supported Planning Program

Program Overview

Disability Support Program

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About this Document

This document provides an overview of the expectations, structure, and operational requirements of Nova Scotia's **Peer Supported Planning (PSP)** program. PSP is intended as an available alternative to initial planning with a Disability Support Program (DSP) Planner, expanding options for planning support offered by those with lived experience for individuals with disabilities (individuals) and their natural support networks. This document guides audiences through how PSP functions, who it is for, and how it will be delivered.

Disclaimer: PSP Coordinating Organizations are bound by the terms and conditions outlined in their service agreements and applicable laws. This document expands those terms and conditions but is not a substitute for them. In the event of a conflict between a service agreement and this document, the service agreement shall prevail.

Program Purpose and Background

Overview

The Peer Supported Planning Program addresses identified gaps in Nova Scotia's disability sector, by providing access to person-directed planning and peer-based supports for individuals, who identify as having a disability, that are not currently supported through the DSP. This gap is identified in the review for the Human Rights Remedy and identified in Key Direction 1: Individual Planning and Support Coordination. It calls for peer supported person directed planning as an option for individuals with disabilities.

The program design for Peer Supported Planning is grounded in established learnings from peer-based support models and was developed through consultation with DSP participants, community advocates, and subject matter experts, with the collective goal of introducing a peer-led support planning system that expands planning development and capacity-building opportunities for individuals across Nova Scotia.

What is the Peer Supported Planning Program (PSP)?

Peer Supported Planning is an alternative planning support distinct from planning provided by DSP Local Area Coordinators, (LAC) or Intensive Planning Support Coordinators (IPSC).

This program aims to introduce a scalable, community-driven approach to expand peer-based support networks across Nova Scotia communities. By focusing the program on peer-to-peer planning support, this initiative can foster capacity building, shared experiences, and authentic connections to support individuals living with a disability.

The objectives of the Peer Supported Planning include:

- **Building** capacity for supports related to the planning process of an individual's journey through expanding access to community resources and peer-based support networks.
- **Promoting** the empowerment and self-determination of individuals living with a disability by enabling individual choice and supporting individuals in pursuing their personal goals.
- **Creating** meaningful leadership and job opportunities for individuals living with a disability within the Disability Support Program and broader community.
- **Strengthening** existing community networks by connecting individuals and families to support systems and foster peer relationships.
- **Providing** alternative planning avenues for individuals who are interested in receiving planning support from someone with lived experience and shared understanding.

PSP Is Available To:

PSP will be available to Nova Scotians who self-identify as having a disability, as well as to family members in the identified support network of individuals with a disability. The program is free to access and has a defined number of support hours for each person with their network to ensure broad access.

PSP will provide structured planning supports to help individuals understand available community resources, with up to 20 hours of peer planning support to help increase in developing plans for how to access community-based supports.

What PSP Is Not:

Based on direction from DSP, the Peer Supported Planning Program does not encompass the following elements:

- **Respite or daily support services** - This program focuses specifically on the planning process rather than direct care delivery.
- **Any treatment or medical based support** - Peer Planners are not licensed medical professionals. The program will maintain clear boundaries between peer planning support and clinical/medical support.
- **Ongoing support with plan implementation, oversight and external service coordination** - PSP helps individuals to envision and develop their plans, where there is an ongoing need or implementation of services they will partner with a DSP planner supports for continuation of the process.
- **General peer mentorship** - The program is specifically designed around structured planning support rather than broad mentorship relationships.

- **Funding and support determination** - PSP will help individuals identify where paid supports may be necessary and what options may be locally available, but they do not determine eligibility for programs or services.
- **Financial planning and telling someone how to use their funding** - Peer Planners provide guidance on planning considerations, but do not offer financial advice.
- **The implementation of one's plan** - The program focuses on supporting the development of person-directed plans through peer-based experience. Implementation support or any service provision is out of scope for the Peer Supported Planning Program.
- **Emergency response or crisis management** - Peer Planners are not equipped for crisis intervention. Clear protocols to direct program users to appropriate support will be established.
- **Unstructured 24/7 support availability** - The program operates within defined hours and structured support frameworks. This ensures appropriate boundaries between Peer Planners and Program Users.
- **Duplication of Services** - To ensure limited resources are used effectively, PSP is not available to individuals who are already supported by an IPSC, LAC or a DSP Care Coordinator.

Service Model Overview

Service Vision and Principles:

The vision of PSP is to deliver peer-lead and person-directed planning support across Nova Scotia that enables individuals with disabilities to live in and contribute to their communities with dignity, safety, and autonomy.

DSP has developed PSP in accordance with the following principles.

- **Enabling Autonomy:** Offering peer connections to help individuals living with disabilities to have control over the plans for their life, and choice over how they receive planning support.
- **Building Systems Capacity:** Creating opportunities for local, community-led planning support networks; and embedding disability leadership opportunities in community.
- **Recognizing the Natural Authority of Individuals with Disabilities and Families:** Increasing opportunity for growth and contribution of individuals with disabilities and their families; and valuing the significance of lived experience.
- **Ensuring Cultural Relevance:** Co-designing with cultural/community groups and ensuring flexibility in the PSP design to support culturally relevant options.

- **Building Sustainable Peer-Led Planning Networks:** Building community networks, facilitating introductions, and fostering relationships between individuals with shared lived experiences.

PSP Service Delivery Model:

PSP is delivered by a third-party coordinating organization, which will be supported by DSP to launch and expand access to peer planning supports across Nova Scotia. A singular coordinating organization will be selected to introduce PSP and will be responsible for supporting its expansion across the province.

PSP Coordinating Organization:

- The selected Coordinating Organization will be responsible for the development and daily operations of the Peer Supported Planning service.
- The selected Coordinating Organization will maintain operational autonomy ensuring there is a separation between PSP and other contracted DSP funded initiatives.
- The selected Coordinating Organization must abide by the expectations and terms as outlined in the established Service Agreement with Department of Opportunities & Social Development, Province of Nova Scotia.
- The selected Coordinating Organization must abide by all expectations outlined in the Peer Supported Planning Program Description.
- The selected Coordinating Organization will operate under a term-limited agreement, with an option for renewal.

Roles and Responsibilities

To ensure collaboration between DSP and the Coordinating Organization, it will be essential to clearly delineate responsibilities. A well-defined working relationship between these groups will be key to achieving program success and positive outcomes for individuals living with disabilities in planning for a good life in community.

PSP Coordination Organization

The Coordinating Organization is responsible for:

- **Program Communications:** Promote the program within communities and maintain accurate program awareness. Handle all program communications responsibilities and share questions and community feedback with DSP.
- **Recruitment:** Lead recruitment efforts to ensure a diverse pool of Peer Planners, engaging with community organizations and groups to support the recruitment of a Peer Planners pool that mirrors the needs of Nova Scotians.

- **Screening:** Ensuring that individuals approved as Peer Planners have a clean criminal record check and vulnerable sector search.
- **Peer Planner Training:** Coordinate training for Peer Planners to ensure each planner receives appropriate preparation before providing peer-based supports. Training will be advised and approved by DSP and will be expected to include but not be limited to:
 - Orientation to the Remedy
 - Orientation to Peer Supported Planning
 - Orientation to Planning for a Good Life in Community
 - Orientation to Facilitating Planning Conversations
 - Orientation to Safe Community Engagements
 - Peer Supported Planning Privacy Expectations
- **Program Matching:** Facilitate the matching process between Program Users and Peer Planners, including:
 - **Overseeing** user requests for peer supported planning and assessing suitability against approved Peer Planners.
 - **Determining** matching-criteria priorities based on the Program User's needs and requested planning area and pairing them with a Peer Planner who has relevant lived experience. The Coordinating Organization is responsible for doing what they can to ensure a successful match between Program Users and Peer Planners, while also offering a diversity of experiences to meet Program Users' planning needs. Initial matching templates will be provided.
 - **Coordinating** and tracking Program User agreements, outlining program parameters, code-of-conduct expectations, and hours of support.
 - **Setting** up initial meetings with potential peer support matches.
 - **Following** up with both Program Users and Peer Planners to determine match viability.
 - **Overseeing** Peer Planner hours.
 - **Outlining** an evolving process for establishing a well-made match between Program User and Peer Planner.
- **Accessibility to Program Members:** Serve as the primary contact for Program Users and Peer Planners, responding to requests, concerns, and inquiries.
- **Peer Planner Management:** Manage the roster of available Peer Planners to meet demand, support dispute resolution, and if needed, involve the DSP representative. This includes creating and overseeing Peer Planner agreements.
- **Peer Planner Compensation:** Track supported hours and submit wage reports to DSP for reimbursement to Peer Planners.

- **Peer Planner Allocation Limit:** Ensure no Peer Planner is working with more than two Program Users at a time.
- **Complaint Resolution:** Ensure there is a complaint/dispute resolution policy and procedure in place to address concerns from PSP Users and Peer Planners in a timely manner.
- **Program Updates:** Communicate program metrics to DSP through regular updates and bi-annual reports based on established reporting metrics.

DSP Responsibilities

DSP will be responsible for the following:

- **Program Funding Oversight:** Tracking and allocating the designated funding to the Coordinating Organization, which includes tracking Peer Planner compensation (including reviews and approvals for travel and additional support costs) and associated administration costs, ensuring the Coordinating Organization receives funding promptly.
- **Organization Compliance:** Ensuring the Coordinating Organization is operating in compliance with: PSP program design requirements, and contractual obligations as outlined in the Service Agreement. DSP will provide advisement and support when requested and as required in matters concerning non-compliance.
- **Program Communication:** Communicating relevant updates and changes related to DSP and the PSP program to the Coordinating Organization and ensuring they are informed.
- **Dispute & Concern Resolution:** Responding to concerns of the Coordinating Organization and escalating as needed to DSP Leadership.
- **Program Monitoring:** Receiving program updates/metrics from the Coordinating Organization regarding the established monitoring indicators. Using Program updates/metrics to provide program direction and advisement as required and as PSP expands.

PSP Funding and Administration

The selected PSP Coordinating Organization will receive start-up and operational funding to ensure service readiness and to support the expansion of Peer Supported Planning across Nova Scotia.

This funding will enable the organization to establish and coordinate PSP in alignment with the DSP Program Design Elements, while building regional capacity required for PSP to operate as an accessible, province-wide service.

Key funding supports include:

- Funding for 2.5 full-time equivalent Program Coordinators, inclusive of salary, benefits, and organizational overhead.

- Dedicated training funding to support Peer Planner training provision, skill development, and ongoing learning.
- Additional Year One funding to support program scaling, advertising and outreach, and extra pre-launch training requirements for the initial cohort of Peer Planners.
- Compensation for Peer Planners at a comparable market rate to ensure fair and equitable participation.
- Dedicated funding for Peer Planners who require assistance to participate in the program, including reimbursement for travel and other support costs which will be reviewed and approved by DSP.

All funding terms, conditions, and reporting requirements for reimbursement will be detailed in the service agreement with the Coordinating Organization.

PSP Program Design Elements

As PSP moves towards program implementation, the established program design elements are guiding principles to ensure PSP remains aligned with the direction of the Remedy and the broader DSP system.

To support a clear and effective launch, the program's design has been organized into three key areas outlined below, which informs how PSP will be delivered to individuals and how it will be coordinated and administered across Nova Scotia.

Program User Elements

These elements define the experience, expectations, and supports for individuals accessing PSP. They outline how program users engage with the program, what they can expect, and the core features that ensure PSP is accessible and consistent across the province.

- **Open Service Eligibility:** PSP will be available to anyone in community who self-identifies with a disability or family members of individuals with a disability.
- **Accessing Planning Supports:** PSP will be available only to individuals who are not currently accessing DSP planning supports (IPSC, LAC or a DSP Care Coordinator).
- **No Fee for those Accessing PSP:** Individuals with disabilities and their families will not be charged for accessing the program.
- **Culturally & Regionally Relevant Peer Support:** To support cultural and regional relevance, the program will need to be rooted within the communities it serves.
- **Defined Amount of Support Hours:** Individuals participating in PSP will have access to up to 20 hours of planning hours through the program. It is expected that the hours be used over a reasonable and planned timeline.

- **Program User Contractual Agreements:** Signed agreements will be established for the Program User and will be overseen by the Coordinating Organization, outlining the program parameters, code-of-conduct expectations, hours of support and timeline for each match. The Coordinating Organization will be responsible for creating and administering the associated Program User agreements.
- **Streams of Planning Support:** As the program grows, dedicated planning streams based on emerging demand and identified support needs will be developed.

Peer Planner Components & Requirements

This area details the responsibilities, and structural supports required for Peer Planners to deliver PSP effectively. It includes role expectations and resources necessary to ensure Peer Planners can provide peer-based supports across Nova Scotia.

- **Paid and Meaningful Job Experience:** Peer Planners will be compensated for their time. Peer Planner hours will be billed back to DSP for funding distribution.
- **Peer Planner Contractual Agreements:** Signed agreements will be established between Peer Planner and the Coordinating Organization, outlining the program parameters, compensation, privacy standards, required training, Peer Planner allocation limit, and code-of-conduct expectations. The Coordinating Organization will be responsible for creating and administering the associated Peer Planner agreements.
- **Eligible Peer Planners:** Eligible Peer Planners will include individuals with direct DSP experience, as well as those who are not directly involved in DSP but self-identify as having a disability, or someone who supports an individual with a disability (e.g., family members). Peer Planner applications will be received and reviewed by the Coordinating Organization.
- **Peer Planner Allocation Limit:** Peer Planners will be limited to supporting no more than two Program Users at the same time.
- **Targeted Recurring Training:** The Coordinating Organization will be responsible with the advisement of DSP to deliver recurring training for Peer Planners. This training must be completed before any Peer Planner begins providing support.

PSP Administration & Program Coordination

These elements describe the processes, and organizational functions for the administration of PSP. They include program governance, reporting requirements and coordination practices that enable consistent delivery across Nova Scotia.

- **Third Party Coordination and Delivery:** To maintain PSP as a distinct program separate from DSP services, it will be coordinated by a third-party organization. (see Roles & Responsibilities for further information)

- **DSP Program Oversight:** DSP will provide connection to the program with guidance on planning expectations, oversight of program budget, tracking of annual metrics, and advisement to the Coordinating Organization to provide consistent delivery. (see Roles & Responsibilities)
- **Program Meeting Considerations:** To support the safety of both Program Users and Peer Planners, all in-person meetings should take place in a location accessible and safe for all parties. When necessary for safety, a representative from the Coordinating Organization may be present. Offering virtual meeting options, where appropriate, can also help reduce participation barriers for some Program Users.
- **Follow-Up Processes:** It is expected that there is a feedback/follow-up process embedded into the program to provide opportunity for Program Users to provide feedback or inquire about opportunities to become Peer Planners.

Monitoring, Reporting, and Program Evaluation

Upon launching PSP, ongoing monitoring will be required to ensure support quality and inform necessary adjustments to services and agreements as the program expands. Clear reporting expectations will be in place with regular connection between DSP and the coordinating organization to review how the program is operating.

Below are key program monitoring and performance metrics which will be monitored as the program is launched.

- **Regional Peer Planner Registrations:** Tracking Peer Planner registrations across DSP regions will help assess and monitor recruitment efforts and identify growth trends across Nova Scotia.
- **Geographic distribution of Peer Planners and Program Users:** Monitoring the geographic coverage of Peer Planners as well as Program Users will help identify gaps between program demand and availability of Peer Planners. This will then allow the prioritization of regional recruitment and promotion strategies.
- **Number of individuals involved in PSP:** Understanding the number of individuals involved in PSP on an annual basis will help assess PSP uptake and adoption of the program across Nova Scotia, which will inform growth considerations and needs of the program.
- **Recurring themes of support:** Tracking common themes of support as requested by program users that arise throughout the delivery of PSP will ensure that the program grows to meet the demand that exists within the community.
- **Strengths in community networks:** Keeping track of the community networks that are leveraged throughout PSP delivery will give DSP a deeper sense of the existing support streams within various communities to share to expand successes to build community capacity.
- **User satisfaction:** Collect feedback from individuals working with peer planners on the use of the service to inform continued quality improvement.

Continuous Quality Improvement

The Coordinating Organization must maintain a continuous quality improvement approach informed by data and feedback. Information collected may be used to:

- Monitor program usage and response times
- Identify patterns, risks, and regional service needs
- Monitor the nature of complaints and resolution
- Support evaluation of program effectiveness

Program monitoring focuses on ensuring that PSP complements the suite of services available to individuals, or to families supporting an individual, who self-identify as having a disability

DSP and the coordinating organization will use this information to inform service improvements and future planning.

Incident Reporting and Safety

The PSP Coordinating Organization must have a policy and guidelines for safe practices for Peer planners as well as a policy on recording, review and reporting of critical incidents including:

- Timely reporting of critical incidents and significant service disruptions
- Supporting Peer planners and Program Users and staff following incidents
- Cooperating with investigations and follow-up actions to support resolution

The Coordinating Organization is responsible for reviewing, supporting the resolution of, debriefing, and reporting to DSP on critical incidents that occur within the delivery of Peer Planning services. This includes any critical incidents involving peer planners and/or program users that are related to the delivery or access of Peer Planning supports.

The Coordinating Organization should establish an internal process for reviewing and documenting incident reports. This process should align with, and be integrated into, the organization's broader approach to continuous improvement and quality assurance.

Equity, Inclusion, and Rights-Based Practice

PSP is delivered in a manner that:

- Respects individual dignity, autonomy, and choice
- Is culturally responsive and inclusive of diverse identities and communities
- Upholds DSP shared values and approaches delivery with a Human Rights perspective

Conclusion

By introducing a structured, community-based model that leverages lived experience, PSP aims to expand choice in how planning supports are accessed while strengthening connections among individuals, families, and community networks.

The program will promote empowerment, self-determination, and capacity-building, while also creating meaningful leadership and employment opportunities for persons living with disabilities.

Through third-party coordination, ongoing monitoring, and consistent oversight, PSP is designed to be scalable, adaptable, and responsive to community needs.

As the program moves into active delivery, continued learning and collaboration between DSP and the Coordinating Organization will ensure alignment with DSP shared values and expand the provision of person-directed supports to Nova Scotians with disabilities.

For any questions regarding PSP, please reach out to the DSP Program Coordinator Kim Landry (Kim.Landry@novascotia.ca)

APPENDIX A: Glossary

DSP: The Nova Scotia Disability Support Program under the umbrella of the Department of Opportunities and Social Development.

PSP: Peer Supported Planning Program which is operationalized through the Coordinating Organization and defined within the scope of the attached program description.

Coordinating Organization: Service Provider organization which facilitates the connection between the Program User and Peer Planner. The Coordinating Organization is also accountable for services delivered and supports the coordination of Peer Planners across Nova Scotia. Further details on the Coordinating Organization responsibilities' can be found in the attached program description.

Peer Planner: An individual with lived experience of disability or supporting an individual with a disability who has applied for and been approved to become a Peer Planner. Peer Planners provide support and guidance to Program Users in developing their plans to live their best lives in community.

Program User: An individual participating in the PSP program who receives planning support from a Peer Planner. This can be anyone who self-identifies with having a disability or is a family member who provides supports to an individual with a disability.

Individual Living with Disabilities: An individual who experiences a physical, mental, intellectual, learning, or sensory impairment, including episodic disabilities, that in interaction with barriers, hinders their full participation in society. Throughout the program description document, the terms "individuals living with a disability" and "individuals" are used interchangeably.

Lived Experience: Knowledge gained through personal experience with disability, service systems, or community supports. This is the foundation of Peer Planner expertise.

Critical Incidents: See 'Serious Occurrences'

Serious Occurrence: A serious occurrence includes:

- Participant death
- Serious accident/injury which requires medical attention
- Suicide attempts.
- Missing person where the Coordinating Organization has contacted the police
- Incidents that prompt police response, emergency services, and/or significant public attention.

APPENDIX B: Privacy

While specific requirements for privacy are outlined in the Coordinating Organization's service agreement, this Appendix is provided for supplementary information and context.

The selected PSP Coordinating Organizations must protect the privacy and confidentiality of all information, including personal information, obtained due to participation in, or exploration of PSP. Breaches of privacy or confidentiality must be reported immediately.

Overview

All information (including personal information as defined in the Nova Scotia Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act), data, documents, records, and materials acquired by, or to which access has been given to, a Coordinating Organization by or from the Department as part of PSP shall be treated as confidential.

The Coordinating Organization will maintain standards and procedures for safeguarding the privacy and confidentiality of all such information, including personal information. For this purpose, "personal information" has the same meaning as in the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

The Coordinating Organization will ensure that Peer Planners follow privacy and confidentiality standards. The Coordinating Organizations will immediately notify the Department upon becoming aware of a breach or suspected breach of privacy and/or confidentiality, in accordance with the current privacy breach reporting guidelines of the Province of Nova Scotia. A breach includes any unauthorized access, collection, use, disclosure, or disposal of information, including personal information, that the Coordinating Organization is required to keep confidential per any Disability Support Program policy or agreement and/or applicable laws.

The Coordinating Organization will ensure that consent to share personal information is informed, documented, time limited, and specific about what information is to be shared and to whom. Informed consent is gathered in a way that is meaningful to the Program Users.

Personal and other information provided by the Coordinating Organization to the Department related to Program Users receiving PSP services will be collected, used, disclosed, and retained by the Department and the Province of Nova Scotia in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

The Coordinating Organization must ensure they follow any relevant law or regulation applicable to the use of personal information, including the Personal Information and Protection of Electronic Documents Act (Canada) (PIPEDA). PIPEDA will apply to any activity that qualifies as a 'commercial activity', regardless of the legal status of the Coordinating Organization. This requirement may also include the Personal Health Information Act (Nova Scotia) (PHIA) as regards the collection and use of personal health information or the delivery or facilitation of healthcare services.

The Coordinating Organization is expected to:

1. Maintain standards for safeguarding the privacy and confidentiality of all information, including personal information.
2. Ensure that Peer Planners are aware of, and adhere to, all privacy and confidentiality standards.
3. Immediately notify the Department of any breach or suspected breach of privacy or confidentiality.
4. Ensure that consent to share personal information is informed, documented, time limited, and specific.
5. Follow all applicable laws and regulations (e.g., PIPEDA, PHIA) that may apply with respect to the management of personal information.