

# Disability Support Sector Workforce Strategy – Winter 2025-26 Progress Report to March 31, 2026 (updated May 2026)

## A Disability Support Sector Workforce Strategy---A Human Rights Remedy Report Directive

The first Disability Support Sector Workforce Strategy launched in January 2025. This strategy is the plan for the Disability Support Program (DSP) to deliver on the commitment to create a skilled workforce, “sufficient to support the Remedy strategies (philosophically and practically).” (HR Remedy Report, pg. 2). The plan aims to modernize and strengthen the disability support workforce through four priority areas: awareness and recruitment; learning and development; health and safety; and growth and stability. The full strategy can be found on the DSP transformation website timeline. The table below is a progress report on the actions listed in the strategy.

### IMPLEMENTATION STATUS

#### Awareness and Recruitment Actions

#	Fiscal Year	Action	Status	Status Update
1	2024-25	Engage Health Association of Nova Scotia (HANS) to provide recruitment support to service providers	Complete	Contract ended; Nova Scotia Works (NS Works) can provide supports for recruitment; Presentation to the sector to be scheduled.
2	2024-25	Providing funding to Nova Scotia Career Development Association (NSCDA) to create and deliver a career advisor training module (e.g., NS Works) about working in the disability support sector.	Complete	Modules available on NSCDA catalog of training for members and non-members at no cost. As of January 2025: 64 enrolled; 24 complete. Modules promoted by NSCDA at regional conference, “Elevate”.
3	32024-25	Partner with Immigrant Settlement Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) to create and deliver a newcomer bridging program for internationally trained disability support workers.	Complete	ISANS funded by Labour, Skills and Immigration (LSI) and DSP in 2024-25 to create a disability sector stream of the existing long-term care bridging program and support up to 40 participants. Program developed and delivered.
4	2024-25	Develop resources for high school students about career opportunities in the disability support sector.	In Progress	NSCDA funded to develop student resources in both English and French for use in the public school career planning tool, My Blueprint as well as training for NS Works school liaisons and other school career advisors to best support students in pursuing a career in the disability support sector.

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5	2024-25	Partner with Education and Early Childhood Development's (EECD) African Canadian Services Branch and Prep Academy to identify pathways to post-secondary education and employment through culturally relevant information and resources on the disability support worker profession.	In Progress	Preliminary discussions held around resources and activities that would support African NS student pathways to education and employment.
6	2025-26	Raise awareness among post-secondary students of career opportunities in disability sector. Provide career advisors with resources, tools, and information to build awareness and attend career fairs to promote the sector and current vacancies.	Not Started	Activities will be aligned with next steps to develop career planning resources with the NSCDA.
7	2025-26	Engage Mi'kmaq community leaders across the province including intergovernmental subject matter experts to explore ways to support Mi'kmaq individuals who are interested in pursuing a career in the disability support sector.	Not Started	This action will be advanced through the Executive Director as part of DSPs ongoing engagement of the Mi'kmaq community.
8	2025-26	Expand ISANS's Bridging Program to attract and prepare newcomers to work in the disability sector and explore options to replicate it using LSI's One Journey Program to support people to develop the skills needed to work in the disability sector (e.g., income assistance recipients, persons with disabilities, or those who have been involved with the justice system).	In Progress	In 2025-26, additional funding from LSI to continue the bridging program for an additional 40 participants. Participants who choose to pursue a career in the disability sector will be supported by ISANS to complete the disability sector focused courses and gain employment in the sector. Preliminary discussions held with LSI to identify additional bridging program opportunities using One Journey model.
9	2025/26	Complete a labour force assessment in collaboration with Labour, Skills and Immigration to better understand staffing needs as the sector evolves.	In progress	A labour market outlook was developed by Labour, Skills and Immigration to better understand labour market. Workforce planning survey will inform any future activities.

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10	2025-26	Develop and launch a marketing campaign to market the disability support profession as a career and promote job and education opportunities.	In progress	To inform marketing efforts, a workforce planning survey was launched in January 2026 to gather comprehensive workforce and labour market data across the sector. Results will be analysed and the actions required to increase recruitment to best support the sector will follow.

### Learning and Development Actions

#	Fiscal Year	Action	Status	Status Update
11	2024-25	Provide funding to NSCC to pilot a certificate of professional study (four courses). Three cohorts of up to 23 students funded.	Complete	<p>Pilot project that began in January 2022 was extended to fund 3 cohorts in total each with up to 25 students.</p> <p>Evaluation of the of the pilot led to the creation of the new, one year certificate that incorporates the four courses covered in the certificate of professional study. Students from the cohorts who successfully complete the program will be eligible for advanced standing in new certificate program.</p>
12	2024-25	Fund the delivery of Trauma Informed Practice Professional Development. Explore options to adopt a train-the-trainer program.	Complete	<p>Beginning in February 2023, 12 workshops of 55 seats have been funded by DSP for sector staff. It is expected that by March 2026, approximately 600 people will have received trauma informed care training.</p> <p>In September 2024, two DSP staff participated in the new IWK TIC train the trainer program. Staff will begin holding workshops to offer training initially to DSP staff as well as hosting workshops</p>

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				in the sector. Additional space has been requested in future training sessions.
13	2024-25	Fund NSCC to develop and deliver two micro credentials: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Advocacy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</li> <li>2. Human Rights Foundations for the Disability Support Professionals</li> </ol>	Complete	<p>Two NSCC micro credentials were developed and piloted by January 2025 with the content also included in the new one-year certificate. Students successfully completing both microcredentials are eligible for credit towards the NSCC DSP Certificate.</p> <p>March 2026, NSCC funded to deliver a total of 1350 seats across the sector and DSP staff. This includes 900 of the first microcredential and 450 of the second.</p>
14	2024-25	Partner with NSCC to create a new one-year hybrid (virtual and in-person) certificate to replace the current two-year full-time diploma and the four-course certificate of professional study program.	Complete	<p>The new NSCC Disability Support Professional certificate program was launched September 2024 in three campuses --Sydney, Kingstec and Lunenburg (PT) offering a total of 75 training seats. The first graduates from the program will be available for employment June 2026.</p> <p>Part-time programs will begin at Kingstec, Sydney and the Ivany Campus in Halifax in September 2026 adding an additional 80 training seats for a total of 155 FT and PT seats across the province in four campuses.</p> <p>DSP funded 130 bursaries covering tuition, books and required fees to eligible students enrolled in the NSCC program for September 2026.</p>

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15	2024-25	Conduct an occupational analysis of disability support professionals to replace the current list of core competencies with requirements that better reflect the current and future skills required under the Remedy.	In Progress	In September 2024, work began to develop a competency profile and complementary training standard that will replace the existing list of core competencies. The competency profile is almost completed, and work will begin in the fall 2026 on the training standard development and implementation planning.
16	2025/26	Develop training guidelines for post-secondary institutions to meet new competency requirements and work with Advanced Education to ensure all post-secondary programs reflect these requirements.	Not started	Pending completion of core competency review.
17	2025-26	Identify options to manage tracking and delivery of professional development training at the sector level. Consideration given to building a robust digital platform for managing training programs including online enrollment and progress tracking, facilitating communication, and providing resource information.	Not started	Pending completion of core competency review.
18	2025-26	Develop a prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) approach to facilitate existing disability support staff to demonstrate acquired skills and knowledge for post-secondary credential and career advancement.	Not Started	Pending completion of core competency review.  As a related activity, NSCC has ensured sector training is integrated and options for students to have learning recognized for credit where possible (e.g., Recognition of Prior Learning).
19	2025-26	Explore options to develop sector specific mentorship and coaching programs for individuals working in frontline and supervisory roles.	Not Started	Pending completion of core competency review.
20	2025-26	Facilitate access for sector staff to improve essential skills and/or prepare for post-secondary education through free educational programs funded by the Adult Education Division of Labour, Skills & Immigration via the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning (NSSAL),	Not Started	Pending completion of core competency review.

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#	Fiscal Year	Action	Status	Status Update
		community learning organizations and sector associations.		
21	2025-26	Facilitate employment transition support for sector staff displaced by facility closures through Labour Skills and Immigration's (LSI) Employment Nova Scotia teams. Support includes identifying strategies (job searching, retraining/upskilling, job coaching), training programs, and career planning resources to help the transition to new employment.	In Progress	DSP Closure Team working collaboratively with LSI's Employment Nova Scotia and Workplace Initiative Divisions to identify opportunities to engage service provider employers to provide information to their staff experiencing employment disruptions. Activities will be monitored as closure activities advance.
22	2025/26	Create and/or fund leadership training program to address succession planning gaps in the disability support sector.	Not Started	Delivery of MSVU leadership micro credential planned for Summer 2026.
23	2025-26	Create leadership training to address succession planning gaps in the disability support sector. Includes assessment of available training such as Mount Saint Vincent's micro credential, "Continuing Care: Ready to Lead" a pilot funded by Nova Scotia's recently adopted micro credential framework.	In Progress	Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU) began the development of a leadership training program for people working in supervisory roles within the disability support sector in October 2025 with a pilot of the first program in Summer 2026. The initiative is supported by an advisory working group with representation from persons with disabilities, government and the support sector.
24	2025-26	Conduct service provider workplace training needs assessments in partnership with Labour, Skills and Immigration's (LSI) Workplace Initiatives Division to identify skill gaps that can be addressed through professional development that would complement the required core competencies. Informed by the assessment identify, prioritize and make available: •Operational professional development (e.g., HR	In Progress	While work continues to replace the core competencies, leadership and trauma informed practice, DSP will continue to fund training identified as a need. Current efforts to date include:  1. June 2025, free enrolment offered to sector staff to complete the

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		practices) provided by LSI that could be customized for the sector. •Profession specific training (e.g., trauma informed practices) that can be sourced or developed		<p>“Foundations of Belonging in the Workplace” training developed by P4G in partnership with NSCDA and funded by LSI.</p> <p>2. September 2025, Business skills training was offered to service provider organizations affected by closure process with 11 attending. Future delivery is in the planning stages as an Executive Business Skills training for delivery by March 31, 2026.</p>
25	2026-27	Collaborate with the sector to identify an approach to manage the delivery and tracking of required entry to practice (e.g., updated core competencies) and professional development training. Consideration will be given to adopting certification approaches used by non-compulsory trades.	Not Started	Pending completion of core competency review.

### Health and Safety Actions

#	Fiscal Year	Action	Status	Status Update
25	2024-25	Partner with the Workers’ Compensation Board of Nova Scotia (WCB) to assess and prioritize the physical and psychological health and safety needs of the disability support sector.	In Progress	Discussions have begun to discuss options to further support health and safety in the sector as it evolves to community-based support and services.
27	2024-25	Partner with Labour, Skills and Immigration and Aware Nova Scotia to offer funding and programs to ensure employers in the sector meet all occupational health and safety requirements.	In progress	Continuing to collaborate with safety partners (LSI, WCB and AWARENS) to provide training and resources to ensure service provider employers and staff understand and practice their legislated occupational health and safety obligations.

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				<p>Collaborative activities include,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since 2023, providing funding to AWARE-NS to deliver training across the sector as part of the response to the Workplace Safety Initiative. Training includes Safe Handling and Mobility, SAFERi Leadership training, Violence in the Workplace</li> <li>• February 2025, funding provided to enable the sector participation in Psychological Health and Safety online training courses identified by the Nova Scotia Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) being offered through University of Fredericton, University of New Brunswick, and the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. 12 individuals from five service provider organizations submitted claims for participation.</li> <li>• Summer/Fall 2025 piloted the use of virtual reality technology to deliver occupational health and safety training in the sector.</li> </ul>
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## Growth and Stability Actions

#	Fiscal Year	Action	Status	Status Update
28	2025-26	Develop a plan to mitigate risks while enhancing safety competencies, fostering a culture of safety in the disability support sector.	In Progress	March 2026, DSP partnered with NSCLO to fund a safety navigator position to support workplace safety practices. The position is for one year and focuses on supporting all sector service providers to address workplace safety concerns.
29	2024-25	Work with partners to ensure all DSP service providers and staff have access to workplace safety leadership training as well as Employee and Family Assistance Programs, including return-to-work programming.	In Progress	Ongoing collaboration with WCB and LSI to better understand ways to best support sector in providing safe and healthy workplaces.
30	2024-25	Identify and analyze alternative approaches to compensation that address calls from employees about inadequate wages and benefits.	Not Started	Pending completion of core competency review.
31	2025/26	Identify opportunities to align with existing sector associations and allied health partners on a consistent approach to the development of resources and the delivery of training for service providers leveraging existing organizational models like the Alberta Council of Disability Services and EECD's Common Services Bureau.	Not Started	Pending completion of core competency review.