



Accountability Report 2020–21

Office of the Premier/Executive Council
Office/Office of Strategy Management/
Office of Citizen-Centered Approaches



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Accountability Report 2020–2021

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A. Accountability Statement

Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Office of the Premier, Executive Council Office, Office of Strategy Management, and Office of Citizen Centered Approaches (the “Offices”) for the year ended March 31, 2020, is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the Offices’ Business Plan for the fiscal year just ended. The reporting of the outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments, and the opinions of the Offices.

The report is, to the extent possible, a complete and accurate representation of outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in the Offices’ 2019-2020 Business Plan.

The Honourable Tim Houston
President of the Executive Council

Laura Lee Langley
Clerk of the Executive Council
Deputy Minister of the Office of the Premier

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B. Message from the President of the Executive Council

I am pleased to present the Accountability Report for the 2020-2021 fiscal year for the Offices.

The Executive Council Office (ECO) acts as a secretariat to the Executive Council (Cabinet) and its committees, and ensures its business is conducted in a timely and efficient manner.

ECO provides non-partisan advice and information to the Premier, Cabinet and its committees, administers government's decision-making process, develops and advances corporate priorities and plans, works with departments and agencies to develop business plans and accountability reports as well as provides advice and support on the governance of, and appointments to, agencies, boards and commissions. It also provides administrative and operational support, including human resources and budgeting, to the Office of the Premier.

In the coming year our government looks forward to working with all Nova Scotians as we listen to their concerns and bring forward solutions that help to build a province where everyone can see a future for themselves and their family. Together we will ensure that communities across Nova Scotia are able to provide a quality of life for their people that is second to none.

The Honourable Tim Houston,
President of the Executive Council

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C. Financial Table and Variance Explanation Error! Bookmark not defined.

	2020-2021 Estimate	2020-2021 Actuals	2020-2021 Variance
Executive Council Office/ Office of the Premier	<i>(\$thousands)</i>		
Departmental Expenses:			
Executive Council Office/ Office of the Premier	4,566	3,947	(619)
Total: Departmental Expenses	4,566	3,947	(619)
Additional Information:			
Ordinary Revenue	0	0	0
Fees and Other Charges	0	0	0
Ordinary Recoveries	0	0	0
Total: Revenue, Fees and Recoveries	0	0	0
TCA Purchase Requirements	0	0	0
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	36.0	30.7	(5.3)
<u>Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:</u> Variance due to vacancy and operating savings			
<u>Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:</u> Variance due to temporary vacancies			

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	2020-2021 Estimate	2020-2021 Actuals	2020-2021 Variance
Office of Citizen-Centered Approaches	<i>(\$thousands)</i>		
Departmental Expenses:			
Office of Citizen-Centered Approaches	1,108	590	(518)
Total: Departmental Expenses	1,108	590	(518)
Additional Information:			
Ordinary Revenue	0	0	0
Fees and Other Charges	0	0	0
Ordinary Recoveries	0	0	0
Total: Revenue, Fees and Recoveries	0	0	0
TCA Purchase Requirements	0	0	0
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	4.0	3.9	(0.1)
<u>Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:</u> Variance due to operating and salary savings			
<u>Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:</u> Variance due to temporary vacancies			

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	2020-2021 Estimate	2020-2021 Actuals	2020-2021 Variance
Office of Strategy Management	<i>(\$thousands)</i>		
Departmental Expenses:			
Office of Strategy Management	969	870	(99)
Total: Departmental Expenses	969	870	(99)
Additional Information:			
Ordinary Revenue	0	0	0
Fees and Other Charges	0	0	0
Ordinary Recoveries	0	142	142
Total: Revenue, Fees and Recoveries	0	142	142
TCA Purchase Requirements	0	0	0
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	7.0	5.7	(1.3)
<u>Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:</u> Variance due to vacancy and operating savings			
<u>Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:</u> Variance due to temporary vacancies			

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D. Measurement of Performance

The Offices discontinued the use of the client survey in 2017 in favor of meaningful conversations with clients and stakeholders.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OFFICE

Feedback from conversations with policy analysts, Cabinet, clients and stakeholders is generally positive and noted improved collaboration between the Executive Council Office and departments through the Cabinet submission process. An area of development identified is to continue to increase the efficiency of the Cabinet and Treasury and Policy Board submission process.

Governance and Accountability Unit:

In July 2018, the Executive Council Office formed the Governance and Accountability Unit (GAU) in order to centralize certain aspects of the Agencies, Boards and Commissions (ABC) appointments and governance process, to ensure that appointments are made in a timely way, and to develop and implement strategies to promote diversity and inclusion. In addition to coordinating the appointments process, the goals of the GAU are to develop performance indicators for monitoring new policies and processes regarding appointments. The GAU frequently fields calls from departments, ABCs, and applicants to assist them through applications and the appointment process and to help them better understand the corporate process.

Agencies, Boards and Commissions online web application and database system:

The implementation of the ABC online web application system in September 2017 has made it easier for applicants to review current opportunities, submit applications, and track the status of applications and appointments. The system also provides applicants with the option to voluntarily disclose their gender and diversity from amongst a list of categories. The system enables government to screen applications more quickly and effectively, to more accurately track the diversity of applicants and appointees (where applicants have chosen to declare their diversity characteristics) and enables the departments to be better aware of applicants with diversity.

Since implementing the system in fall of 2017, there has been an increase in individuals who claim diversity creating applicant profiles in the system. Creating a profile is the first step in submitting an application to sit on a board. The system can provide point in time (snap shots) on data regarding diversity. Individuals can be counted for more than one category, where they qualify; each diversity characteristic that applies is counted.

Currently, approximately 77% of individuals declare their gender and diversity when creating their system profiles. About 15% of individuals claiming diversity are from outside Canada and do not hold Canadian citizenship or Landed Immigrant Status, therefore are not eligible for appointment consideration. This information is communicated to these individuals, and they are provided information links to the Department of Immigration.

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Although there has been an increase in individuals self-identifying on their applicant profile, not all individuals declare gender or diversity in the actual application they submit for board membership. The GAU has therefore identified the continued need to ensure a welcoming climate for diversity candidates on ABC's. To that end, work will continue to ensure ABC's sustain and promote a culture of inclusion.

Despite this challenge, since the tracking of gender and diversity began in the Fall of 2017, there has been an increase in the proportion of self-identified individuals being appointed to boards. In 2017, there were 32% appointed, as of March 12, 2020 there are 35% appointed. As of April 27, 2021, there were 717 appointments, of which 236 disclosed one or more diversity characteristics (roughly 1/3 or 33 % of the total number of appointments).

The GAU continues its outreach and marketing to diversity groups promoting appointments to ABCs and encourages members of the public inquiring about the process to self-identify when submitting their applications.

With the addition of a Stakeholder section in the database, departments and Government as a whole, are now better able to reach a more diverse group, and if necessary a targeted group, of Nova Scotians during recruitment drives, both corporately and by the individual departments.

Applicant and application numbers for the recruitment campaigns indicate the online system has been well received and both the number of applicants and applications has been maintained or increased over time.

Modifications were also made to the ABC Database in 2018, 2019 and 2020 to improve the tracking of process timelines from application submission to appointment of members to ABCs. Additional features were added to create better communication with applicants, in an effort to assist them in submitting comprehensive application packages. This communication also includes providing applicants with feedback from the non-partisan screening panels on their applications.

OFFICE OF STRATEGY MANAGEMENT

The Office of Strategy Management is responsible for communicating and managing the priority objectives of Executive Council and working across departments to advance government's policy agenda. It works closely with departments and agencies to translate government's priorities into policies, programs, and initiatives intended to produce measurable results. Core activities include:

- Work with Executive Council (Cabinet) to establish government priorities.
- Articulate government's policy priorities to departments and agencies and foster engagement with the priorities.
- Align efforts or initiatives of government to enable the achievement of priority objectives.
- Encourage and inform horizontal collaboration and initiatives to advance progress on complex challenges.
- Monitor organizational performance.

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The Executive Council Office, Office of the Premier and Office of Strategy Management routinely speak with stakeholders to improve processes and communication.

The Office of Strategy Management also regularly reports on the progress of priorities identified by the Ivany Commission through the OneNS dashboard <https://onens.ca/>.

OFFICE OF CITIZEN CENTERED APPROACHES

The Office of Citizen-Centered Approaches collaborates with ECO, OSM and departments to ensure government's priorities are advanced and supported to foster and facilitate citizen-centred and restorative approaches in the areas of strategy, decision-making, policy design and operations. The Office works to accelerate system level change and different ways of working to measurably improve the social wellbeing of Nova Scotians.

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E. Approach to the Impact of COVID-19

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the Coronavirus to be the cause of a worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. On March 22, 2020, the Province of Nova Scotia declared a provincial state of emergency to help contain the spread of COVID-19.

For the health and safety of our employees and the people we interact with, a COVID-19 Response Plan for working from home and returning to work was developed for the Office of the Premier, Executive Council Office, Office of Strategy Management and Office of Citizen Centered Approaches.

The plan outlined the requirement for employees to continue their responsibilities whether working from home or at the office. All employees were provided with the required technology (including Microsoft Teams for video conferencing) to do their work. The plan also included a flexible schedule for how and when employees would return to the workplace, based on recommendations from Nova Scotia Public Health and the Chief Medical Officer for the Province. As the pandemic evolved, the response plan was modified accordingly.

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F. Annual Report Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act

The *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act* (the “*Act*”) was proclaimed into law on December 20, 2011. The *Act* allows government employees 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 disclosing employees from reprisals by enabling them to lay a complaint of reprisal with the Labour Board.

A wrongdoing, for the purpose 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 counseling someone to commit a wrongdoing.

OP/ECO/OSM have no items to report for 2020-2021.

Information Required under Section 18 of the <i>Act</i>	Fiscal Year 2020-2021
The number of disclosures received	0
The number of findings of wrongdoing	0
Details of each wrongdoing (insert separate row for each wrongdoing)	n/a
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing (insert separate row for each wrongdoing)	n/a