

# Invest Nova Scotia Business Plan

2025-26



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## Message from the Minister

As Minister of Growth and Development and Invest Nova Scotia, I believe in our ability to leverage our strengths and seize new opportunities in light of shifting global trade dynamics. Driving export growth through market diversification is not a new focus of ours, but it is a renewed one. Invest Nova Scotia's programs and services and the work they do with businesses every day will ensure our companies thrive in new markets both within Canada and abroad.

Here at home, Nova Scotia Loyal will put our producers at the forefront and make it easier for Nova Scotians to choose and buy local. Invest Nova Scotia's Innovation Rebate Program will support our processors and manufacturers, particularly in key sectors like housing, to make critical capital investments that enhance productivity. Competing in today's global marketplace has never been more important.

Invest Nova Scotia will continue to empower start-ups and entrepreneurs, ensuring they have access to the capital and resources they need at all stages of their growth. We will build on their success and showcase Nova Scotia as the best place to live, work and do business, attracting industry leaders from around the globe to join us.

From working with traditional industries of fishing, farming and forestry, to unlocking the potential of our critical minerals and renewable energy, we are uniquely positioned to drive economic growth and build our resilience.

Now is the time to turn this vision into a reality.



Honourable Colton LeBlanc  
Minister, Growth and Development

## Key Areas of Focus for 2025-2026

### Enabling market diversification and helping businesses be more productive.

Reaching new markets and being productive and competitive has never been more important. Our team will work with businesses to increase productivity and identify, reach, and develop new partners, customers, suppliers, and investors. We will also help them leverage our rich natural resources. Our approach will include programs and services to help companies diversify into new markets and be more productive.

Invest Nova Scotia will:

- Investigate new approaches to in-market representation to better support companies to find new opportunities in key markets.
- Work with the Nova Scotia Department of Intergovernmental Affairs and other partners to advance the province's trade action plan.
- Build key alliances and leverage networks both domestically and internationally to support innovation, investment, and export growth.
- [Atlantic Trade & Investment Growth Strategy](#) – collaborate with the Atlantic Provinces and the [Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency \(ACOA\)](#) to deliver programming including:
  - [Market Entry Development Program \(MEDP\)](#) – reduce risks of tariff uncertainty and accelerate growth, this program connects companies with international trade consultants who provide tailored market entry strategies and hands-on support in market.
  - [Scale-Up Hubs](#) – through established technology networks, facilitates international investment and technology partnerships, helping companies scale.
  - [Launch Export Atlantic Incubator](#) – supports businesses ready to export for the first time through information sessions, one-on-one coaching, and an educational trade mission.
  - [Tariff & Customs Advisory Program](#) – offers consultancy and advisory services to SMEs, assisting them in navigating tariffs and resolving supply chain challenges.

- Continue programming that provides solutions to challenges companies encounter as they adapt to market demands and seek new opportunities for growth. This includes:
  - [Trade Market Intelligence \(TMI\) Service](#)
  - [Export Development Program \(EDP\)](#)
  - [Trade Missions](#)
  - [Supplier Diversity Certification Pilot Program](#)
  - [In-person and Virtual Workshops](#)
  - [Innovation Rebate Program \(IRP\)](#)
  - [Productivity and Innovation Voucher Program \(PIVP\)](#)

### **Investing in new ideas and entrepreneurship to attract capital and create better jobs.**

Ensuring start-ups that choose Nova Scotia as the place to put down roots can access the capital and other support required for their success will be a critical focus of our work. As will attracting new, innovative firms to drive ecosystem growth and make our province their home.

Our efforts to drive entrepreneurship and support start-ups will focus on the following:

- Finding and fostering new high-potential technology companies while promoting entrepreneurship across the province.
- Empowering entrepreneurs with the knowledge and insights needed to stay ahead of global shifts in trade and spark innovative business solutions.
- Making venture capital investment through the [Nova Scotia First Fund](#) and delivering incubation facilities and acceleration programs and services, Invest Nova Scotia will:
  - Make direct venture capital investments in start-ups to address market gaps and provide essential funding that may not be available through other sources.
  - Implement the activating capital initiative – facilitate the formation of angel investor groups in regions outside of Halifax and strengthen the pipeline of investable companies.
  - Continue fund investments – invest in start-ups via our limited partnerships in external funds to leverage private capital.

- Offer incubation space and services for early-stage companies in Nova Scotia's strategic growth sectors, including lab, office, and light-industrial facilities at [The Labs](#) and [The Bays](#).
- Deliver acceleration programs and services to support start-ups nearing investment readiness, with both financial and non-financial assistance:
  - [Invest Nova Scotia Accelerate](#) – a milestone-based program, focused on five sector-based cohorts, that helps start-ups become investment-ready.
  - [GreenShoots](#) – a program delivered with partners to assist bioresource technology companies by providing funding and business guidance from seasoned professionals.
- Collaborating with key stakeholders, including the private sector, government departments, post-secondary institutions, and business accelerators and incubators, to advance projects that foster innovation, attract investment, support sustainability, and stimulate economic growth across all regions.

### **Advancing Nova Scotia's strategic sectors and enhancing regional competitiveness.**

Invest Nova Scotia supports businesses in leveraging Nova Scotia's rich natural resources for sustainable economic growth. Our team works with businesses in natural resources and other key sectors to help them develop relationships with new partners, find new customers, source suppliers, and connect with investors. We will look for avenues to integrate natural resources with innovative technologies, delivering the next generation of products and services for the sector.

Our approach will include:

- Partnering with industry and government to maximize the economic value of Nova Scotia's natural resources in sectors such as seafood, agrifood, renewable energy, and critical minerals, highlighting regional advantages, attracting investment, strengthening supply chains, supporting increased productivity, and exploring new market opportunities.
- Promoting Nova Scotia's unique assets and value proposition to attract industry leaders in key sectors from around the globe to join us.

- Informing strategies that align provincial investments and programming to accelerate the growth and scaling of Nova Scotia’s technology sectors.
- Developing investment attraction initiatives focused on attracting innovative, highly productive, sustainable companies, creating high value jobs across the province.
- Working with stakeholders to advance the ecosystem required for strategic cluster development and business growth in areas such as advanced technologies, industrial biomanufacturing, and carbon capture, utilization and storage.
- Overseeing the strategic management and development of industrial real estate assets and business-enabling infrastructure.
- In collaboration with partners, pursuing opportunities where AI can enhance productivity, innovation, and competitiveness in priorities like healthcare, energy, housing, and defence.

### **Ensuring all communities experience growth and prosperity.**

Entrepreneurs across Nova Scotia have shown remarkable ingenuity, creating exceptional products, fostering new opportunities, and contributing to the prosperity of their communities and the province.

Businesses committed to calling Nova Scotia home need our support to stay rooted and grow globally. We will make it easy for Nova Scotians to identify and buy local, and we will ensure companies in all regions have the advice, programs, services and resources they need to grow.

Our key initiatives will include:

- Serving as a first point of contact for entrepreneurs and guiding them to the resources they need to grow their businesses.
- Collaborating with [Regional Enterprise Networks \(RENs\)](#) and community partners to identify investment opportunities and highlight local business capabilities through the co-development of regional value proposition materials highlighting key assets and sectors.
- Continuing to fund and promote the [Atlantic Site Certification](#) program, which helps identify and promote development-ready sites and industrial buildings.
- Partnering with provincial organizations to help entrepreneurs tap into provincial procurement opportunities.

- Amplifying marketing campaigns promoting [Nova Scotia Loyal](#).
- Delivering the [Nova Scotia Loyal Producer Labelling Program](#) – making it easier for consumers to identify and support locally-grown, made, or designed products and services.
- Updating the goals and commitments in our [Accessibility Plan](#) to ensure accessibility is integrated into all aspects of our programming, employment, and physical spaces. The Invest Nova Scotia accessibility committee will:
  - Develop a Workplace Accessibility Policy for Invest Nova Scotia.
  - Monitor both the implementation of the Built Environment as well as the development of the accessibility standards for Employment, Goods and Services, and Information and Communication for future updates.



## Performance Measures

Measure	2025-2026 Target
Payroll across the province	Clients maintain their payroll
Attract innovative businesses in our key sectors to establish in, or relocate to, the province	A minimum of 10 innovative companies establish in, or relocate to, Nova Scotia
Attract and incentivize private capital that is invested for productivity improvements through the Innovation Rebate Program	A private sector commitment of a minimum of \$36 million in capital investment for productivity improvements
Leverage private capital through the Nova Scotia First Fund	Investments in Nova Scotia start-ups leverage a minimum of \$12 million of private capital (i.e., \$2 leveraged for every \$1 invested through the Nova Scotia First Fund)
Diversify export markets	A minimum of 20% of clients diversify exports through sales to an additional market
Value of Nova Scotia exports	Clients maintain value of exports

## Budget Context 2025-2026

	Budget 2024-25 \$	Forecast 2024-25 (Dec) \$	Estimate 2025-26 \$
<b>Revenues</b>			
Operating grant	62,045,000	52,269,600	57,228,000
Interest on loans receivable	100,000	4,835,000	4,619,000
Other	2,564,500	1,630,000	1,539,400
Ordinary recoveries	-	1,223,300	1,180,100
Nova Scotia Fund (NSF): Real properties	926,000	871,300	988,700
Federal revenue	705,900	787,200	394,000
Miscellaneous provincial revenue	61,500	272,400	272,000
Nova Scotia First Fund (NSFF) investment income	1,800	349,100	5,000
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>66,404,700</b>	<b>62,237,900</b>	<b>66,226,200</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Operating expenses	26,017,900	24,868,600	26,213,500
Strategic investments	23,359,000	14,559,000	18,400,000
Innovation Rebate Program (IRP)	12,000,000	12,000,000	12,000,000
Interest on long-term debt	-	4,744,000	4,567,000
Export Development Program (EDP)	2,500,000	3,250,000	2,500,000
Productivity and Innovation Voucher Program (PIVP)	1,000,000	1,004,900	1,004,900
Nova Scotia Fund (NSF): Real properties	926,000	548,900	884,200
Early Stage Commercialization Funding (ESCF)	500,000	500,000	500,000
Nova Scotia First Fund (NSFF) investment expenses	-	183,700	5,000
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>66,302,900</b>	<b>61,659,100</b>	<b>66,074,600</b>
<b>Operating surplus</b>	<b>101,800</b>	<b>578,800</b>	<b>151,600</b>
<b>Other revenues (expenses)</b>			
Statutory capital contributions	11,000,000	18,050,000	11,000,000
Amortization of deferred capital grants	146,200	146,200	146,200
Capital grant	250,000	-	-
Provision for impairment of portfolio investments and loans receivable	(600,000)	(422,000)	(600,000)
Depreciation	(363,000)	(344,800)	(399,500)
Realized gains on portfolio investments	-	284,900	-
<b>Total Other revenues (expenses)</b>	<b>10,433,200</b>	<b>17,714,300</b>	<b>10,146,700</b>
<b>Surplus</b>	<b>10,535,000</b>	<b>18,293,100</b>	<b>10,298,300</b>

## Appendix A: Strategic Investment Funds (SIF)

Pursuant to *Business Development Incentives Regulations*, the business plan must include the policies and guidelines governing the Payroll Rebate and any other business development incentive funded through the strategic investment funds. The Payroll Rebate is the only business development incentive funded by strategic investment funds (SIF) in fiscal 2025-2026.

<b>PAYROLL REBATE</b>	
<b>Overview</b>	<p>A Payroll Rebate is a discretionary, non-entitlement business development incentive intended to promote targeted payroll generation by creating incremental employment. Includes, where appropriate, the opportunity to target further incentives to key groups such as new residents, new graduates, underrepresented populations, and other groups deemed appropriate.</p> <p>The Payroll Rebate may be used when it can be shown that a company's project generates an economic benefit to the province, including export development, investment in the province, or improved competitiveness of existing businesses in one or more of the province's key economic sectors.</p>
<b>Amount</b>	<p>Payroll Rebates will be equivalent to between 5% and 10% of gross payroll, depending on the company's strategic location in Nova Scotia or business sector and the economic benefit generated to the province. Additional rebates may be considered where the company is hiring individuals with specific skills or experience, new members of the Nova Scotia workforce, underrepresented groups, is increasing export activity, undertaking a capital project deemed strategic to their Nova Scotia region, or establishing or expanding its presence in rural Nova Scotia.</p> <p>All other Nova Scotia provincial government assistance with respect to the project and any federal emergency assistance that incents or subsidizes payroll or wages must be disclosed to Invest Nova Scotia and may influence the rebate amount.</p>
<b>Eligibility</b>	<p>The company's business must be considered eligible according to Invest Nova Scotia's operating regulations.</p> <p>Projects are expected to create sustainable long-term employment. Cyclical peaks in employment will not be considered for assistance.</p> <p>Eligibility requires that all projects should result in the creation of jobs for at least 20 full-time equivalents (FTEs) in Nova Scotia. Projects creating fewer than 20 FTEs will be considered when there is high strategic value or strong economic benefit.</p> <p>Companies that have previously received an incentive under the Payroll Rebate will not be eligible for additional incentive unless the project is incremental to the peak FTE level attained by the company under the previously provided incentive.</p> <p>Projects considered competitively harmful to existing Nova Scotia businesses will not be considered.</p> <p>The company will collect and remit employee payroll taxes in accordance with the Income Tax Act (Canada).</p>

## **Appendix B: Nova Scotia Fund**

Pursuant to Business Development Incentives Regulations, the business plan must include the following information in respect of the Nova Scotia Fund.

The Nova Scotia Fund portfolio currently has approximately \$23.5 million outstanding to 9 companies located throughout the province. The annual portfolio lending cap is set at \$100,000 for fiscal 2025-26 solely for the purposes of realization costs.

The Nova Scotia Fund has not issued new business development incentives since fiscal 2014-2015. The current regulations for the Nova Scotia Fund prohibit new business development incentives.