

April 18, 2023

Honourable Kelly Regan, MLA
Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts
C/O Legislative Committees Office Reciv
1700 Granville Street
One Government Place, 2nd Floor
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 1X5

Received LCO
April 18, 2023

Dear Ms. Regan:

RE: NOVA SCOTIA LEGAL AID COMMISSION – MARCH 29, 2023 PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

It was our pleasure to appear before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and to speak to our most recent Annual Report, Business Plan, Accountability Report and Financial Statements. Please find enclosed the information requested/offered during the meeting held on March 29, 2023.

1. Statistical data relating to the percentage of people who have income and who qualify for legal aid (See page 5 of transcript):

In response to this request, I am enclosing a series of charts that examine the financial eligibility of people who have applied for legal aid from 2010-2011 fiscal year to 2019-2020 and a partial analysis of 2020-2021. We have not yet undergone a full analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on the 2020-2021 to 2022-2023 years. I am pleased to provide the data report along with graphs that show full service open files for clients with income exceeding our financial eligibility guidelines, rejections of applicants exceeding our financial eligibility guidelines and a comparison of full-service clients who meet our existing guidelines v. clients who exceed our financial eligibility guidelines.

2. Average caseload per solicitor at Nova Scotia Legal Aid? How many clients per year are they dealing with? (see page 6 of transcript):

In response to this request, Nova Scotia Legal Aid uses Daily Time Reports (DTRs), applications received, applications opened, and applications closed data to analyse caseloads. In our system,

each file counts but not every file is the same. For example, a homicide file is a file count of one as is an assault file. In family, an application for child support is a file count of 1 as is a child protection file. In our Case Management System (CMS), each file counts as one but we recognize the complexity, preparation hours and court time is significantly different. The data for applications received, files opened, files closed, and average file times may be found in our Annual Report for 2021-2022 year which can be found here: [Nova Scotia Legal Aid Commission 2021-22 Annual-Report](#) . The reports that NSLA utilizes to manage resources does not produce an average caseload number per se and so this is a more challenging question to answer, but if you require any clarification on the information below, please let me know.

For 2021-22 of our full-service applications received, 58% were for adult criminal matters, 33% for family matters, and the remaining 9% were for other areas of law. We closed 11,745 Staff Lawyer files and 3,490 private lawyer files. When we look at the weighted file time, 45% were for adult criminal matters and 48% were for family matters and the remaining 7% on youth and social justice.

Over the last 10 years, the average file time across all 5 areas increased by 37% from 6.5 hours to 8.9 hours. Family law file time increased significantly over the last 10 years from 11.6 to 17.6 hours (52% increase) and child protection increased from 28.5 to 35.6 hours. Criminal matters also increased, on average 1 hour per file but when broken down into subject matter area, the impact is greater. For example, drug trafficking increased from 10 to 16.5 hours.

Nova Scotia Legal Aid utilizes a variety of tools to monitor caseloads and staffing needs across all offices. We use context reports, Daily Time Reports, applications received, files opened, and files closed as part of this process. The context report generates a guideline for lawyers for an expected range of files they should be closing per year. It is a report based on average file time and is a number that we believe needs to be revisited in light of the changes noted above in average file times. It is a report that needs to be updated to take into consideration the different areas of law like social justice, appeal work, mental health legal services, and youth services. It also does not take into account mixed practices (family/criminal; family/social justice) and it does not take into account rural/urban differences (travel for example). The current context numbers for closed file per year that we currently use:

- Full criminal practice – 275
- Full family practice – 100
- Combined family/*Children and Family Services Act* (CFSA) practice – 80/20
- Full CFSA practice – 40

Since these numbers will represent a range of matters, it does not represent a full picture. For example, the average file time for a criminal matter is 6.1 hours and so using this report the average hours/year is 1,677.5. For family, the average file time is 17.6 hours and using this report the average hours/year is 1,760. However, this does not take into account the actual makeup of the caseload. For example, a drug trafficking matter, a historical sexual assault, or a homicide file all have higher average file times.

We use Daily Time Reports to track Staff Lawyer time. If we look at billable hours (preparation hours and court time), in 2021-2022, our Staff Lawyers billed 124,707 hours on full-service files. We had 103 full-time equivalent Staff Lawyers. On average, billable hours were 1,211 hours per lawyer. However, this does not include the time of our Summary Advice Counsel, Criminal Duty Counsel (cells and enhanced duty counsel), Telephone Duty Counsel (business hours and after hours) or our Summary Advice services. It also does not include administrative time, outreach, professional development, or committee work (internal and external). If we add in administrative time for Staff Lawyers, the average per lawyer increases to 1,470 hours per year.

Context reports are provided to Managing Lawyers monthly as a tool in monitoring the caseloads of their individual lawyers. This, in conjunction, with one-on-one meetings with staff, enable the Managing Lawyer to assess the caseload the lawyer is carrying and adjust as needed by reducing weekly intake and being conscious of type of matter assigned.

3. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan

Please find enclosed a copy of our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan. I am pleased to advise as well that the Law Foundation of Nova Scotia approved our grant application for a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Advisor to help the Executive lead and implement the plan.

If you require any clarification regarding the foregoing, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Yours sincerely,

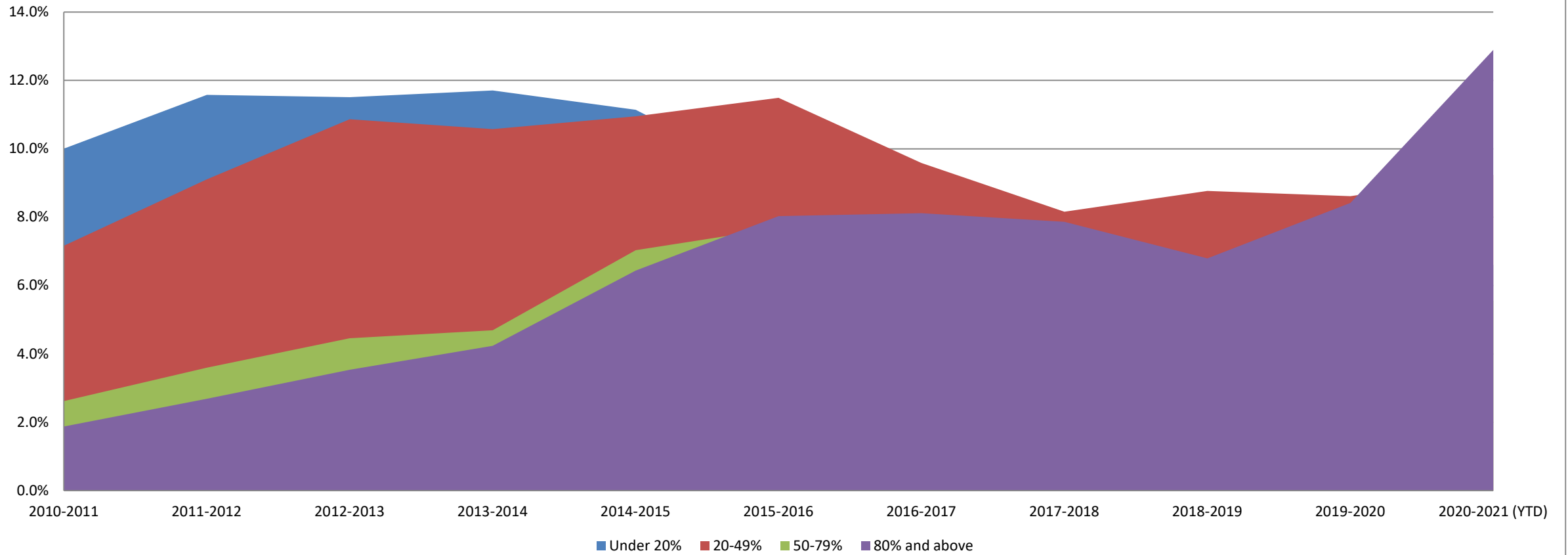
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Charlene Moore, KC
Chief Executive Officer

rpt56a.p	2010-11		2011-12		2012-13		2013-14		2014-15		2015-16		2016-17		2017-18		2018-19		2019-20		20-21 (YTD)	
FEG = Financial Eligibilty Guidelines	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Full Service (FS) Opened	13,879		13,971		13,747		13,226		14,415		15,206		14,919		14,417		14,274		13,404		8,187	
No Income (EI/Incar/no income)	8,661	62.4%	8,909	63.8%	8,795	64.0%	8,622	65.2%	9,354	64.9%	9,115	59.9%	6,896	46.2%	6,245	43.3%	6,983	48.9%	6,796	50.7%	4,658	56.9%
Has Income	5218	37.6%	5062	36.2%	4952	36.0%	4604	34.8%	5061	35.1%	6091	40.1%	8023	53.8%	8172	56.7%	7291	51.1%	6608	49.3%	3529	43.1%
FS Exceeding FEG:																						
Under 20%	522	10.0%	586	11.6%	570	11.5%	539	11.7%	564	11.1%	549	9.0%	707	8.8%	652	8.0%	541	7.4%	436	6.6%	233	6.6%
20-49%	374	7.2%	461	9.1%	538	10.9%	487	10.6%	554	10.9%	700	11.5%	769	9.6%	667	8.2%	639	8.8%	569	8.6%	326	9.2%
50-79%	137	2.6%	182	3.6%	221	4.5%	216	4.7%	356	7.0%	468	7.7%	542	6.8%	473	5.8%	444	6.1%	417	6.3%	196	5.6%
80% and above	98	1.9%	136	2.7%	175	3.5%	195	4.2%	326	6.4%	489	8.0%	651	8.1%	643	7.9%	495	6.8%	556	8.4%	455	12.9%
Total FS /w Income Exceeding FEG	1131	21.7%	1365	27.0%	1504	30.4%	1437	31.2%	1800	35.6%	2206	36.2%	2669	33.3%	2435	29.8%	2119	29.1%	1978	29.9%	1210	34.3%
Total FS /w Income inside FEG	4087	78.3%	3697	73.0%	3448	69.6%	3167	68.8%	3261	64.4%	3885	63.8%	5354	66.7%	5737	70.2%	5172	70.9%	4630	70.1%	2319	65.7%
	2010-11		2011-12		2012-13		2013-14		2014-15		2015-16		2016-17		2017-18		2018-19		2019-20		20-21 (YTD)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Reject-Financial Total	1,302	48.6%	1,016	41.9%	860	41.9%	631	41.2%	501	36.0%	433	42.4%	511	57.5%	643	46.1%	1,178	78.7%	1,326	60.9%	907	67.7%
Total Rejections	2678		2422		2052		1533		1391		1021		888		1396		1,497		2,176		1,340	
Reject-Financial Exceeding FEG:																						
Under 20%	81	6.2%	33	3.2%	15	1.7%	15	2.4%	8	1.6%	5	1.2%	14	2.7%	13	2.0%	41	3.5%	59	4.4%	32	3.5%
20-49%	309	23.7%	165	16.2%	115	13.4%	60	9.5%	33	6.6%	24	5.5%	30	5.9%	40	6.2%	93	7.9%	90	6.8%	71	7.8%
50-79%	312	24.0%	266	26.2%	210	24.4%	92	14.6%	72	14.4%	44	10.2%	57	11.2%	83	12.9%	164	13.9%	176	13.3%	72	7.9%
80% and above	426	32.7%	409	40.3%	422	49.1%	317	50.2%	247	49.3%	325	75.1%	353	69.1%	401	62.4%	630	53.5%	568	42.8%	315	34.7%
Total RF /w Income Exceeding FEG	1128	86.6%	873	85.9%	762	88.6%	484	76.7%	360	71.9%	398	91.9%	454	88.8%	537	83.5%	928	78.8%	893	67.3%	490	54.0%

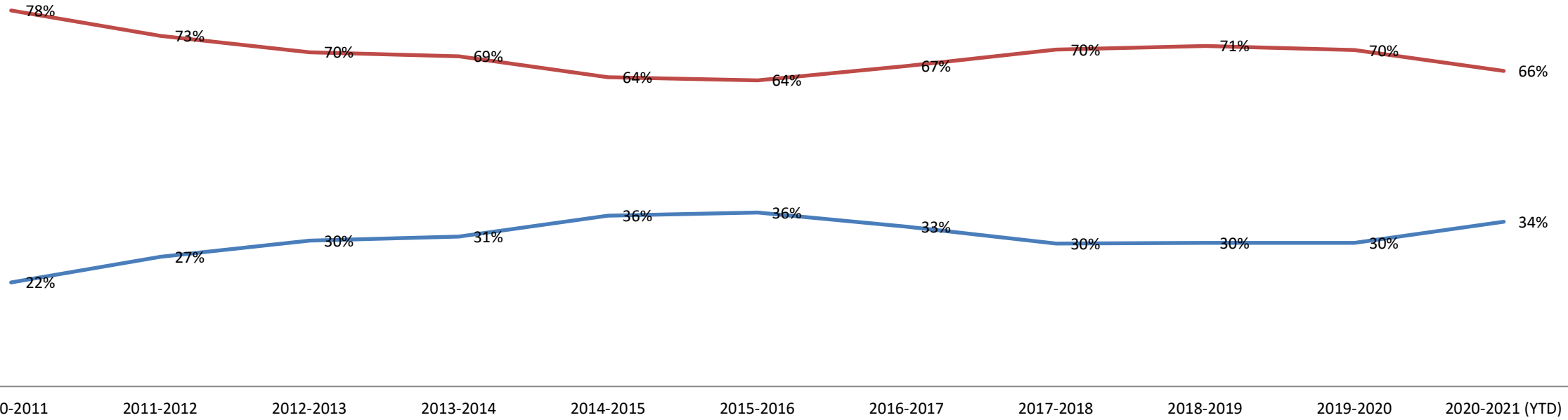
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Full Service Exceeding Financial Eligibility Guidelines

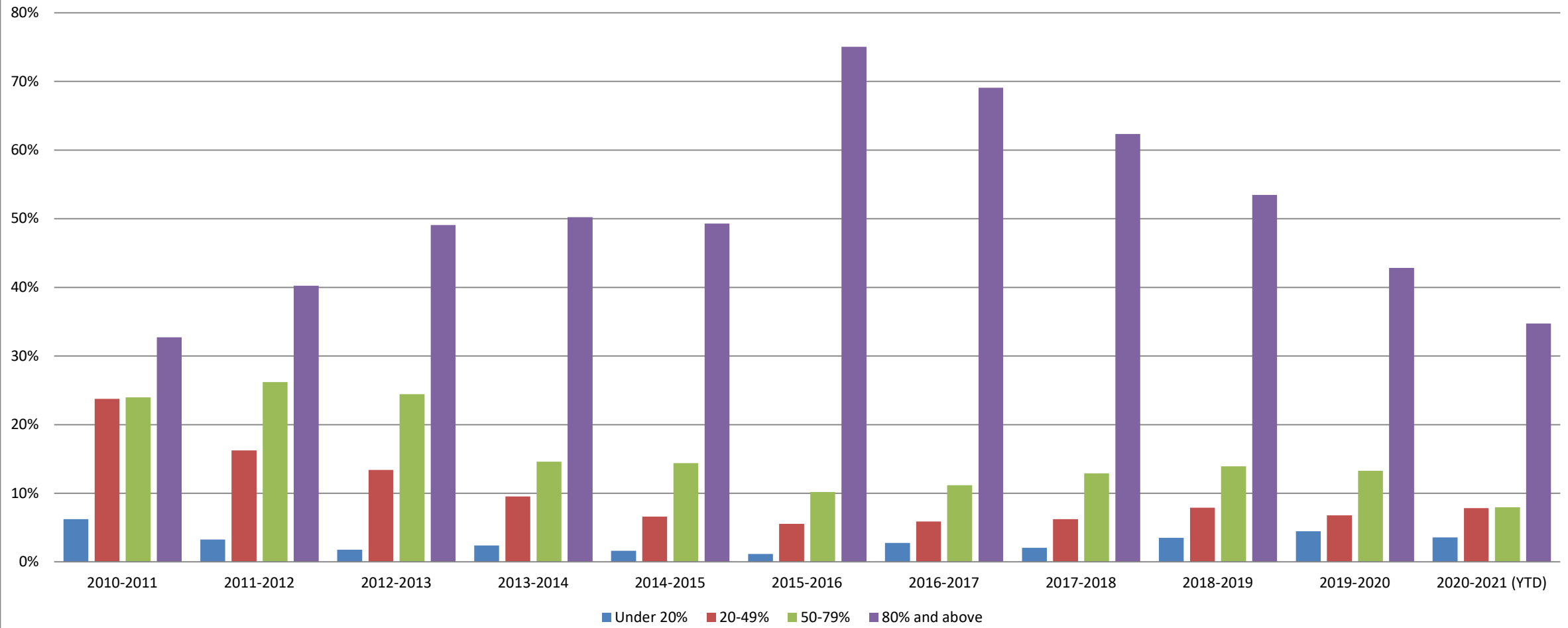


Meeting vs Exceeding Financial Eligibility Guidelines

— Total FS /w Income Exceeding FEG — Total FS /w Income Inside FEG



Reject-Financial Exceeding Financial Eligibility Guidelines



FEG = Financial Eligibility Guidelines	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021 (YTD)
Under 20%	10.0%	11.6%	11.5%	11.7%	11.1%	9.0%	8.8%	8.0%	7.4%	6.6%	6.6%
20-49%	7.2%	9.1%	10.9%	10.6%	10.9%	11.5%	9.6%	8.2%	8.8%	8.6%	9.2%
50-79%	2.6%	3.6%	4.5%	4.7%	7.0%	7.7%	6.8%	5.8%	6.1%	6.3%	5.6%
80% and above	1.9%	2.7%	3.5%	4.2%	6.4%	8.0%	8.1%	7.9%	6.8%	8.4%	12.9%
Total Full Service (FS) Exceeding FEG	21.7%	27.0%	30.4%	31.2%	35.6%	36.2%	33.3%	29.8%	29.1%	29.9%	34.3%

	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021 (YTD)
Total FS /w Income Exceeding FEG	22%	27%	30%	31%	36%	36%	33%	30%	30%	30%	34%
Total FS /w Income Inside FEG	78%	73%	70%	69%	64%	64%	67%	70%	71%	70%	66%

	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021 (YTD)
Under 20%	6%	3%	2%	2%	2%	1%	3%	2%	3%	4%	4%
20-49%	24%	16%	13%	10%	7%	6%	6%	6%	8%	7%	8%
50-79%	24%	26%	24%	15%	14%	10%	11%	13%	14%	13%	8%
80% and above	33%	40%	49%	50%	49%	75%	69%	62%	53%	43%	35%
Total FS Exceeding FEG	87%	86%	89%	77%	72%	92%	89%	84%	79%	67%	54%

	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021 (YTD)
Total RF /w Income Exceeding FEG	1128	873	762	484	360	398	454	537	928	893	490

RF = Rejected Financial

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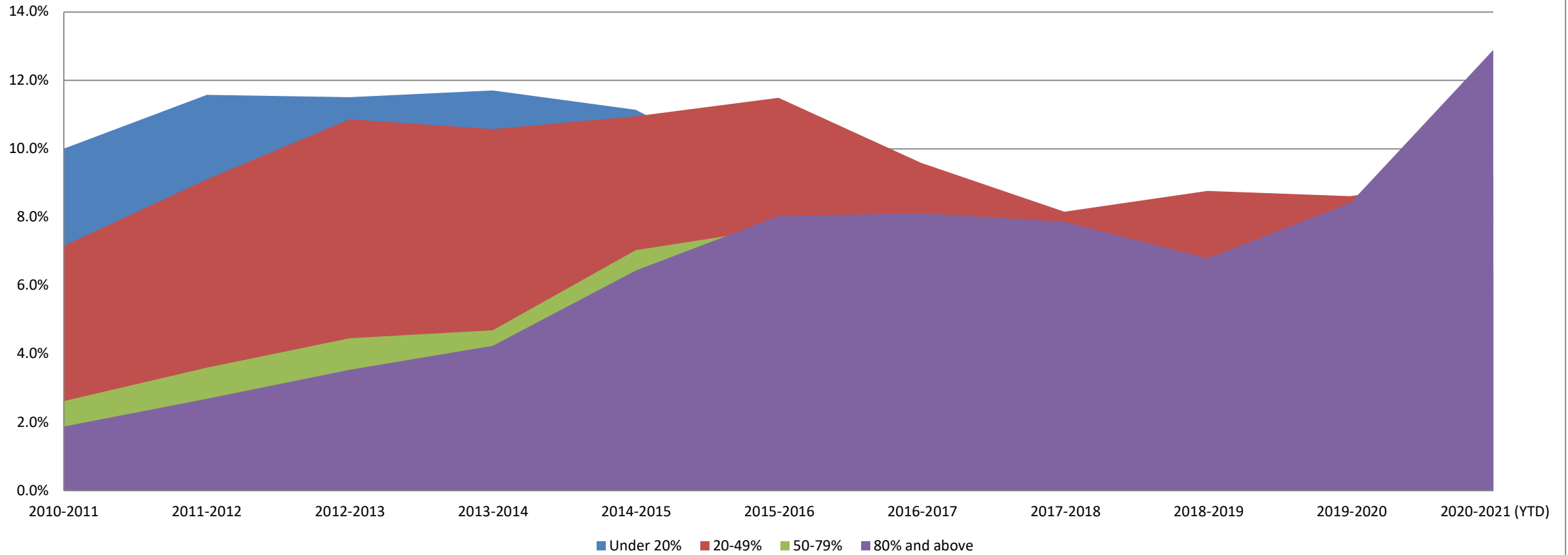
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Has Income	5218	37.6%	5062	36.2%	4952	36.0%	4604	34.8%	5061	35.1%	6091	40.1%	8023	53.8%	8172	56.7%	7291	51.1%	6608	49.3%	3529	43.1%
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	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
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20-49%	309	23.7%	165	16.2%	115	13.4%	60	9.5%	33	6.6%	24	5.5%	30	5.9%	40	6.2%	93	7.9%	90	6.8%	71	7.8%
50-79%	312	24.0%	266	26.2%	210	24.4%	92	14.6%	72	14.4%	44	10.2%	57	11.2%	83	12.9%	164	13.9%	176	13.3%	72	7.9%
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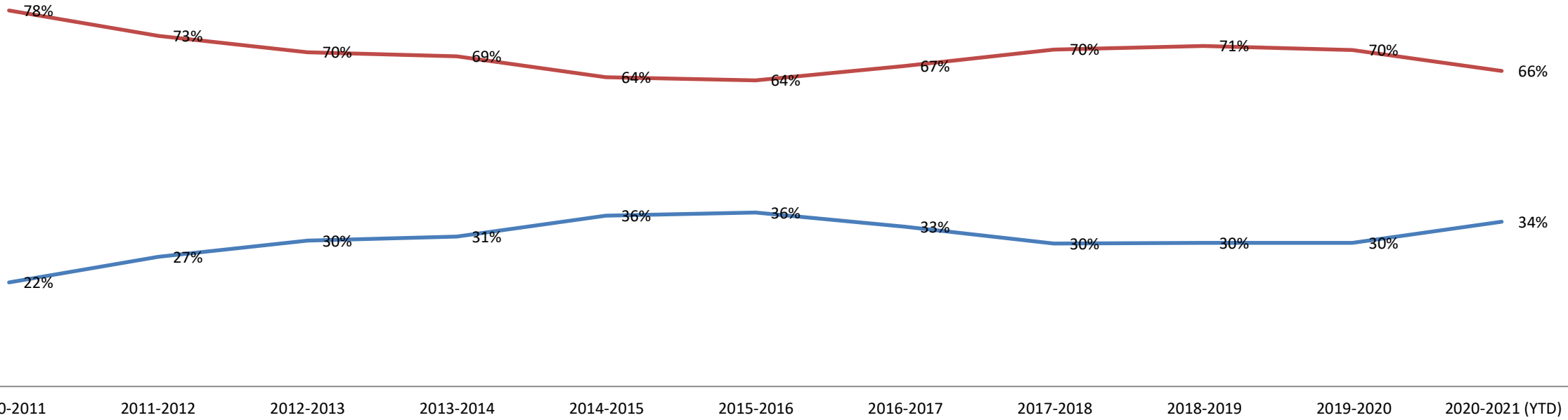
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Full Service Exceeding Financial Eligibility Guidelines

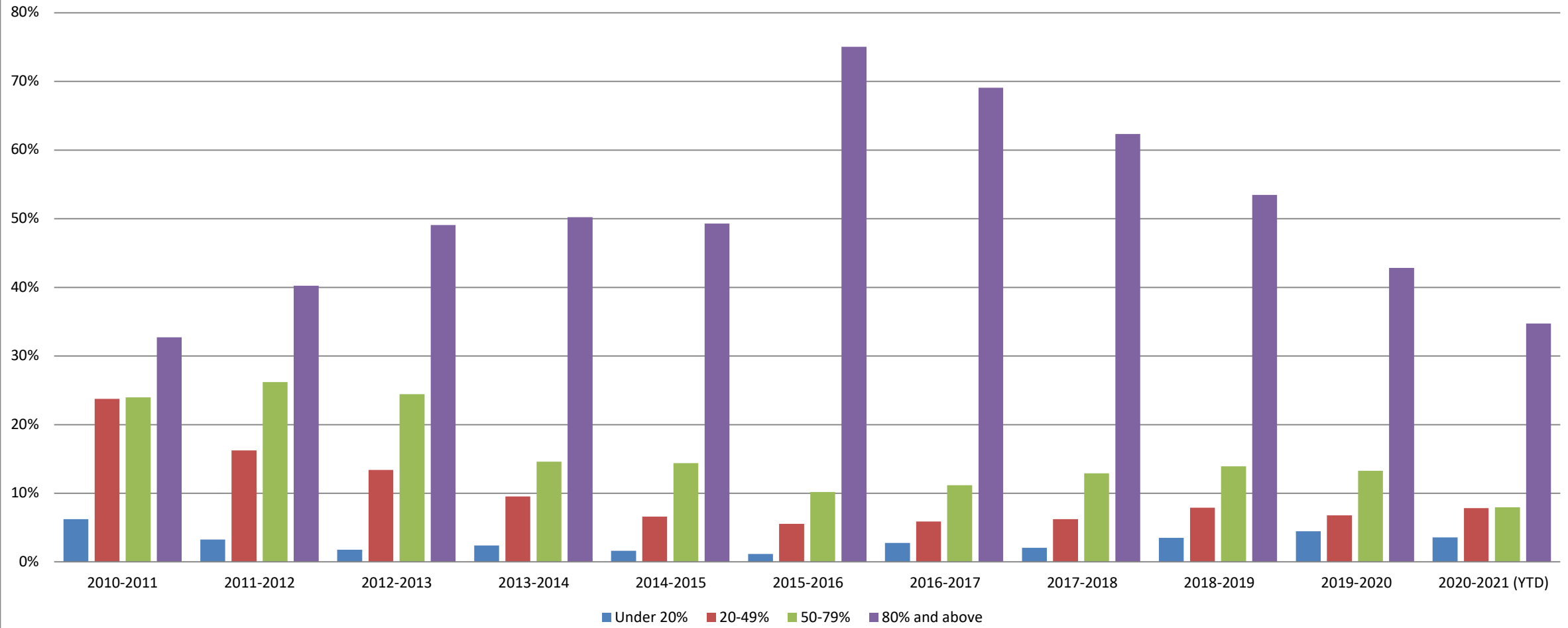


Meeting vs Exceeding Financial Eligibility Guidelines

— Total FS /w Income Exceeding FEG — Total FS /w Income Inside FEG



Reject-Financial Exceeding Financial Eligibility Guidelines



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50-79%	2.6%	3.6%	4.5%	4.7%	7.0%	7.7%	6.8%	5.8%	6.1%	6.3%	5.6%
80% and above	1.9%	2.7%	3.5%	4.2%	6.4%	8.0%	8.1%	7.9%	6.8%	8.4%	12.9%
Total Full Service (FS) Exceeding FEG	21.7%	27.0%	30.4%	31.2%	35.6%	36.2%	33.3%	29.8%	29.1%	29.9%	34.3%

	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021 (YTD)
Total FS /w Income Exceeding FEG	22%	27%	30%	31%	36%	36%	33%	30%	30%	30%	34%
Total FS /w Income Inside FEG	78%	73%	70%	69%	64%	64%	67%	70%	71%	70%	66%

	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021 (YTD)
Under 20%	6%	3%	2%	2%	2%	1%	3%	2%	3%	4%	4%
20-49%	24%	16%	13%	10%	7%	6%	6%	6%	8%	7%	8%
50-79%	24%	26%	24%	15%	14%	10%	11%	13%	14%	13%	8%
80% and above	33%	40%	49%	50%	49%	75%	69%	62%	53%	43%	35%
Total FS Exceeding FEG	87%	86%	89%	77%	72%	92%	89%	84%	79%	67%	54%

	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021 (YTD)
Total RF /w Income Exceeding FEG	1128	873	762	484	360	398	454	537	928	893	490

RF = Rejected Financial

The background of the entire page is a close-up photograph of various colored chalk sticks (blue, green, yellow, orange, red) lying on a light-colored, textured surface. The chalk is out of focus, creating a soft, bokeh-like effect with vibrant colors.

NOVA SCOTIA LEGAL AID

Diversity,
Equity and
Inclusion (DEI)
Strategic Plan

2021-2023



LEGAL AID
NOVA SCOTIA

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Executive Summary

Nova Scotia Legal Aid (NSLA) is committed to diversity equity, and inclusion as part of its service model. The organization has an Equity and Racial Diversity Committee (ERDC) made up of 17 members. In the fall of 2020, on the Committee's recommendation, the Executive of NSLA agreed to undertake an audit of its Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) practices with the goal of strengthening such practices in areas deemed in need of improvement.

Logix Consultants Limited was contracted to undertake the assignment. The company, in agreement with the NSLA, decided to go beyond a simple audit of DEI practices and instead focused on developing a more comprehensive DEI strategy.

To that end, Logix Consultants undertook the following activities:

- A review of DEI literature to identify best approaches
- A desk review of NSLA's internal documents and website to assess stated commitment to DEI
- A survey of Legal Aid organizations across the country to benchmark their approaches to DEI
- A survey of NSLA employees to conduct an internal audit assessment of DEI practice
- A survey of the Commission
- A survey of African Nova Scotian and Indigenous clients
- A survey of key stakeholders

The analysis of all of the results obtained was used to develop a comprehensive DEI strategy for NSLA. The strategy uses the popular Balanced Scorecard model to identify four key pillars (key result areas): 1) Client and Stakeholder Value; 2) Climate and Workplace Aesthetics; 3) Workforce Competence and Capacity; and 4) Leadership and Governance. Desired results, performance indicators, and corresponding actions were identified under each pillar.

The result of this work has led to the development of this 2021-2023 DEI Strategic Plan for NSLA.



01. Introduction

The mandate of the Nova Scotia Legal Aid Commission (NSLA) is to deliver legal services to qualifying applicants, with priority for matters involving individual liberty and civil rights as well as those involving the integrity and protection of the family. NSLA's Staff Lawyers and administrative professionals are located in offices located throughout the province and our services are supplemented by Private Bar lawyers when needed. Nova Scotia Legal Aid provides legal representation to vulnerable Nova Scotians. NSLA's focus is on criminal, family, and social justice law.

Nova Scotia Legal Aid provides some level of help to all Nova Scotians with a focus on providing support for the most vulnerable and equity seeking populations, including African Nova Scotians and Indigenous Peoples. NSLA is committed to helping overcome the barriers to access to justice.

Services provided by NSLA include:

- Public legal information
- legal advice for all Nova Scotians
- 24/7 telephone duty counsel
- court duty counsel
- online chat
- community outreach, and
- Full-service representation by a lawyer

NSLA's six-year Strategic Plan (2017–2023) has set specific client focused and system focused goals including providing culturally proficient services and ensuring staff have the necessary supports to undertake their work.

Some of these client-focused and culturally proficient initiatives include:

- Dedicated Indigenous and African Nova Scotian Social Workers
- Social Justice Support Worker
- Child Protection Practice Group
- Increased and re-imagined outreach service to diverse communities
- Ongoing cultural proficiency for all staff and the Commission



02. Focus on DEI

NSLA is committed to the principles of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) with a strong emphasis on helping to overcome historical barriers to access to justice.

In 2015, NSLA was awarded the CBA NS Excellence in Equity and Diversity Award. In 2020, NSLA's Equity and Racial Diversity Committee created the Anti-Black Racism Action Plan subcommittee (ERDC-ARAP) in contemplation of developing an Anti-Black Racism Action Plan for the NSLA Commission. Part of that mandate included the recommendation to the NSLA Commission, which was accepted, of an equity audit that would provide recommendations on internal policies, external communications, and organizational practices, as they pertain to goals of racial equity and any other areas of concerns or recommendations that may arise from the audit.

While there are many variations in the definition of Diversity Equity and Inclusion, we will subscribe to the following definitions for our purposes.

Diversity:

A wide range of qualities and attributes within a person, group or

community. When we value and embrace diversity, communities and workplaces become richer as they draw upon the variety of experiences, perspectives and skills that people can contribute.

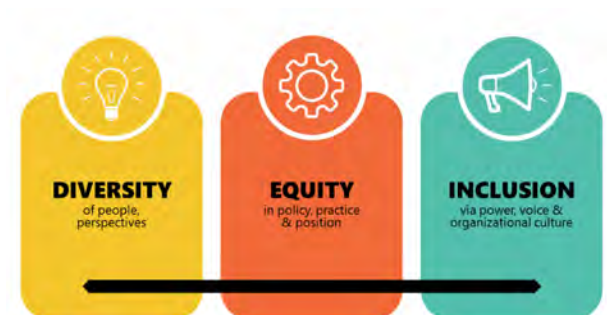
Equity:

Equity is treating everyone fairly by acknowledging their unique situation and addressing systemic barriers. The aim of equity is to ensure that everyone has access to equal results and benefits.

Inclusion:

Acknowledging and valuing people's differences so as to enrich social planning, decision making and quality of life for everyone. In an inclusive NSLA, we all have a sense of belonging, acceptance and recognition as valued and contributing members of society.

The focus on DEI within the NSLA is championed by its Equity and Racial Diversity Committee. The committee is comprised of 17 members.



03. Mission & Vision

Our Mission

NSLA's mission is to create an organization that leverages diversity, equity and inclusion as a source of enrichment and strength in delivering client service experiences. NSLA will foster a workplace that enables success for employees from all walks of life while sharing common fundamental values that are grounded in justice, civility and respect.

Our Vision

NSLA aspires to be a model collaborative, inclusive and caring organization that reflects diversity, equity and inclusion in the service we provide, thereby making us a great place to work and grow.



04. Our Values

The following core values are consistent with NSLA's corporate values and will serve to guide our practices and norms in the context of DEI.

Value/Principle	Description
Diversity	We value diversity in race, gender and gender identity, class, physical ability, sexual orientation as sources of inspiration, innovation and growth. We believe that our diversity must reflect our communities, and that while negotiating space for all can be messy, in the end we forge a better state of humanity.
Continuous Learning	We believe that a commitment to continuous learning is crucial to our transformation to a truly diverse and inclusive organization. Learning empowers understanding of each other and it enables NSLA to build the skills and capacity necessary to success now and in the future.
Respect for Each Other	We believe that to succeed at our mission and vision, we must adhere to the principle of mutual respect: respect for our co-workers, our clients, stakeholders, the Commission, and in particular, respect for equity seeking groups.
Investment in DEI	We believe that in order to foster a culture of diversity, equity and inclusion, investment in people, resources, training and supports must be undertaken. The investments must be both strategic and operational and must be aligned to the needs of BIPOC and equity seeking clients and other employees.
Interdependence	We hold firm to the belief that no-one is an island and that it takes the entire workforce pulling together in the same direction to achieve true equity, diversity and inclusion. As such we are mutually-interdependent and must always act accordingly.

05. The Balanced Scorecard Model

The Balanced Scorecard (BSC) model is a well-known tool for strategic planning. The model promotes a balanced approach to the internal and the external focus acting upon the organization. The ultimate goal for NSLA is to deliver value to all of its clients and stakeholders. In the context of a DEI strategy, the goal is to deliver superior value to equity seeking clients and stakeholders both within and outside the organization.

The internal levers that will enable the delivery of superior client and stakeholder value are grouped into three dimensions: 1) the internal climate and the design, layout, and aesthetics of the physical workspace; 2) the workforce capacity in terms of representation along with the skills and competencies with to meet the needs of equity seeking groups; and 3) the organizational leadership and governance needed to support diversity equity and inclusion.

By simultaneously managing these dimensions within the NSLA, the organization can achieve the status of being a truly diverse, equitable and inclusive organization. Based on the engagement of multiple stakeholders, we've identified a number of priorities and initiatives under each of the dimensions of the balanced scorecard. Those priorities are articulated in the pages that follow.

The four key result areas (KRAs) of the DEI strategy



06. Strategic Priorities

After careful analysis of DEI audit data from the NSLA, the strategic priorities emanating from the data were classified using the four perspectives of the BSC model, also referred to as four key result areas (KRAs). Under each KRA, there are a number of desired results or objectives. The desired results emanated from the DEI audit and represent areas needing improvement in order to strengthen DEI practice at the NSLA.

	Key Result Area	Desired Results
	Client and Stakeholder Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accessibility & Opportunity• Inclusive Service• Engagement & Outreach• Safety
	Climate and Physical Workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inclusion & Belonging• Workplace Aesthetics• Physical Accessibility
	Workforce Capacity & Competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employee Composition & Retention• Skills & Competencies• Promotion & Opportunity• Career Development
	Leadership and Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leadership & Governance Composition• Policies and Procedures• Compliance and Accountability• Strategic Resources

Client and Stakeholder Value

Creating value for clients, employees and stakeholders require that NSLA's service must be culturally inclusive. By that we mean, the organization has a range of services that meet the needs of not only mainstream society, but the unique requirements of marginalized communities. Delivering value to these communities will require respectful outreach and engagement while making sure NSLA is accessible and that those who wish to use its services have equal opportunity to do so.



Client and Stakeholder Value

Results and Actions

Desired Results (Priorities)	Performance Indicators	In Year 1 we will	In Year 2 we will	In Year 3 we will
Enhance ease of access to NSLA service for diverse clients	<p>Create a system to collect information on ease of access to assess improved satisfaction.</p> <p>Improve access and presence in diverse communities across the Province</p>	<p>Develop a system of self identification for staff and clients that will allow for better alignment of staff competencies.</p> <p>Create a plan to improve collection of data to develop a client profile that will allow for better alignment of services.</p> <p>Develop plan to engage with communities to collect information on ease of access to NSLA's services and make recommendations to improve access where needed.</p>	<p>Create a plan to improve outreach and service in communities for whom service barriers have been identified based on the information and data collected in Year 1.</p> <p>As part of that plan, consider establishing pilot satellite offices in communities disproportionately impacted by service barriers.</p>	Implement outreach plan and follow-up consultation with communities.
Strengthen the inclusivity of service delivery	Annual % of service requests from potential clients not met by NSLA <5%	<p>Review of denied service requests to determine NSLA's adequacy in terms of capacity, scope, and capabilities.</p> <p>Review current services to consider including human rights-related services to support African Nova Scotian and Indigenous clients.</p> <p>Develop and implement plan to consult with marginalized communities to identify service support not currently offered by NSLA.</p>	Develop a plan to maximize NSLA services reach to African Nova Scotian and Indigenous communities and identify if additional resources needed to implement plan and develop strategy to address it.	Implement plan
Desired Results (Priorities)	Performance Indicators	In Year 1 we will	In Year 2 we will	In Year 3 we will
Enhance outreach and engagement with diverse communities and stakeholder organizations	Annual number of effective outreach initiatives – at least one major initiative per region	Integrate culturally responsive practices into our management, administration, education, and outreach program	Establish collaborations with organizations and agencies that are closely connected to marginalized groups to better serve diverse clients.	Engage with Crowns, Justice lawyers, child welfare social workers, police and the judiciary through joint training sessions aimed at improving accountability for systemic racism in their institutions.

Climate and Workplace

The internal climate of NSLA must be one that is inclusive of diverse races, cultures, religions, ways of seeing the world, and ways of knowing. The internal climate must foster a sense of belonging for all that work there, in particular equity seeking groups. Workplace aesthetics and layout should reflect and promote inclusion and belonging. In addition to the aesthetics, the workplace must be physically accessible to those who are physically challenged.



Climate and Workplace

Results and Actions

Desired Results (Priorities)	Performance Indicators	In Year 1 we will	In Year 2 we will	In Year 3 we will
Enhanced culture of inclusion and belonging for diverse groups.	% of employees rating a strong sense of inclusion and belonging $\geq 75\%$	<p>Continually review existing policies & procedures to remove barriers to a more inclusive workplace.</p> <p>Encourage a culture of open communication without reprisal by inviting BIPOCs when necessary, to provide culture-specific opinions/viewpoints on important organizational matters – e.g., HR policies, service designs, etc.</p> <p>Establish a peer mentoring program for new lawyers particularly from equity seeking groups.</p>	<p>Develop a strategy to tackle systemic anti-black racism.</p> <p>Develop updated Indigenous Justice strategy.</p> <p>Establish an award that recognizes employees that promote inclusion and belonging at NSLA.</p>	Continue to develop and implement initiatives designed to prevent discrimination, harassment, and other actions that undermine our commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equal opportunity.

Desired Results (Priorities)	Performance Indicators	In Year 1 we will	In Year 2 we will	In Year 3 we will
Improved workplace aesthetics	Employee satisfaction rating with workplace aesthetics $\geq 75\%$	<p>Review current workplace aesthetics (art, layout, artifacts, etc.). Make recommendations for creating a diverse aesthetic – Art and artifacts from different cultures, color schemes.</p> <p>Conduct review of all physical spaces to ensure efficient access inside and outside all NSLA's facilities.</p>	<p>Consider redesigning NSLAs stationary to reflect its commitment to diversity and equity.</p> <p>Consult with accessibility Nova Scotia to develop plan to address any deficiencies identified from the review.</p> <p>Begin to implement the plan.</p>	Engage with crowns, Justice lawyers, child welfare social workers, police and the judiciary through joint training sessions aimed at improving accountability for systemic racism in their institutions.
Improved physical accessibility of the workplace	Compliance with best practices for an accessible workplace $\geq 80\%$		<p>Conduct review of all physical spaces to ensure efficient access inside and outside all NSLA's facilities.</p>	<p>Consult with accessibility Nova Scotia to develop plan to address any deficiencies identified from the review.</p> <p>Begin to implement the plan.</p>

Workforce Focus

The workforce dimension to DEI must give attention to several elements. There is a need for emphasis on expanding the representation of BIPOCs in the workplace as well as retaining them. BIPOC employees must be given the tools, training and supports to be successful. They must have equal access to opportunities for promotion and ascension to leadership positions. Finally, in order to have a cohesive workforce, the skills and competencies of all employees must be enhanced to avoid unconscious bias, anti-Black racism, sexism, ageism, and all other forms of discrimination and prejudice.



Workforce Focus

Results and Actions

Desired Results (Priorities)	Performance Indicators	In Year 1 we will	In Year 2 we will	In Year 3 we will
Composition	<p>% of BIPOC members on the Commission</p> <p>% of BIPOC employees reflects clients we serve</p>	<p>Conduct a review of the Commission's recruitment process to ensure equity and access to opportunities for potential BIPOC Commission Directors.</p> <p>Conduct review of HR recruitment strategies to ensure equity and access.</p>	<p>Establish a practice of consulting with leaders of racialized and other underrepresented groups and communities in its recruitment of Commission Directors.</p> <p>Identify and solidify relationships with organizations to assist in recruitment.</p>	
Strengthening the policy support for DE&I	<p>The effectiveness rating of DE&I policies</p> <p>Annual number of policy violations</p>	<p>Develop a DEI policy for NSLA</p> <p>Development of policy and procedure for handling reported incidents of systemic anti-black racism.</p>	<p>Establish a plan for promoting the DEI policy and related procedures.</p>	

Desired Results (Priorities)	Performance Indicators	In Year 1 we will	In Year 2 we will	In Year 3 we will
Improving the resources to support DE&I	Dedicated budget allocation for DEI activities.	<p>Survey ERDC and Indigenous Justice committees to identify budget priorities.</p> <p>Executive to build budget based on information collected.</p> <p>Seek funding for manager/director of DE&I.</p>	<p>Present overall budget plan to government with rationale for increased funding.</p>	
Enhanced compliance and accountability in DE&I practice at NSLA	The gap between targets and performance on the DEI Scorecard $\leq 5\%$	<p>Establish a DEI Scorecard.</p> <p>Two reports to Executive a year (year-end and September); reports to Commission at each Commission Meeting.</p>	<p>Dedicate a block of time at Commission's quarterly meetings to the topic of DEI.</p> <p>Embed the structure for diversity, equity, and inclusion across NSLA and into the job descriptions and performance evaluations of all our employees.</p>	<p>Take advantage of the BIPOC talent within the organization to challenge the deeply flawed systems that discriminate against and disenfranchises BIPOC clients.</p>

Governance and Leadership

DEI will thrive within the NSLA as long as the leadership and the governing body deem it to be a strategic priority. NSLA will begin focusing on diversifying the composition of the leadership team and the Commission. The resources needed to support DEI must be sanctioned by the Commission. Policies that promote DEI must be established and enforced. An accountability framework that drives DEI performance will need to be established.



Governance and Leadership

Results and Actions

Desired Results (Priorities)	Performance Indicators	In Year 1 we will	In Year 2 we will	In Year 3 we will
Enhancing the diversity of employee composition	Employee satisfaction with compositional diversity > 80%	<p>Establish a diversity profile that reflects the client base of the NSLA and seek the necessary exemptions that will allow for targeted recruitment of BIPOCs.</p> <p>Develop a plan to increase the % of BIPOCs in management and senior positions.</p> <p>Create and implement a DE&I Hiring and Retention Strategy.</p> <p>Seek to make the ANS Social Worker position permanent.</p> <p>Identify and develop DE&I best practices.</p>	<p>Create paid position such as manager/director/ advisor of DE&I reporting to CEO.</p> <p>Improve supports to employees that are BIPOCs by providing mentoring opportunities.</p> <p>Plan to recruit new staff from underrepresented groups – or replace departing staff with such members where targets for representation are not yet met.</p> <p>Develop a plan to hire more ANS and Indigenous staff lawyers, support staff and court workers.</p>	<p>Integrate diversity, equity and inclusion into hiring, promotion, and salary decisions.</p> <p>Create a dedicated summer student position for 2 students from the IB&M initiative so we are connecting with the best candidates at the earliest opportunity.</p>
Desired Results (Priorities)	Performance Indicators	In Year 1 we will	In Year 2 we will	In Year 3 we will
Enhancing workforce competence in DE&I	All employees have received training in core DEI competencies	<p>Establish core-competency-based DEI training program that all employees must be required to complete within the next two years.</p> <p>Education on microaggression – what it is and how to be mindful of what you say to staff who identify as ANS/Black or Indigenous.</p> <p>Identifying existing content on DEI-related topics that will be mandatory for new employees to watch and/or create new content on DEI-related topics that will be mandatory for new employees to watch.</p>	<p>Provide practice-specific seminars (criminal and family) on how to leverage a client's diverse background to advocate for them.</p> <p>Continue to provide ongoing continuous professional development with a focus on cultural competency/implicit bias.</p> <p>Implement process whereby all new employees watch content on DEI-related topics and complete questionnaire afterwards to confirm follow through.</p>	

07. Next Steps

It is said that the success of a strategic plan lies not in its formulation, but rather in its implementation. While the plan may have been developed over several weeks, it will typically require several years to implement. To position NSLA for a successful roll out, the following critical success factors must be addressed.

Organizational Alignment

As a first step, NSLA will examine its organizational structure to ensure that each goal in the DEI strategy can find a champion within the organization. Each goal must be led by a department or individual who will be responsible for the project management framework implicated by the goal. In some cases, some employees may need to be assigned new roles leading to changes in the organizational structure. A failure to align the organizational structure with the plan will risk the creation of orphan goals that never get implemented.

Prioritization of Initiatives

Not all initiatives are equally important. They have varying impact, resource requirements, skills requirements, and in some cases, there may be logistical constraints. It is important to prioritize initiatives using several criteria which include but are not limited to: 1) achieving quick wins to motivate the group; 2) ease of implementation; 3) cost of implementation; 4) availability of resources, and 5) the opportunity for synergy (i.e., implementing initiative A first makes it easier to implement initiative B). Using the criteria, initiatives can be scored and ranked and subsequently rolled out in that order.

Rollout of the Plan

The rollout of the plan will require the use of many tools that are typically part of the project management tool chest. First, in each fiscal year, NSLA will decide which initiatives it will implement; prepare budget submissions for funding if necessary; allocate the human resources; and develop a work plan which identifies all of the project activities on a time scale. Every activity must have an activity owner and every project must have a project manager. The senior leadership will establish regular project status update meetings to manage accountability for results.

Monitoring & Evaluation of the Plan

The only way to know if a plan is successful is to measure the desired impact it is supposed to have against targets set by the leadership team. For each desired result on the DEI strategy, there is a key performance indicator (KPI). With targets set, NSLA will need to establish a data collection regime along with a performance dashboard. The performance dashboard is a suite of key measures that will give the organization a synopsis of DEI performance in real time. The suite of measure could include: 1) BIPOC Composition; 2) BIPOC Client Satisfaction; 3) Number of DEI-related Complaints per Quarter; etc.

08. Summary

This document represents the collective effort of the staff and professional team of the organization. The strategic agenda, though challenging, is not insurmountable. Given the very flat nature of the NSLA, advancing the plan will require a concerted collaborative effort on the part of all employees.



Commitment to DEI

Overall, the audit shows that NSLA has made the issue of DEI an important one for the organization, going as far as commandeering the resources to develop a DEI strategic strategy. It is notable that the organization welcomed the expansion of the original scope of the project beyond a simple DEI audit.



A Model for the Country

The data from the benchmarking survey clearly indicate that NSLA has taken a step forward relative to its colleagues having developed a comprehensive DEI strategic plan. None of the respondents to the benchmarking survey possess a fully developed DEI strategic plan.



A Platform for Action

While many organizations articulate a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion in the form of a statement, without a platform or a framework for action, very little change happens. NSLA with the DEI strategic plan has a platform for action and an inherent framework for measuring progress over the next three years.

The strategic plan is a call to action to strengthen DEI practice at NSLA over the next three years. As a living document, it is expected that the organization will review progress on an annual basis at the very least, and recommend course corrections when desired results are not being achieved. The Commission is expected to undertake its necessary oversight role by leveraging the use of a DEI Dashboard to hold leadership accountable for results.

09. Acknowledgements

Logix Consultants Limited would like to acknowledge the participation of several people in this process: the participation of other legal aid organizations across the country; staff of NSLA, stakeholders, the Commission, and the clients from the African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaq communities. This work was initiated by the ERDC with support from the CEO and the Board of Commission Directors.

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***We don't own the
shame of the past
but we have to
own the present
and the future.***

Senator Wanda Thomas Bernard



10. DEI Resources

EDI Strategic Plan, McGill University

https://www.mcgill.ca/equity/files/equity/mcgill_strategic_edi_plan_2020-20251.pdf

Developing a Strategic Inclusion & Diversity Action Plan

https://www.sreb.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/diversity_and_inclusion_webinar.pdf

Defining DEI

<https://diversity.umich.edu/about/defining-dei/>

5 Powerful Ways to Take REAL Action on DEI

<https://www.ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/5-powerful-ways-to-take-real-action-on-dei-diversity-equity-inclusion/>

Why Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Matter

<https://independentsector.org/resource/why-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-matter/>

Equity and Inclusion Lens Handbook

https://documents.ottawa.ca/sites/documents/files/ei_lens_hb_en.pdf

Advancing Equity and Inclusion: A Guide for Municipalities

https://www.cawi-ivtf.org/sites/default/files/publications/advancing-equity-inclusion-web_0.pdf

The Diversity and Inclusion Revolution: 8 Powerful Truths

<https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/deloitte-review/issue-22/diversity-and-inclusion-at-work-eight-powerful-truths.html>

Diversity and Inclusion Framework: Halifax

<https://www.halifax.ca/about-halifax/diversity-inclusion/diversity-inclusion-framework>

McMaster's EDI Strategy

<https://equity.mcmaster.ca/strategy/towards-inclusive-excellence/>

