



Music Nova Scotia's Strategic Plan

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Executive Summary

This document outlines the conclusions drawn by Music Nova Scotia's board members during a facilitated session to shape the organization's strategic plan for the next 5 years. This plan identifies several areas in which we can strengthen our operations, sustainability, community, and relationships with key stakeholders in the coming years. We discuss these items within the Cascade Framework, arranged into 4 domains: *aspirations, where we will play, what we need to succeed, and what systems are needed*. Following, we discuss our strategy to implement this envisioned future by focusing on 5 strategic pillars: artist & industry performance development & excellence, organizational sustainability, community engagement, strategic partnerships, and leadership and advocacy. The steps towards implementing and building these strategic changes is captured in a high-level timeline which considers next-steps at the 6-month, 1-year, and 2-year marks, respectively. To successfully implement the changes outlined in this timeline, we recommend that Music Nova Scotia considers quarterly reviews of the strategy and an annual status review, for which we have provided assessments tools in the appendix. Collectively, this plan encapsulates strategic steps towards an envisioned future for Music Nova Scotia: one in which the organization optimizes operations, increases in sustainability, connects with diverse communities, and strengthens relationships with funding partners and key stakeholders who can contribute towards the next 5 thriving years of Music Nova Scotia.

Introduction

Our mandate, as Music Nova Scotia, is to encourage the creation, development, growth, and promotion of Nova Scotia's music industry. Since 1989, we have existed to grow and nurture the Nova Scotia music industry, retain our own natural resources, and promote investment. Our leadership team has a vibrant vision for Music Nova Scotia's future operations, activities, and impact, which aligns with this vision and mission. The present document outlines a 5-year strategic plan which advances this envisioned future, as crafted by Music Nova Scotia's board members during a strategic session. This document highlights the key findings from the session, focusing on the strategic pillars and initiatives identified during the process. Based upon these outcomes, our operational staff are working to develop a detailed implementation plan to guide next steps. Moving forward, we will collaborate with the Executive Director and Board Chair to establish strategic outcomes and success metrics, ensuring that we remain aligned with these goals.

Music Nova Scotia's Strategic Journey

Our strategic journey began in April-May of 2024 when we began mapping the key components of a new strategic plan. This initial phase was foundational as it laid the groundwork for the direction we aimed to take as an organization. By May-June, we shifted our focus to staffing components of the strategy. This involved a thorough review of our current organizational structure, with an emphasis on ensuring that all roles were aligned with our goals. We engaged closely with our team to identify activities that would enhance team cohesion and overall functionality, making sure that everyone was equipped to contribute effectively to our shared vision.

In July, we hosted a strategy session with the Music Nova Scotia board members to brainstorm the direction we wish to see the organization take throughout the next 5 years. Subsequently, in August, we conducted a staff session to build upon the board's outcomes. This session was instrumental in testing our strategic vision, ensuring that it can be operationalized, and that staff buy into the strategic objectives. Currently, staff are working to create action items to operationalize the plan, a break down of strategic priorities into key activities and measures, and a timeline to track progress. These plans will be essential in helping our strategy come to life, providing a timeline of key activities, and benchmarks to help us track and adjust our progress in the future.

At present, we have established the core of our strategic plan, which we present to you today. This presentation marks a significant milestone our strategic journey! It will not only showcase our priorities but also initiate a discussion on the impacts of these priorities. We will explore measures that will help us track our success going forward, ensuring that we remain focused and accountable.

In this session, our goal is to:

1. Present and review the strategic focus areas of the next 5 years and the key initiatives that will drive them.
2. Discuss the desired outcomes of each strategic focus.

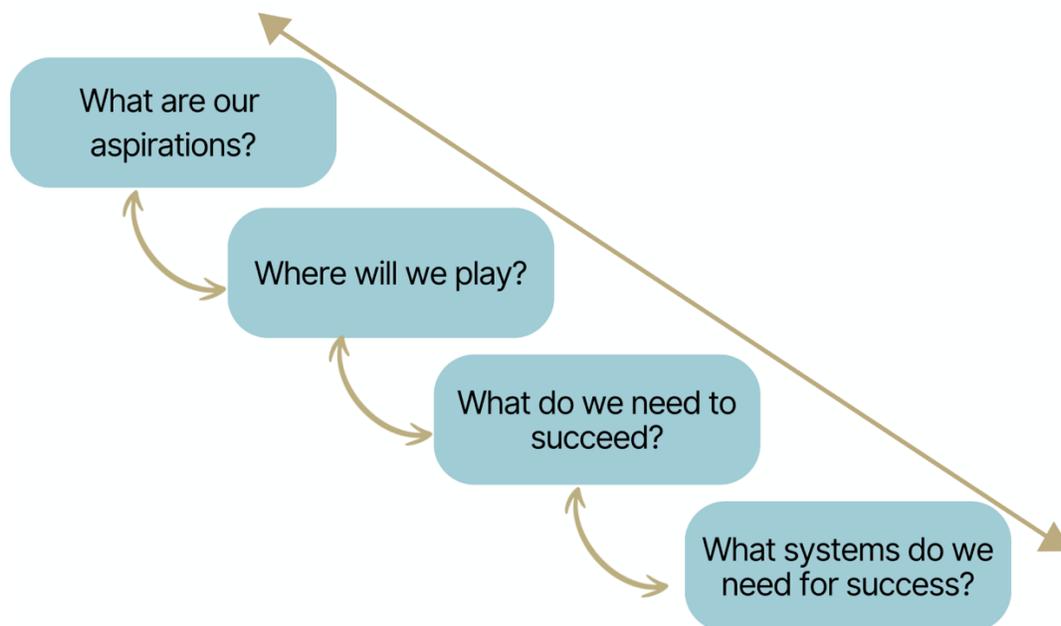
The Cascade Framework

The “Cascade Framework”, depicted below, was developed by [Roger L. Martin](#) and shared in his book *Playing to Win: How Strategy Really Works*. This framework posits that strategy is a series of choices that are constantly evolving.

The following figure outlines the four questions that Music Nova Scotia board members reviewed throughout the strategy session, based upon this Cascade Framework. In the following sections of this document, each question is addressed and detailed in the context of Music Nova Scotia.

Figure 1

Cascade Framework



Note. Adapted from Roger L. Martin (2020). This figure depicts four cascading components: our aspirations, where we play, what we need, and what systems are required. By answering these questions, we create a strategy that is customized to the organizations vision and capacity, while identifying gaps and required next steps. The following strategy for Music Nova Scotia will be considered within the context of this framework.

Why Use the Cascade Framework?

We choose to use the Cascade Framework because it enables a process of co-creation among a team. Unlike frameworks that impose specific structures or approaches onto the development of a strategy, this flexible framework offers a creative and interactive experience to draw out a team's unique vision!

The Cascade Framework functions by breaking strategy development down into key choices; instead of being overwhelming with details, a team can focus on what matters. They will answer questions about where to play (i.e., which areas or markets to focus on) and how to win (i.e., what the organization will do differently or better). The outcome is a clear and comprehensive strategy, making it easier to understand and commit to!

Music Nova Scotia within the Cascade Framework

1. What Are Our Aspirations?

This section describes the key aspirations that we envision for the future of Music Nova Scotia.

Figure 2

Music Nova Scotia's Aspirations



Note. The 5 aspirations depicted in this diagram, described below in greater detail, capture Music Nova Scotia's key strategic goals as an organization.

As an organization, we aspire to:

- ★ **Champion Nova Scotia's Music Industry.** We are dedicated to being the leading advocate and support system for the diverse voices and talents within our music community. Since 1989, we have committed ourselves to fostering the creation, development, growth, and promotion of Nova Scotia's music industry.

- ★ **Empower Our Members.** By providing education, information, and resources, we aim to equip our members with the tools they need to thrive. We are a network of songwriters, musicians, agents, managers, promoters, distributors, and industry professionals, united in our pursuit of excellence.
- ★ **Leaders in Promoting Nova Scotia's Musical Heritage.** We are passionate about retaining and nurturing our natural musical resources. Through advocacy for government and private enterprises, we strive to ensure a supportive environment that encourages investment and growth.
- ★ **Expand Our Reach.** We support our members in promoting the export of Nova Scotia's music regionally, nationally, and internationally. Our vision is to make Nova Scotia's music resonate far and wide, establishing our province as a vibrant hub of musical talent on the global stage.
- ★ **Engage and Reflect Our Diverse Community.** We are committed to making Nova Scotia's music culture inclusive and accessible to all.

2. Where Will We Play?

This section describes where we will make our impact and the target group of focus. We will engage with a broad and diverse range of stakeholders, ensuring that its programs and initiatives are inclusive and far-reaching:

- ★ **Artists of Different Levels.** We will provide tailored support to artists at various stages of their careers, from hobbyists to aspiring, emerging, and professional artists. This includes offering resources, training, and opportunities that meet the specific needs of each group, ensuring that all artists have access to the support they need to grow and succeed.
- ★ **Industry Professionals.** We will expand support for industry professionals, including managers, promoters, videographers, and others involved in the music ecosystem. By providing professional development opportunities and fostering connections between industry players, we will help strengthen the overall infrastructure of the music industry in Nova Scotia.
- ★ **Fans and the Public.** We will engage with fans and the broader public through memberships, showcases, and community-driven initiatives. By creating opportunities for fans to connect with local artists and participate in the music scene, we will help build a strong, engaged audience base that supports the growth and success of the music industry.

3. What Do We Need to Succeed?

This section describes how we will be successful, and the capabilities needed for success. To achieve our goals, we will focus on the following key areas:

- ★ **Core Strengths.** We will continue to excel in our core areas of strength, including the execution of live events, advocacy, and fostering strong relationships with the provincial government and funding. By leveraging these strengths, we can build upon our successes and expand its impact.
- ★ **Revenue Diversification.** Reducing reliance on government grants is critical to our long-term sustainability. By developing new revenue streams through corporate sponsorships, donor engagement, and other sources, we will ensure that we have the financial resources needed to support our programs and initiatives.
- ★ **Governance and Staffing.** We will develop a diverse, skilled board and staff structure that reflects the community and supports the organization's strategic goals. This includes implementing succession planning for key leadership roles, recruiting board members with the necessary expertise, and ensuring that staff have the support they need to succeed.
- ★ **Systems.** We will improve internal systems and technological systems to ensure ease of operations and capacity for information and staff succession.

4. What Systems Do We Need for Success?

This section describes what systems and structures are required for us to be successful in our identified aspirations and domains. We will implement the following systems to ensure the successful execution of our strategic plan:

- ★ **Monitoring and Reporting.** We will develop systems for regular progress reporting to the board, ensuring that the organization stays on track with its strategic objectives. This includes creating a one-page strategic summary that can be used to communicate the organization's progress and goals to external stakeholders.
- ★ **Action Plan Development.** Staff will create detailed operational plans with clear metrics, timelines, and responsibilities for each strategic initiative. These plans will ensure that our goals are translated into actionable steps and that progress is measured and reported consistently.
- ★ **Staff Structure and Operations.** We will consider effective staff structures and work systems, including work week assessments and creative and effective ways to help staff function optimally.

Strategic Pillars

This section describes the strategic pillars which will uphold our vision, the desired outcomes of each, and the key actions required to pursue them. The figure below depicts these pillars in relation to one another.

Figure 3

Music Nova Scotia's Strategic Pillars



Note. This figure depicts the five strategic pillars which uphold Music Nova Scotia's strategy plans: artistic and industry performance development and excellence, organizational sustainability, community engagement, strategic partnership, and leadership and advocacy.

1. Artist & Industry Performance Development and Excellence

Desired Outcome:

Elevate artists' performance standards and professional development across Nova Scotia while enhancing support for music industry professionals and businesses. This pillar ensures that both artists and industry members are equipped to thrive in a competitive and evolving music landscape.

Key Actions:

★ Training and Development

- **Artist Training Programs.** Strengthen training programs for artists, with a focus on career development, performance skills, and music business acumen. Specialized workshops will cover stage presence, vocal training, music business acumen and music production to elevate artistic excellence.
- **Diverse Representation in Training.** Diversify our basic training instructors and representation structures to better reflect the diverse needs of Nova Scotia's music community.

★ Coaching

- **One-on-One Artist Coaching.** Provide personalized coaching sessions for artists to refine their skills, particularly in live performance and touring. Coaching will be integrated into funding programs to ensure artists receive tailored guidance.

★ Nova Scotia Music Week Integration

- **Flagship Event Utilization.** Leverage Nova Scotia Music Week as a key platform where artists, industry members, fans, and international/domestic delegates can gather. The event will feature one-on-one meetings, panels, mentorships, and showcasing opportunities, maximizing development and networking.

★ Industry Support & Engagement

- **Membership Support.** Provide tailored support services for professional and non-professional artists, as well as industry businesses. This includes resources and guidance to help industry members grow and sustain their operations.

- **Industry Engagement System.** Create a structured engagement system to facilitate communication and collaboration between industry members, fostering a cohesive and supportive industry environment.
- **Wavemakers Legacy Program.** Establish the “Wavemakers Legacy Program” to celebrate and support the contributions of Nova Scotian artists to the global music scene.

★ **Support for Music Businesses**

- **Business Support.** Enhance support for businesses within the music industry by providing access to resources, training, and networking opportunities. Facilitate mentorship connections for industry entrepreneurs and build partnerships with local businesses to create a stronger, interconnected music industry ecosystem.

2. Organizational Sustainability

Desired Outcome:

Ensure the long-term sustainability of Music Nova Scotia through revenue diversification, organizational growth, and effective staffing.

Key Actions:

★ Revenue Diversification

- **Sponsorship Packages.** Launch corporate sponsorship packages tailored to different levels of support.
- **Donor Engagement.** Initiate a donor engagement strategy, including a legacy giving program to secure long-term funding.
- **Revenue streams.** Explore new revenue streams, such as partnerships with technology companies and media outlets.

★ Organizational Growth

- **Expand Reach.** Implement a growth strategy that includes expanding the organization's reach across Nova Scotia and beyond (e.g., Cape Breton Music Industry Cooperative).
- **Capacity Building.** Build capacity through investment in digital infrastructure and staff development.

★ Staffing & Succession Planning

- **Staffing Structure.** Develop an effective staffing structure that supports operational continuity and succession planning.
- **Key Roles.** Recruit key roles such as Fundraising Coordinator, Digital Communications Specialist, and Artist Development Coordinator in the long term
- **Leadership Development.** Establish leadership development programs for current staff to prepare them for future leadership roles.

★ Environmental Sustainability

- **Environmental Practices.** we will achieve environmental sustainability by implementing green practices at events, such as reducing waste, promoting recycling, and using eco-friendly materials. Additionally, the organization can partner with local environmental groups to promote sustainable initiatives within the music industry, ensuring that environmental responsibility becomes a core aspect of its operations.

★ **Industry Growth**

- **Strategic Partnerships.** Develop strategic partnerships with educational institutions to ensure a steady pipeline of young talent and future industry professionals.
- **Career Pathways.** Promote music-related career pathways to high school and college students, contributing to the long-term sustainability of the Nova Scotia music industry.

3. Community Engagement

Desired Outcome:

Expand our engagement with diverse communities to ensure inclusivity and representation in all aspects of our activities.

Key Actions:

* Engagement with Diverse Groups

- **Relationship Strengthening.** Strengthen relationships with the African Nova Scotian Music Association, Francophone, Indigenous, and 2SLGBTQ+ communities.
- **Program Diversification.** Expand programming to include music and cultural expressions from diverse groups, reflecting the community's diversity.

* Diversity in Staffing

- **Staffing.** Ensure that staffing reflects the community it serves by recruiting from diverse backgrounds.
- **Officers.** Appoint diversity and inclusion officers to guide organizational policy and practice.

* Newcomer Engagement

- **Programming.** Develop programs aimed at integrating newcomers into Nova Scotia's music community.
- **Resources.** Offer multilingual resources and support to help newcomers navigate the music industry.

* Community Partnerships

- **Program Partners.** Collaborate with NSCC, non-profits, youth groups, and faith-based organizations to create inclusive music programs.
- **Production Partners.** Engage with communities producing foreign music, offering them platforms within Music Nova Scotia events.

* Support/Engagement for Non-Professional Artists

- **Early Training.** Create accessible training opportunities for hobbyists and emerging artists.
- **Showcases.** Develop showcases that offer non-professional artists the chance to perform and grow their audience base.
- ★ **Education: Middle School and High School**
 - **School Programs.** Advocate for music programs in Nova Scotia middle and high schools, supporting the growth of music education within the community.
 - **School Boards.** Engage with school boards to build partnerships that promote music education and foster a future generation of music industry interest.
 - **Career Awareness.** Increase awareness among students about career opportunities within the music industry, nurturing potential future professionals.

4. Strategic Partnerships

Desired Outcome:

Build and strengthen strategic partnerships to support our activities and to ensure our long-term success.

Key Actions:

* Develop Strategic Relationships

- **Strategic Partners.** Establish partnerships with corporate entities, individual supporters, and community experts.
- **Government Relations.** Strengthen relationships with government departments, municipalities, and non-profit groups to enhance support for our activities.

* Leverage Post-Juno Legacy Opportunities

- **Juno Momentum.** Leverage the momentum from the 2024 Junos to build lasting relationships with key industry players.
- **Festival Partnerships.** Collaborate with national and international festivals to create new opportunities for Nova Scotian artists.

* Funding Partners

- **Establish New Funding Partnerships.** Identify and secure strategic funding partners who can provide sustained financial support (e.g., banking, corporate, Discover Halifax).
- **Adapt Existing Partnerships.** Adapting to ongoing changes in existing partnerships (e.g., budget changes, government changes, etc.)
- **Funding Packages.** Develop tailored funding packages for corporate sponsors and funders.

5. Leadership and Advocacy

Desired Outcome:

Position Music Nova Scotia as a leader in the music industry through advocacy, convening, and strategic influence.

Key Actions:

* **Advocacy**

- **Lead Advocacy Initiatives.** Lead advocacy efforts to secure more government investment in the music industry (e.g., Advocacy training, Coalition for the Arts in Canada ED role in advocacy space, greater Halifax arts coalitions, Lobbying, ED engagement with MLAs).
- **Promote Musical Importance.** Promote the importance of music in Nova Scotia's cultural and economic landscape.

* **Convening**

- **Convener of Stakeholders.** Act as a convener for different stakeholders within the music industry, including artists, industry professionals, government bodies, and community groups.
- **Annual Summit.** Organize an annual summit to discuss and address key industry challenges and opportunities. (Wavemakers Music strategy, NSMW, orgs outside music space who use music connecting on music display in their events. Leverage ED's role as vice chair for the Creative NS Leadership Council.

* **Industry Influence:**

- **Diversity and Inclusivity.** Lead by example in diversity and inclusivity initiatives, setting standards for other organizations (i.e., when people think of music inclusion in events, etc. Music Nova Scotia is first to come to mind). Can we convert this to a revenue source?
- **Music Policies.** Influence music policy at the provincial, national, and international levels through strategic advocacy and partnerships.

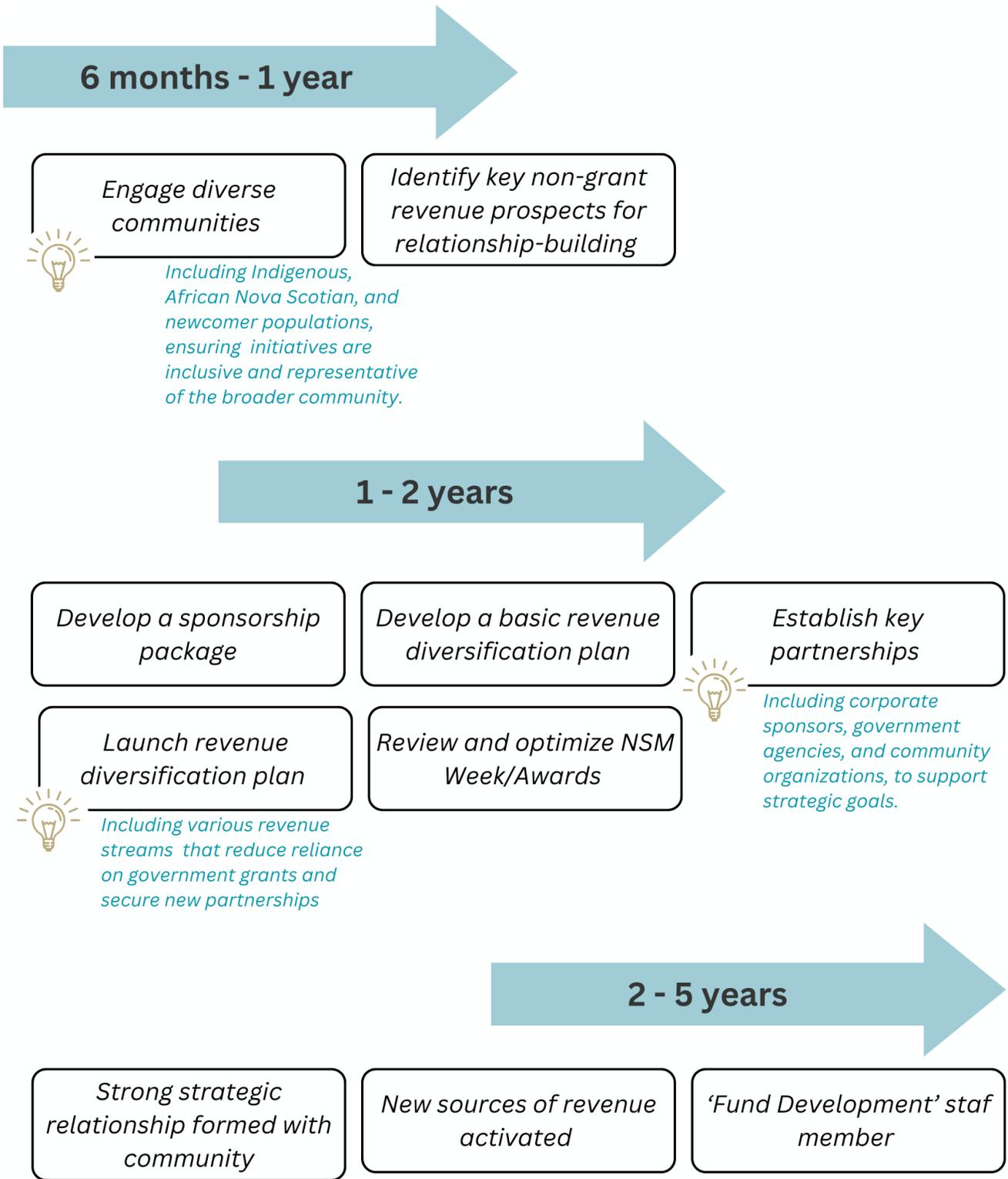
Strategic Action Roadmap

The roadmap below depicts a 5-year strategic timeline for the implementation of the goals and next steps discussed in this document. This timeline can help the team and board to review and adjust their strategic progress overtime, ensuring a successful and sustainable implementation of this plan.

To accompany this timeline, we recommend that the team build a system of reviewing and assessing strategic goals, utilizing the tools provided in the appendix. This process can include:

- ★ Discussing the strategy with stakeholders, using the one-pager (Appendix A)
- ★ Quarterly reviews of the present strategy (Appendix B)
- ★ An annual status review of strategic progress with the board (Appendix C)

Strategic Action Timeline:



 **Key Factors for Successful Implementation :**

- ▶▶ Quarterly review of strategy
- ▶▶ Annual status review

Conclusion

This strategic plan has detailed various ways that we can strengthen the operations and impact of Music Nova Scotia in the coming years. This includes optimizing procedures, strengthening sustainability, connecting with diverse communities, and building strong relationships with funding partners and key stakeholders. Throughout this document, we discussed these items within the context of the Cascade Framework, Strategic Pillars, and a Strategic Action Roadmap which provided a timeline for the implementation of the strategy. We encourage the team to progress this strategy plan over the course of these 5-years, using the assesment tools provided in the appendix. Collectively, this plan can play a pivotal role in our strategic journey and contribute towards the advancement of a flourishing future, aligned with Music Nova Scotia's vision and mission. We believe that as Nova Scotia grows, so too will its vibrant music industry, guided and inspired by the great contributions of Music Nova Scotia!

Appendix

This appendix includes several tools to further develop and maintain the strategy that has been outlined in this document. These tools include:

- ★ **A. Music Nova Scotia’s Strategy One-Pager.** This document summarizes and communicates Music Nova Scotia’s Strategic Plan with plain language and visualizations. It offers a succinct and accessible overview of the strategy that can be shared with stakeholders and the wider community.
- ★ **B. Quarterly Strategic Assessment Review Chart.** This chart offers staff a tool to systematically review and assess the progress of strategic goals. This chart should be completed once every four months for quarterly progress reviews.
- ★ **C. Annual Actions and Goals Review Chart.** This chart offers the leadership team a tool to systematically assess the status of strategic goals and the state of the strategy. This review provides an opportunity for leadership to understand progress and implement adjustments to actions or mandates, as required. This chart should be completed once annually.

Appendix A
Music Nova Scotia's Strategy One-Pager



Appendix B

Quarterly Strategic Assessment Review Chart

| Strategic Goals | Quarterly Objectives | Key Achievements & Milestones | Challenges | Next Activities or Actions | Overall Assessment |
|---|--|---|---|--|---|
| | Describe the objective for the quarter that supports the aspiration. | List specific actions or milestones with the target date and responsible team/person. | Outline key challenges encountered this quarter that impacted progress. | Describe any next steps or adjustments for the upcoming quarter. | Indicate your overall assessment of the quarter by colour (see “Colour Key”). |
| Artist & Industry Performance Development & Excellence | | | | | |
| Organizational Sustainability | | | | | |
| Community Engagement | | | | | |
| Strategic Partnerships | | | | | |
| Leadership and Advocacy | | | | | |

Colour Key for Overall Assessment :

-  **On Track:** Objectives met or on schedule, no significant issues
-  **Minor Issues:** Minor adjustments needed, but manageable
-  **Off Track:** Significant delays or challenges requiring action

Appendix C

Annual Action and Goals Review Chart

| | Actions and Goals | | | | |
|---|-------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Focus | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 |
| Artist & Industry Performance Development & Excellence | | | | | |
| Organizational Sustainability | | | | | |
| Community Engagement | | | | | |
| Strategic Partnerships | | | | | |
| Leadership and Advocacy | | | | | |
| Capabilities and Tools <i>What tools and capabilities do we need at each stage?</i> | | | | | |
| Who are we Targeting <i>Which businesses or partners do we target specifically?</i> | | | | | |
| Revenue Trajectory <i>What is the trajectory of our revenue ?</i> | | | | | |
| Funding Trajectory <i>What will we fund? How does this funding grow over time? What is the timeline and objectives of this funding ?</i> | | | | | |
| Success Measures (SMART) <i>How do we specifically measure success?</i> | | | | | |