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ANNUAL
REPORT
2023-2024

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Message from the Chair

Looking back, it is with immense pride and optimism that I present this message on behalf of Digital Nova Scotia. Our organization, representing a $3.6 billion digital industry, continues to be a driving force in innovation, growth and community engagement across the province.

In 2023-24, the digital landscape has undergone remarkable transformations. The advancements in artificial intelligence, cloud computing, cybersecurity and more have not only redefined industry standards but have also propelled Nova Scotia to the forefront of tech excellence. Our members have demonstrated resilience and adaptability, navigating the many challenges posed by a rapidly evolving global market.

As we look ahead, the future holds immense promise. The global demand for digital solutions is set to soar, and Nova Scotia is well-positioned to be a leader in this dynamic landscape.

This year also marks my first as Board Chair of Digital Nova Scotia. It has been an incredible journey, filled with learning, collaboration, and a deepened appreciation for the remarkable community this organization has built. Stepping into this role, I have been continually inspired by the passion, innovation, and resilience demonstrated by our members and partners. I am deeply honored to lead such a dynamic organization and am committed to fostering an environment where creativity and excellence can thrive. Together, we will continue to drive forward the vision and mission of Digital Nova Scotia, ensuring our province remains at the cutting edge of the digital world.

Robert Chambers
Digital Nova Scotia Board Chair

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Message from the CEO

As we reflect on the past fiscal year, I am proud to share the remarkable growth and achievements of Nova Scotia's digital industry. The sector has continued to thrive, now contributing an impressive $3.6 billion to our province's economy. This success is a testament to the hard work, innovation, and dedication of our entire community.

At Digital Nova Scotia, we have been relentless in our efforts to support our members through strategic initiatives, advocacy, and thought leadership. Our programs have focused on promoting diversity and inclusion and fostering a culture of continuous learning and development. One of the year's highlights has been our commitment to skills development. Our various programs and initiatives have equipped numerous professionals with the advanced skills needed to excel in an ever-evolving digital landscape. We have conducted more than 70 training sessions, benefiting over 4,400 individuals, and launched new initiatives to address emerging needs within the industry.

None of these achievements would have been possible without the unwavering support of our partners and funders.

Your contributions have been instrumental in driving our mission forward and fostering a thriving digital ecosystem. We are deeply grateful for your ongoing commitment and collaboration.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to our incredible team. Your passion, creativity, and relentless pursuit of excellence have been the driving force behind our success. It is an honour to work alongside such a talented group of professionals who are dedicated to making a positive impact.

As we look ahead, I am filled with optimism and excitement for what the future holds. We are poised to build on our successes and continue pushing the boundaries of innovation. Together, we will embrace new opportunities, tackle challenges, and achieve even greater heights in the coming year.

Thank you for being a part of our journey. I look forward to another amazing year ahead.

Owen Sagness
Digital Nova Scotia CEO

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ABOUT US

Digital Nova Scotia (DNS) is the industry association for Nova Scotia's $3.6 billion ICT and digital technologies sector. We connect our digital community, promote its successes and lead skill development to help our sector grow and thrive. We are a membership-driven organization. Our members include startups, small-to-medium enterprises, large multinational corporations, universities, colleges, government entities, and non-profits.

Our Mission

Our mission is to foster the growth of the digital economy in Nova Scotia. Our programs, events, and opportunities enable us to connect our digital community and proudly promote its successes. Through skills development, capacity building, industry events, strong partnerships and the promotion of IT opportunities, we are supporting our sector as it continues to grow, evolve and thrive.

Our History

Our organization began as the Software Industry Association of Nova Scotia (SIANS) and later became the Information Technology Industry Alliance of Nova Scotia (ITANS), before re-branding to be the Digital Nova Scotia that we are today! We're a non-profit organization that is dedicated to growing and developing Nova Scotia's digital technologies industry – facilitating connections, providing professional development and capacity-building opportunities, and promoting our digital sector. Originally incorporated in 1989, Digital Nova Scotia has been leading our industry for 30 years.

OUR VALUES

COLLABORATION

We believe the best outcomes are achieved by working together, and value opportunities to bring together diverse thought and the strengths of those within Digital Nova Scotia and those around us

INTEGRITY

We are honest and transparent in our communications and interactions, and value the relationships we have with our extensive network of stakeholders, including our team, members, industry, and community partners.

RESULTS DRIVEN

We are passionate about having a significant impact on the continued growth and advancement of our sector and work hard to deliver results that matter.

INCLUSIVITY

We strive to continue to support diversity, driving inclusive best practices and making a commitment to continuous learning and improvement.
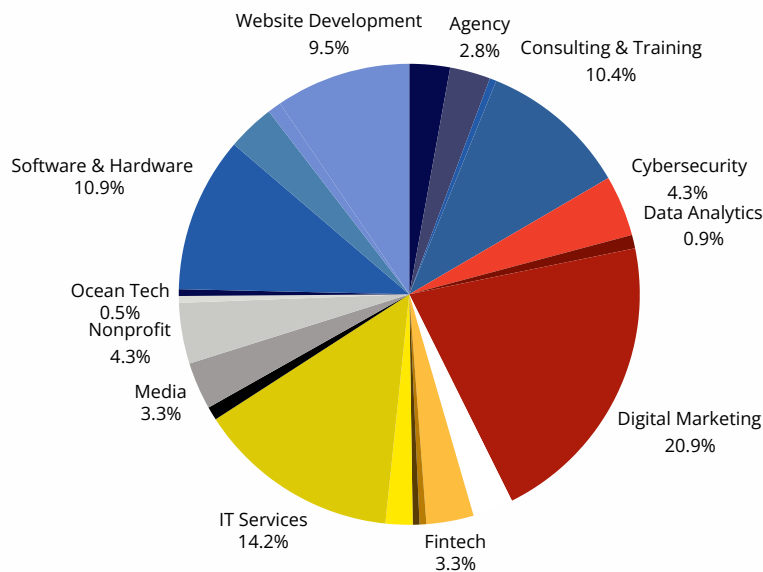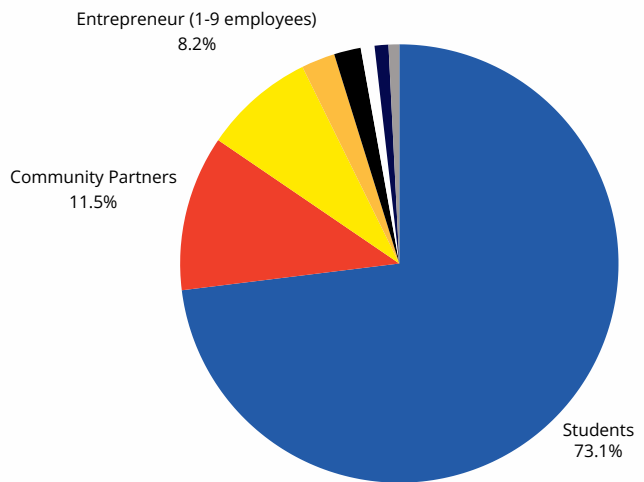
INNOVATION

Through an unwavering commitment to our mission, we work hard to deliver results that matter, and by building a strong community and actively engaging with industry, we enhance our ability to drive meaningful progress and achieve our goals.

MEMBERSHIP

Digital Nova Scotia's member base has continued to grow and diversify, reflecting our unwavering commitment to supporting and advancing our province's technology sector. Over the past year, DNS has welcomed 52 new paid member companies while retaining 87% of our overall membership. Additionally, we have seen a notable 29% surge in student memberships.

Our diverse membership includes a range of organizations and individuals, from startups and SMEs to established tech giants, post-secondary institutions, government entities, non-profit organizations, ecosystem partners, seasoned professionals and students. The top three primary service offerings of our members are digital marketing, IT services and software/hardware solutions.

Entrepreneur (1-9 employees) 8.2%
Community Partners 11.5%
Students 73.1%

Website Development 9.5%
Agency 2.8%
Consulting & Training 10.4%
Software & Hardware 10.9%
Cybersecurity 4.3%
Data Analytics 0.9%
Ocean Tech 0.5%
Nonprofit 4.3%
Media 3.3%
Digital Marketing 20.9%
IT Services 14.2%
Fintech 3.3%

21 Digital Nova Scotia members featured through the All Hands on Tech podcast; episodes that were downloaded 2,077 times

2023-24 AT A GLANCE

159 women+ learned new digital skills

430 Atlantic Canadians graduated from our cybersecurity, data analytics, and web development career-building programs

471,676 website page views, seen by 157,971 users

4,452 individuals participated in 74 training sessions on everything from cybersecurity to digital marketing and cloud computing.

300 events posted and 103 blogs written featuring our members

2.7M+ social media impressions across X, LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram to our **25,000+** followers

119 tourism businesses digitally supported

120 youth engaged in tech programming

CAREER-BUILDING

Our industry continues to grow with a strong demand for talent across our province and region. Digital Nova Scotia supports workforce development through programs like Skills for Hire Atlantic (SFHA) and Tech Sales Plus.

SFHA focuses on entry-level skill-building in cybersecurity, data analytics and web development. Last year, we were once again oversubscribed with 2,825 applications, and over the course of three cohorts, 430 Atlantic Canadians graduated from the program. To date, 978 participants have reported securing a new job placement through DNS programming, or have engaged in continuous learning.

Tech Sales Plus was an exciting pilot program that trained individuals in tech sales and customer experience. This innovative program was the first of its kind for DNS and acknowledged the importance of non-technical roles in the tech sector, aiding employers in finding talent with both technical and soft skills. Last year, 100 participants enrolled, with 49 successfully graduating.

Adrianna Primerano, Tech Sales Plus participant
"Tech Sales Plus has already been an incredibly transformative journey, equipping me with invaluable skills and insights that have made a significant impact on my career in only a few weeks. My dedicated instructor has been an inspirational guide throughout, fostering an environment of growth and excellence. I'm so happy I decided to take this course."

SKILL-BUILDING

With the rapid growth of our sector, we recognize the importance of continuous learning and upskilling. To address this need, we collaborated with industry leaders to facilitate 74 relevant workshops and webinars. These attracted 4,452 participants, helping them stay current and competitive in this evolving industry.

Since 2015, with support from Nova Scotia's Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive, we have offered free training to our members through the Next Level Skills Programs. These programs enhance productivity, profitability, innovation, technology, and competitiveness while promoting workplace diversity. Last year, 70 participants gained new skills through six courses led by local tech experts:

- Advanced Search Engine Optimization
- PMI-ACP Certification
- Scrum Workshop
- Business Analytics for Data-Driven Decision Making
- Succession Planning in tech
- The Future-Forward ICT Leader

Kate Sullivan, Digital Nova Scotia member and Next Level Skills participant

"It's been an interesting journey thus far and it's not over yet! The next challenge is to write and pass the PMP exam! Thanks to Daniel Fay for his amazing knowlege, wisdom and leadership in guiding us through this rigorous program to prepare to write. So much knowledge and value gained and a great learning experience! Thanks also to Digital Nova Scotia for offering such a wonderful benefit and opportunity to its members."

WOMEN IN TECH

DIGITAL SKILLS for WOMEN+

Digital Skills for Women+ is a program designed by women who have faced barriers in tech, and it is aimed at helping women+ without industry experience learn about digital topics, the ecosystem and career opportunities. It builds confidence, teaches industry language and positions participants to enter tech careers.

We are extremely proud of this program that is consistently oversubscribed. This past year, we received 674 applications, accepted 181 and graduated 159—numbers that truly highlight the program's necessity in our province. This program is made possible by the generous support of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency.

Carol C, Digital Skills for Women+ participant

"The program provided me with a holistic understanding of crucial tech domains, including AI, programming, cybersecurity, and digital marketing, unlocking a world of opportunities in the tech industry.Women encouraging and mentoring women is such an empowering sight to see. And when you graduate from the program, the benefits don't end there; DNS extends invitations to alumnus for tech-related events and mixers that are extremely helpful."

Shobhan M, Digital Skills for Women+ participant

"Being immersed among talented women facing similar barriers within the digital space was empowering, and learning from seasoned professionals in the tech industry was invaluable."

DIGITAL ADOPTION

Digital Nova Scotia continues to champion digital adoption across the province through the Tourism Digital Assistance Program (TDAP), in partnership with Tourism Nova Scotia. This past fiscal year, TDAP connected 119 tourism businesses with digital experts to advance their digital adoption efforts.

Through our Tourism Digital Assistance Program — Communities initiative, 20 community development organizations received support to enhance their digital presence, attract visitors and boost tourism spending. We also successfully hosted five Digital Days events, with 58 participants, and further expanded DigiPort, our online learning platform for tourism buisnesses.

Seaweed Tours Inc., TDAP participant
"The opportunities provided by Digital Nova Scotia and the ability to work with Nova Social Media have been of enormous significance and importance to my company. It moves the bar higher in the placement of my space on the web in such a positive way, and it adds tremendous confidence for me as I move forward. I thank you so very much for this wonderful support and opportunity."

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

Together with the Discovery Centre, the Digital Discovery Camp offers an immersive experience for young tech enthusiasts aged 9-14. Celebrating its successful ninth year, the camp was hosted in multiple locations across Nova Scotia. Notably, this past Summer marked a milestone as we introduced a new DDC in Cape Breton, reaching more communities than ever before!

This past fiscal year, we were delighted to host 120 campers from diverse backgrounds across Nova Scotia, who engaged with numerous industry mentors.

As we approach DDC's 10th anniversary, we are thrilled to continue inspiring and educating the next generation of innovators.

Cindy Hartlen, parent of camper
"My son had an amazing week! He came home smiling and excited to share what he had learned. Maybe he'll follow in his parents footsteps and work in IT. He said REDspace has the best slide he's ever been on!"

RESEARCH

This past year, Digital Nova Scotia has undertaken various research projects to support and advance the Nova Scotian tech sector. These initiatives have addressed key challenges and uncovered new opportunities, providing our industry with valuable insights and tools:

Changing Perspectives
This project aimed to help employers and employees with a framework to assess and develop digital competencies for the top five in-demand IT jobs in Nova Scotia. The tool, completed on Jan. 19, 2024, identifies the key digital skills most valued for these roles at both entry and mid/senior levels. The website has seen 9,500+ views across 3,500+ unique users. While most users were from Nova Scotia (1,400+), specifically the HRM (700+), we saw a large usage from individuals in Toronto (400+) and Montreal (190+).

Beyond Digital Recognition
This project complements the Changing Perspectives project and supports a holistic assessment of both technical and non-technical skills of current and future employees. Over the past year, DNS worked with partners to develop a framework to assess and recognize key non-technical competencies relevant and in demand in the ICT sector. The framework was reviewed by advisory groups of 21 ICT managers and HR professionals, and based on framework results and their feedback, the project was submitted for further funding to support the development of an assessment tool and further resources.

Labour Market Information
We conducted another labour market survey in 2023-2024 to stay up-to-date and ahead of labour market trends in Nova Scotia. A mixed survey containing open-ended and closed-ended questions was posed to our membership base in early January 2024 and was open for six weeks. The findings will soon be posted on the DNS website for anyone who may benefit from them.

Creating an Inclusive Culture
We wrapped up the first year of this three-year initiative and the main focus was research. This project combines research and training initiatives to identify and assess best practices to improve workplace culture to promote diversity, inclusion and performance in the workplace. Greater diversity in the labour force will lead to a broader pool of skilled workers that can meet the rapidly growing need for digital talent in our province. We look forward to continuing the research in year two and working with partners to develop the training frameworks.

CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE

Nova Scotia's ICT community united once again to honour the trailblazers, visionaries and advocates for diversity and inclusion within the industry at the 2023 Tech Forward Awards, presented by RBC.

More than 260 guests gathered to celebrate eight outstanding individuals and organizations reshaping and positively impacting our digital landscape. These awards not only highlight leaders in the field but they aim to recognize those who are actively fostering diversity and inclusion while contributing to the overall growth of Nova Scotia's technology sector.

Tech for Good Award Winner: Virtual Hallway Director of Operations, Jessica Morehouse

"*The Tech Forward Awards are a testament to the potential and drive of our region. We are proud to be considered for this award; our mission is to make specialist level healthcare accessible to every person on earth, starting with Nova Scotians,*"

Thinking Forward Award Winner: Dr. Gail Tomblin Murphy

"*Being nominated for the Tech Forward award not only underscores the importance of collaborative innovation in health care, but is a way to acknowledge of all those who have walked this path with me. I am incredibly proud to work with a diverse and dedicated team of innovators every day, who have a laser sharp focus on what is at the heart of it all – a healthier Nova Scotia.*"

BUILDING COMMUNITY

At Digital Nova Scotia, we focus on building community and celebrating its successes. We promote thought leadership through engaging panel discussions, amplify our members' achievements on social media and through our "All Hands on Tech" podcast and foster connections at our various member and alumni mixers. We're dedicated to creating opportunities for networking and collaboration.

Last year, we hosted five Talking Tech panels, which 291 individuals attended. Our networking events brought together over 700 people, helping them make new connections and expand their networks. We released 21 episodes of our "All Hands on Tech" podcast, sharing the stories and achievements of our members, which were downloaded 2,077 times. Our blog featured 103 member stories, we shared over 300 events on our calendar, while our newsletter subscription base grew by 1,542 individuals.

Through creative social media efforts, we reached over 25,000 followers and garnered more than 2.7 million impressions. Traditional media also took notice, featuring us in 19 television, radio, print and web articles. We further supported our digital community by attending, sponsoring or speaking at 44 events.

In all these ways, we are committed to driving the growth and success of Nova Scotia's digital community, ensuring our province remains a leader in innovation and technology, and fostering an environment where businesses and individuals can thrive.

OUR FUTURE

As we embark on the final year of our 2022-2025 Strategic Plan, we are already actively shaping our future trajectory. Looking ahead, we have a thrilling opportunity to build on our positive momentum, and we are excited to share our vision and strategic direction for the coming year:

- Promote and drive digital skills development across all Nova Scotia industries
- Foster a robust community and ecosystem to support mutual growth and collaboration
- Significantly grow our member base to strengthen and amplify our collective influence
- Advocate for our members to provide a unified voice on sector-relevant issues
- Seek opportunities that support investments and drive the growth of our sector and DNS members
- Continue to highlight our members and sector opportunities
- Strengthen and broaden our partnerships
- Establish a reputation as an excellent workplace where team members are valued and respected

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OUR PARTNERS

A special thank you to all our esteemed partners who joined forces with DNS throughout the 2023-2024 year! Your support fuels our journey and we eagerly anticipate further collaboration in the future.
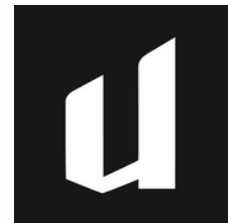
OUR TEAM

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CEO

Claire Quirion
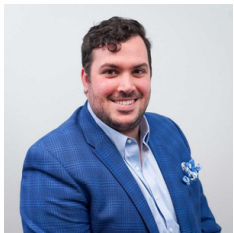Director, Project & Program Delivery

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