



Office of the Auditor General of Nova Scotia

Business Plan 2018-19

Auditor General's Mandate

The Auditor General of Nova Scotia is an officer of the House of Assembly, nonpartisan and independent of government. The Auditor General is appointed by, and reports to, the House. He derives his mandate, authority and responsibilities from the Auditor General Act.

The Auditor General's mandate includes issuing opinions on government financial reports and conducting performance audits on public sector operations.

The Auditor General provides annual opinions on the government's consolidated financial statements, the revenue estimates included in the government's budget, and the financial statements of certain other public sector entities.

Performance audits may examine and report on:

- the effectiveness of governance frameworks, including risk management, ethics and organizational direction;
- effectiveness, efficiency and economy of programs and processes;
- adequacy of controls;
- compliance with legislation, regulations and policy; and
- stewardship of government resources.

By exercising these responsibilities, the Auditor General helps the House of Assembly hold the government to account for its management of public funds, and contributes to a well-performing public sector.

Our Vision

A relevant, valued, and independent audit office serving the public interest as the House of Assembly's primary source of assurance on government performance.

Our Mission

To make a significant contribution to enhanced accountability and performance in the provincial public sector.

Our Values

Our values are a statement of the high standards we hold in conducting ourselves and our work, and of the results we strive to achieve.

Independence

We remain independent of the entities that we audit and are objective in our work.

Integrity

We work together and with others in an open, honest, and trustworthy manner while respecting the confidentiality of the information we obtain.

Impact

We focus on significant issues to make a positive difference for the benefit of Nova Scotians.

Our Priorities

Our mission, vision and values guide us in our work as independent professionals adding value through audit. We have identified five priorities as key to the achievement of our vision.

Serve the House of Assembly

Conduct and report audits that provide clear and relevant information to the House of Assembly to improve its ability to hold the government accountable for its performance and stewardship over public funds.

Consider the Public Interest

Focus our audit efforts on areas of higher risk that impact on the lives of Nova Scotians.

Improve Government Performance

Contribute to a better performing public service by conducting audits that result in practical recommendations for significant improvements.

Enhance Government Financial Reporting

Encourage continual improvement in financial reporting by government to the House of Assembly and the people of Nova Scotia.

Foster Workplace Excellence

Promote excellence and a professional and supportive workplace at the Office of the Auditor General.

Strategic Initiatives

This business plan highlights some of the key strategic initiatives the Office will work on in 2018-19, supporting our commitment to continuous improvement.

The Office's governance structure aligns with our vision and priorities, and focusses our strategic efforts in five key areas: financial audit, performance audit, communications, people management, and operations. The Office continues to recognize the critical importance to our mission of highly trained and engaged staff. We have invested in a professional Director of Human Resources and will focus a lot of our strategic efforts in developing and implementing best practices in human resource management that meet the needs of our Office. Working groups, where appropriate, comprised of office staff, will be responsible to complete

the following 2018-19 strategic initiatives as needed.

- Review, update and implement our new employee orientation practices to provide structure and consistency.
- Design a new human resources competency-based framework for the selection, training and evaluation of staff. This framework will be implemented in subsequent years.
- Develop and implement a new employee recognition program for the Office.
- Develop a formal Office communication strategy.
- Assess and develop an approach for using data analytics more effectively in both our financial and performance audit practices.

Audits and Other Assurance Engagements

The Office conducts a variety of audits and reviews, some of which are mandated by legislation, others are at the discretion of the Auditor General. Our current plan is to conduct the following assignments in 2018-19.

- Audit of the province's March 31, 2018 consolidated financial statements.
- Review of the government's 2019-20 revenue estimates.
- Audit of expenditure compliance and internal controls at the Nova Scotia House of Assembly.
- Audit of the March 31, 2018 financial statements of five government agencies, including the Nova Scotia Health Authority.
- Planning will begin on our audit of the IWK's March 31, 2019 financial statements.
- Eight performance audits.
- Follow-up of recommendations made in previous performance and financial audits.

Quality Assurance and Office Accountability

A number of processes serve to ensure the quality of our work and our accountability to the House of Assembly, including:

- Publically reporting the results of our financial and performance audit work through tabling audit reports in the House of Assembly and posting copies of our reports and video summaries on our website.
- Internal quality assurance systems based on Canadian auditing standards, including multiple levels of review.
- Implementing recommendations from peer reviews of our audits by other legislative audit offices in Canada.
- Addressing findings of periodic reviews of our financial statement audits and associated quality control systems by the Chartered Professional Accountants of Nova Scotia.
- Addressing the results of staff surveys and other performance measures focusing on elements of the Office’s audit work and administration.
- Reporting results of the independent audit of the Office’s annual financial statements to the Speaker of the House of Assembly.
- Submitting an annual business plan and a performance report to the Public Accounts Committee of the House of Assembly.
- Publically reporting on our website the travel and hospitality expenses of our Executive team.

Performance Indicators

Performance indicators are elements of an organization’s work efforts, outputs and outcomes that can be measured and assessed against targets in order to evaluate the efficiency, effectiveness and quality of its operations. The following are performance indicators against which the Office will assess its 2018-19 performance, including audit performance.

Performance Indicator	Description	Office Target
1. Implemented recommendations	Percentage of recommendations implemented after two years	80% or higher
2. Published reports	Reports released during year	Four
3. Planned audits completed	Whether audits planned for the year were performed	80% or higher
4. Financial audits on target	Financial audits completed by applicable target dates	All target dates met
5. Performance audits on target	Performance audits completed by applicable target dates	80% or higher
6. Strategic projects completed	Percentage of 2018-19 strategic projects completed	80% or higher
7. MLA satisfaction	Percentage of MLAs satisfied with our work	80% or higher
8. Staff satisfaction (Note 1)	Percentage of staff who feel this is a good place to work	80% or higher

Note 1: staff surveys will be conducted every 3 years.

Resources

The Office recovers the cost of certain financial audits through billings, but the majority of its funding is by way of an annual appropriation of the House of Assembly. The following table outlines the Office's budgeted and actual net expenses, and staff positions for 2017-18 and 2018-19. The Office's major expense is salaries and benefits, which represents 84% of gross expenditures for 2018-19. All but four staff members are directly involved in providing audit services. Non-salary office administration (\$317,000, including office rent of \$192,000) is budgeted to be 7% of gross expenses in 2018-19.

Office of the Auditor General Net Expenses and Staffing			
	2017-18 Budget	2017-18 Actual	2018-19 Budget
Expenses			
Salaries and benefits	\$3,556,000	\$3,237,321	\$3,854,000
Other staff expenses	118,000	126,516	148,000
Travel	79,000	64,417	65,000
Professional services	164,000	253,287	216,000
Office administration	345,000	245,280	317,000
	4,262,000	3,926,821	4,600,000
Recoveries from Government			
Audit fees	393,000	414,250	363,000
	393,000	414,250	363,000
Net Expenses (to be funded by Government of Nova Scotia)	\$3,869,000	\$3,512,571	\$4,237,000
Staff – Full-time-equivalent	36.0	32.3	37

Additional Information

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