

Workplace Safety & Insurance System (WSIS) Strategic Plan:

Review April 2006

Prepared by the Heads of Agencies Committee, for the System
Coordinating Committee

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BACKGROUND

As a result of consultation with stakeholders, a five-year strategic plan for the Workplace Safety and Insurance System (WSIS) was established in August 2003. That plan made a commitment to address three key priorities, as identified by stakeholders:

1. Preventing workplace injury and illness,
2. Continued consultation with stakeholders in setting the course for the future, and
3. Monitoring the progress of the strategic plan with System Performance Measures.

In support of those priorities, the plan set out the System's vision, mission and goals, and proposed a five-year strategy to achieve them.

Entering the third year of the plan, the Heads of the four WSIS partner agencies have evaluated each of the components of that original plan (vision, goals and strategy), and have determined that:

- a) While much has been accomplished since establishment of this plan, the vision and goals as stated will continue to serve as our guide posts; and
- b) The strategy will be updated to reflect current System opportunities and stakeholder needs.

Consultation with members of the System Goals Advisory Committee (SGAC) provided input into this evaluation process, as well as provided guidance in the development of an updated strategy. The remainder of this document provides the resultant updated strategy and identifies initiatives to be undertaken over the next year to move us closer to achievement of the vision and goals.

Please note that this document does not replace, but is complimentary to, the WSIS Strategic Plan, 2004-2008. Initiatives identified in that document continue to be a focus, and are included in Appendix A of this document for easy reference. Progress toward accomplishment of those initiatives will continue to be reported on a quarterly basis. With what we have learned from this review and from on-going discussions with key stakeholders, initiatives outlined in Appendix A will be validated and updated as necessary.

TERMINOLOGY

Vision

An aspirational statement of what is to be accomplished within a set time frame.

Goals

More specific than vision, goals identify key desired outcomes as a result of achieving set vision.

Initiatives

Those activities that will be carried out to accomplish the set goals.

Strategy

Identifies the approach to be taken to accomplish goals – the filter through which initiatives are strategically identified and selected.

WSIS VISION AND GOALS

Vision

Our vision is safe, healthy workplaces for Nova Scotians and sustainable safety and insurance services.

Goals

Toward achievement of that vision, our goals remain:

1. Improve outcomes for workers and employers
 - Reduce workplace injuries
 - Return to work
2. Improve service delivery
 - Accessibility of information and information sharing
 - Issue resolution
3. Ensure effective governance of the System
 - Formal accountability structure
 - Stakeholder consultation
 - System performance measures
4. Ensure financial sustainability of the System

STRATEGY AND INITIATIVES

Environmental Analysis

Toward defining WSIS strategy, an analysis was conducted of the environment within which the WSIS functions. Components of the environmental analysis include:

- Stakeholder input
- System performance
- The state of healthcare

Stakeholder Input

Traditionally, workers and representatives have been active participants in the WSIS. Over the past couple of years, employer stakeholders have expressed increased interest in system governance and operation. For instance, employer participation in the claims management and appeals processes is on the rise, particularly in relation to chronic pain claims.

With the participation of stakeholders, the WSIS governance structure changed significantly during 2005, including restructuring of the WCB Board of Directors and the establishment of the System Goals Advisory Committee (SGAC).

Changes to the WCB Board of Directors means that two key stakeholder groups are equally represented, with four worker representatives and four employer representatives. Of the total eight representative positions, six were newly filled – three workers and three employers. These changes enhance and improve the way stakeholders interact with the WCB and other system agencies, and are meant to strengthen confidence in the system.

Over the past 18 months, members of the System Coordinating Committee have also come to rely on the advice and input of a broader group of stakeholders. This group is consulted at minimum twice a year – once in the spring around the timing of the Annual General Meeting, and once in the fall. Both this group and the newly-formed SGAC have proven to be valuable resources for the identification of stakeholders' system-related concerns and needs. Specific areas of interest highlighted to date include:

- Ensure greater employer engagement – to the benefit of workers and employers alike
- Emphasis on communication – beyond HAC and SGAC; engage players external to the System agencies, such as government and members of the opposition; ensure that stakeholders outside of SGAC better understand the planning process and how they can be involved; ensure greater transparency and cooperation
- Evolve performance measurement to better drive desired outcomes

- Governance – ensure that initiatives take advantage of the new governance model and demonstrate to stakeholders that change is in progress

System Performance

System performance is reported to stakeholders on a quarterly basis. Results themselves indicate the need for continued focus on the goal of improved outcomes – namely, injury prevention and safe and timely return-to-work. While the numbers are trending down, Nova Scotia still exhibits the highest durations in the country, and one of the highest injury rates.

The process of performance reporting itself is also in need of focus. In August of 2005, the System Performance Measures Advisory Committee (SPMAC) shared a recommendation with the Chair of the WCB, identifying measures that they felt would provide them with insight in to how well the system was performing. With the help of SGAC, implementation of that recommendation is in progress. While establishment of new measures will enhance stakeholders' ability to gauge progress, it will also improve agency staffs' ability to determine whether their efforts are being directed appropriately.

The State of Healthcare

There are two key concerns in the area of healthcare: availability of diagnostic, treatment and specialist referral services, and cost. Service availability influences the quality of claim and appeal decisions, as well as safe and timely return-to-work outcomes. The cost of healthcare has a significant impact on the cost to administer the system.

Diagnostic, treatment and specialist referral wait-times impact both an injured worker's recovery and return-to-work – and in both the initial claims processing phase and in the event of an appeal. Wait-times are a national issue, so much so that in December 2004 the Canadian government provided additional funds to provinces to combat increasing wait times.¹ The Province of Nova Scotia's Department of Health tracks wait-times on their web site on a monthly basis. As an example, as of March 2006 the average wait-time at the QEII Health Sciences Centre for an MRI is 122 days.

Nationally, health care costs continue to rise, posing a big challenge for both federal and provincial governments. Currently, Nova Scotia provincial spending on health care is near 47% of the provincial total (up \$218 million over 2004-2005). The main cost drivers continue to be prescription drugs and other health care spending related to research, home care, and ambulances.

In 2004, national health care costs across all Canadian workers' compensation organizations increased by 11.1%, approximately 9.0 percentage points higher than the general inflation rate of 2.1%.

¹ Nova Scotia Health and Health Promotion: Ministers' Report to Nova Scotians 2004-2005

Strategic Themes

The environmental analysis highlights a number of areas upon which WSIS agents will focus over the coming year, namely:

1. Employer engagement;
2. Inter-agency cooperation;
3. Performance measurement;
4. Communication; and
5. Healthcare.

Employer Engagement

Employer involvement is critical to the success of the WSIS-: focus on workplace health and safety and injury prevention, and participation in system issue resolution, return-to-work efforts, and the appeals process. Historically, for numerous reasons, the level of employer participation has been low. In recent years, employer interest and participation has increased tremendously. Agents of the WSIS will capitalize on this momentum by continuing to encourage employer participation and by looking at all system opportunities and challenges through the lens of “How can/should employers be involved?” toward a balanced outcome.

Inter-Agency Cooperation

While the four system agencies have made strides to work more cooperatively, there is opportunity to strengthen those relationships already formed as well as to develop new relationships.

Performance Measurement

Regular performance measurement and reporting has been invaluable to both stakeholders and agency staff, by way of highlighting system issues and areas requiring particular attention. Agency staff will work to improve existing performance measurement mechanisms, and will also work to create the link between initiatives and system performance results.

Communication

The WSIS is comprised of a large and diverse cross-section of stakeholders and system agents. Communication is critical to ensure that information is shared in a meaningful way, and that varying perspectives are heard and taken into consideration. The intent of including ‘communication’ as a strategic theme is to ensure that each and every system activity is viewed through this lens, and that appropriate thought is given to how to ensure all players in the system are kept informed and involved in the process as appropriate to the task at hand.

Focus on Healthcare

Healthcare poses a particular problem for system agencies, and requires deliberate attention. Therefore, a key focus for system agents will be to

strengthen existing healthcare relationships and pursue opportunities to develop new relationships toward improved outcomes.

Initiatives

Strategic themes as identified above have been used as a filter to identify and evaluate initiatives planned by the four agencies for the coming year – to ensure that each identified initiative supports achievement of system goals and objectives within the set strategy.



Table 1 outlines those initiatives, and shows traceability of each to one or more System goals. The list of initiatives will be updated and communicated to stakeholders as agency plans evolve.

Table 1: Agency Initiatives-System Goals Traceability

Initiatives	Goals							
	Improve Outcomes		Improve Service Delivery		Effective Governance			Financial sustainability
	Reduce workplace injuries	Return to work	Accessibility of info and info sharing	Issue resolution	Formal accountability structure	Stakeholder consultation	Performance measurement	
OHS								
<i>Improve workplace standards</i>								
▪ Develop workplace violence prevention strategy	✓							
▪ Consult with stakeholders on workplace ergonomic injuries	✓							
<i>Improve regulatory management</i>								
▪ Introduce elements of the Competitiveness & Compliance Initiative (Regulatory Framework)	✓							
<i>Improve regulatory environment</i>								
▪ Introduce revisions to General Blasting Regulation	✓							
▪ Introduce revisions to Underground Mining Regulation	✓							
▪ Introduce revisions to Summary Offence Ticket regulations revision for high hazard activities	✓							
▪ Introduce LNG Regulation	✓							
▪ Support the process to introduce revisions to the Canada Nova Scotia Offshore Accord	✓							
<i>Quality Initiative</i>								
▪ Assess Enforcement Management tool	✓				✓			
▪ Operationalize quality management and control activities	✓				✓			

Goals

Initiatives	Improve Outcomes		Improve Service Delivery		Effective Governance			Financial sustainability
	Reduce workplace injuries	Return to work	Accessibility of info and info sharing	Issue resolution	Formal accountability structure	Stakeholder consultation	Performance measurement	
<i>Knowledge Management</i>								
▪ Introduce new Activity Tracking System	✓							
▪ Enable electronic access to client access records	✓							
▪ Introduce elements of the Competitiveness & Compliance Initiative (Knowledge Strategy – Learning Team; Knowledge Strategy – Science Team)	✓							
<i>Issue Leadership</i>								
▪ Introduce elements of Competitiveness & Compliance Initiative (compliance promotion)	✓							
▪ Explore ways and means of improving compliance with IRS requirements	✓							
▪ Communication of multi-year OHS Plan	✓		✓					
▪ Develop promotion and education materials	✓							
<i>Relationship Development</i>								
▪ Begin development of systems to inform partners and report on relationships	✓		✓					
<i>Timely Reporting</i>	✓						✓	

Goals

Initiatives	Improve Outcomes		Improve Service Delivery		Effective Governance			Financial sustainability
	Reduce workplace injuries	Return to work	Accessibility of info and info sharing	Issue resolution	Formal accountability structure	Stakeholder consultation	Performance measurement	
WAP								
▪ Effort to maintain existing service levels to all eligible injured workers (response time and provision of service)		✓		✓				
▪ Continued participation in the Issues Resolution Working Group			✓	✓				
▪ Continue to work to improve WAP access to claim information required to represent and assist workers		✓	✓	✓				
▪ Improve survey of clients using external survey tools						✓	✓	
▪ Enhance File Management System to include Case Plan System to improve service delivery, tracking of performance targets and reporting outcomes		✓	✓	✓			✓	

Goals

Initiatives	Improve Outcomes		Improve Service Delivery		Effective Governance			Financial sustainability
	Reduce workplace injuries	Return to work	Accessibility of info and info sharing	Issue resolution	Formal accountability structure	Stakeholder consultation	Performance measurement	
WCAT								
▪ Continue update of appeal management processes		✓		✓				
▪ Monitor effectiveness of self-represented process		✓		✓				
▪ Establish a process to provide feedback to advocates regarding submissions, practice quality and Tribunal processes				✓		✓		
▪ Establish a process to obtain feedback from participant groups such as employers and injured workers				✓		✓		
▪ Continue with work to benchmark key performance indicators							✓	
▪ Maintain participation in joint initiatives with WSIS partners and explore new opportunities, particularly in joint training		✓	✓	✓				

Goals

Initiatives	Improve Outcomes		Improve Service Delivery		Effective Governance			Financial sustainability
	Reduce workplace injuries	Return to work	Accessibility of info and info sharing	Issue resolution	Formal accountability structure	Stakeholder consultation	Performance measurement	
WCB								
<i>Chronic Pain</i>								
▪ Continued adjudication		✓						
▪ Process review		✓						✓
<i>RTW redesign</i>								
		✓						✓
<i>Develop Health Services partnerships</i>								
		✓						✓
<i>Service Delivery</i>								
▪ Review service model	✓	✓	✓	✓				
▪ Employer contact coordination	✓	✓				✓		
▪ Customer service training				✓				
▪ Priority Employer Program	✓							✓

Goals

Improve Outcomes		Improve Service Delivery		Effective Governance			Financial sustainability
Reduce workplace injuries	Return to work	Accessibility of info and info sharing	Issue resolution	Formal accountability structure	Stakeholder consultation	Performance measurement	

Initiatives

Joint Agency Initiatives							
▪ SPMAC Recommendation implementation	✓	✓				✓	
▪ Continue to operationalize joint-agency prevention (OHS and WCB)	✓						✓
▪ Continue to support work of sub-committee, tasked to define Employer Assistance role	✓	✓		✓			
▪ Development of relationship with NS Health Promotion	✓	✓					
▪ My Account – releases 1, 2 & 3	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
▪ Improve WCB-DEL employer targeting coordination	✓						
▪ Continue work of Issue Resolution Working Group			✓	✓			
▪ Work to identify new partnering opportunities	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓

NEXT STEPS

The WSIS Strategic Plan is a living document, continually evolving: as we progress toward accomplishment of our vision and goals, as we come to better understand our stakeholders' needs, and as environmental variables change.

In keeping with that evolution, the Heads of the four System agencies commit to continually monitor and update the plan: an annual review of the vision, goals and strategy; and on-going monitoring and updating of planned initiatives. Any changes to vision, goals or strategy will be made in consultation with members of the SGAC. Any changes to planned initiatives will be provided to members of SGAC, for their information.

Progress toward goal achievement will be reported to members of SGAC and other key stakeholder groups through the System's quarterly performance reporting process. Quarterly performance results will also help us determine whether we are focused appropriately, or whether change is required.

APPENDIX A – WSIS Strategic Plan Initiatives Q4 2005 Status

Initiatives

Timeline

Progress

Goal: To improve outcomes for workers and employers

Prevention Initiatives	Ref. Pg*	2005		2006				
		Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Social Marketing Campaign	10	O	O	O	O	O	O	work is underway & on schedule
Core Curriculum	11	O	O	O	O	O	O	work is underway
Youth education program	11	O	O	O	O	O	O	this is an ongoing initiative
Explore options for Certification of Trainers Program	11		O	O	O			Deferred to Q4 due to PEP implementation
Employer Account Look Up	12	O	O	O	O	O	O	Work well underway and on schedule
Develop industry support networks	12	O	O	O	O	O	O	this is an ongoing effort
Investigate experience rating range	12	O	O	O	O	O	O	Program underway
Develop new safety incentive program	12	O	O	O	O	O	O	Policy complete program to be rolled out in Q4 2005 and implemented in 2006
Develop priority employer program	12	O	C					Program development complete and program has been operationalized
Develop safety audit program	12	O	O	O	O			Criteria in final draft- reviewed in September
Develop disincentives	13	O	O	O	O	O	O	Ongoing initiative

Return to Work Initiatives

Develop baseline measurements & set targets	15	O	O	O	O	O	O	Baseline measures & targets established based on current measurement approach. Will revisit once new RTW model is done
Develop survey tool for RTW	15					P		This will be incorporated in an overall review of the stakeholder survey in 2006
Develop strategy & train staff to educate employers	15	O	O	O	O	O	O	Work underway. Will be integrated with Prevention and RTW Redesign efforts.
Implement most effective delivery model for RTW	15	C						New model rolled out in Sept. 2005. Monitoring started in Q3 2005.
Consult stakeholders & train staff re. best practices	16	O	O	P	P			Work underway. Will be addressed in the delivery model for RTW (above). Further best practice work to occur later. Consultation with stakeholders started in Sept. 2005
Improve mgmt of service provider contracts	16	O	O	O	O	O	O	New physio contracts implemented in Sept. 2005. Other health care disciplines to follow.
Explore certificate in Occupational Health	16				P			not starting until 2006
Support Disability Prevention & Mgmt Course	16	O	O	O	O	O	O	Worker is underway. Primary Care Physicians trained by ACOM in June 2005.
Educate physicians on RTW	16	O	O	O	O	O	O	this is an ongoing effort

Goal: To improve service delivery

Accessibility Initiatives

Youth education program	19	O	O	O	O	O	O	this is an ongoing effort
Regional workshops	19	O	O	O	O	O	O	this is an ongoing effort
New service channels	19	O	O	O	O	O	O	this is an ongoing effort
Investigate integrated telephone inquiry service	20			P				to be investigated in Service Delivery Review
Develop single document describing System	20				P			not starting until 2006
Determine reading level of clients	20			P				Waiting for results from Dept. of Education study of Canadian Reading Levels by Prov.
Develop plan for communicating with special needs clients	21			P	P			Will be linked to Service Delivery Model review for WCB component and start in 2006

Issue Resolution Initiatives

Joint working group to explore new forms of issue resolution	22	O	O	O	O	O	O	ongoing
Develop opportunities for joint agency training	22	O	O	O	O	O	O	ongoing
Provide WAP with access to expedited services	22			P				Assigned to Issues Resolution Working Group

Initiatives*Timeline***Progress****Goal: To ensure effective governance of the System**

	Ref. Pg.	2004		2005				
		Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Produce quarterly agency reports	23	O	O	O	O	O	O	1 st joint report in Nov. 03

Additional WSIS Initiatives

Governance Review – as announced by Minister of E&L	N/A	O	O	O	O	O	O	Recommendation presented at AGM. Implementation of governance principles underway
System Navigator	N/A	O	O	O	O			Meeting with stakeholders Nov. 30 2005. Sub working group created to further examine the issue in 2006

Completed WSIS Initiatives

Collaborate with Medical Society re. web-site	16							completed in 4th quarter, 2003
Organize first WSIS Annual General Meeting	25							completed in Q2, will be an annual event
Develop policy for stakeholder consultation	25							presented to BoD Q1 2004
Establish inter-agency policy forum	26							Completed in Q1 2004
OH&S Grant Program	10							Completed in Q2 2005
Establish System performance measures group	26-27							Inaugural meeting June 4/04
Create System web-site	20							Phase 1 (design of gateway pg for system) completed in Q4 2004

* Refers to the page in the System Strategic Plan where the initiative is discussed.

O = Ongoing Activity; P = Planned Activity; C = Completed Activity