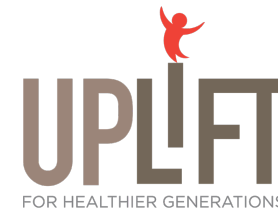


UPLIFT PARTNERSHIP

Capacity Building
Summary Report



September 2024





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The **UpLift** Partnership's vision is *a healthier Nova Scotia through a youth-engaged Health Promoting Schools approach*. In working towards this vision, a focus of the **UpLift** Partnership is to align with and enhance work that is currently underway to support the health and well-being of children and youth through effective implementation of the HPS model using a youth engagement (YE) approach. The vision is achieved through six areas of work. These areas and associated goals are:



Partnerships & Leadership: Health Promoting Schools (HPS) approach that is resourced by and embedded within the Nova Scotia (NS) health and education system;



Planning & Evaluation: Evidence-informed HPS approach across NS with a comprehensive accountability framework aligned with partner goals;



Youth Engagement: Engaged and empowered NS youth who support child and youth health and well-being through a HPS approach;



School & Community Engagement & Action: School and community environments across NS that support child and youth health and well-being through a HPS approach;



Capacity Building: Evidence-informed practice within the NS health and education systems to support HPS;



Communication & Knowledge Exchange: Community support across NS for a HPS approach.

This evaluation gathered data to describe activities done by **UpLift** related to capacity building, as well as to assess the outcomes of these activities:



Increased knowledge, skills, and confidence to support the implementation of a YE in HPS approach and how this approach supports child and youth health, well-being, and student achievement



Enhanced application of knowledge and skills to support YE in HPS implementation

The evaluation used both quantitative and qualitative methods:



Tracking forms completed by the Project Manager (PM)



A review of program documents



Key informant interviews with partners, Youth Engagement Coordinators (YECs), and the PM and Co-lead



Surveys with participants of **UpLift** learning opportunities

➤ Student Engagement Community of Learning (SECOL)

SECOL was formed in 2020 to provide a forum for sharing, networking, and learning related to YE in HPS. The group met monthly from July 2020 to April 2024 and membership varied over the years, with approximately 20 members at a given time, from Public Health at NSH, RCEs/CSAP, DEECD and academia.

➤ Workshops

Several workshops were developed through **UpLift** summarized below:

1 Building Healthy School Communities Through YE Course

Online self-paced course offered to a cohort of 32 Youth Health Centre Coordinators with the goal to build knowledge and skills for engaging children and youth in HPS. The course included 5 modules (the HPS Approach, Community Youth Development Framework, Exploring the Community Youth Development Tools for Youth, the YE Spectrum, and YE in HPS) and 6 facilitated support sessions.

2 Health Promoting Schools—Creating Healthy School Communities Modules

Developed and implemented in partnership with the ELCNS with the goal of critically exploring concepts and topics related to individual, school, and community health, and providing participants with a foundation for creating the essential conditions for a flourishing school that employs an HPS approach. Eight staff from Education (schools RCEs, etc.) participated.

3 Municipal Policy Project (MPP)

Working with municipalities and community partners, workshops were developed and delivered to two cohorts with the goal to increase knowledge, skills, and confidence to facilitate the development and implementation of policy actions that support physical activity in communities, including YE. Eight municipalities/towns participated, as well as other partners including community organizations, CCTH staff, RCEs, schools, NSH and community colleges and universities (total of 53 participants).

[Acronyms List]	
CSAP: Conseil scolaire acadien provincial	NSH: Nova Scotia Health
CCTH: Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage	ELCNS: Education Leadership Consortium of Nova Scotia
DEECD: Department of Education and Early Childhood Development	RCEs: Regional Centres for Education

➤ Events

Three events (Chignecto Central Regional Centre for Education Youth Summit, HPS Provincial Gathering, UpLifting HPS Summit) to celebrate and recognize youth for their leadership, promote and raise awareness about YE and best practices in HPS among adult champions, facilitate connections between youth and adults, and review YE and HPS frameworks. There were a total of 189 participants across the three events from various organizations including students and staff from schools, NSH (Public Health and Mental Health and Addictions), DEECD, RCEs, CSAP, municipalities, community organizations and the IWK.

➤ Support for YECs

The **UpLift** Core Team planned and facilitated seven bi-annual YEC retreats, with the purpose of increasing capacity and connection among YECs and partners to support YE in HPS. These retreats were two-to-three-day events, with three to eight YECs in attendance at each retreat. Former YECs and other partners from NSH also attended some retreats, to support building relationships and capacity within the HPS network.

➤ Work of YECs, HPS Leads, and Staff Champions

The work of the YECs, HPS Leads, and staff champions helped to build awareness, understanding, knowledge, and skills about YE in HPS among youth and adults. Some projects funded by the HPS **UpLift** Student Action Grants targeted teaching and learning including projects related to healthy eating, inclusion, physical activity, and special events. The YECs provided school staff with capacity building opportunities and mentorship, provided students with capacity building delivered in schools, and worked with partners to provide capacity building to youth in the community.

➤ Other Capacity Building

A Youth Participatory Action Research approach was used to train two cohorts of youth researchers in the Peer Researcher project. The purpose of this study was to understand youth perspectives on HPS and school YE. Once youth were trained, they interviewed their peers and analyzed the data. A data integration workshop was held with the youth researchers to gain their perspectives on the interview findings. Findings from the interviews and from the youth researchers' experience were published in two academic articles.

- Increased knowledge, skills, and confidence to support the implementation of a YE in HPS approach and how this approach supports child and youth health, well-being and student achievement

Gains in knowledge, skills, and confidence from the **three learning opportunities**:





Increased knowledge about HPS and its implementation, YEC role, and student engagement (benefits and resources); ideas/tips for overcoming barriers to YE; **Uplift** projects and structures; and the various approaches to YE and HPS.

Increased confidence in engaging students in HPS.

Gained skills in facilitation, planning and program design, community youth development, and empowering youth leadership.



Building Healthy School Communities Through YE Course

Increased knowledge about HPS and YE including the benefits of YE in HPS and ways to engage youth.

Increased confidence in explaining HPS concepts and applying skills related to HPS.

Gained skills in applying HPS values to participants' work and identifying community resources.

Health Promoting Schools—Creating Healthy School Communities Modules

Increased knowledge about HPS, the importance of teamwork and partnerships, the social determinants of health, youth voice/leadership, and teacher well-being.

Increased confidence to incorporate YE in HPS into student learning, and support a HPS plan for the school community.

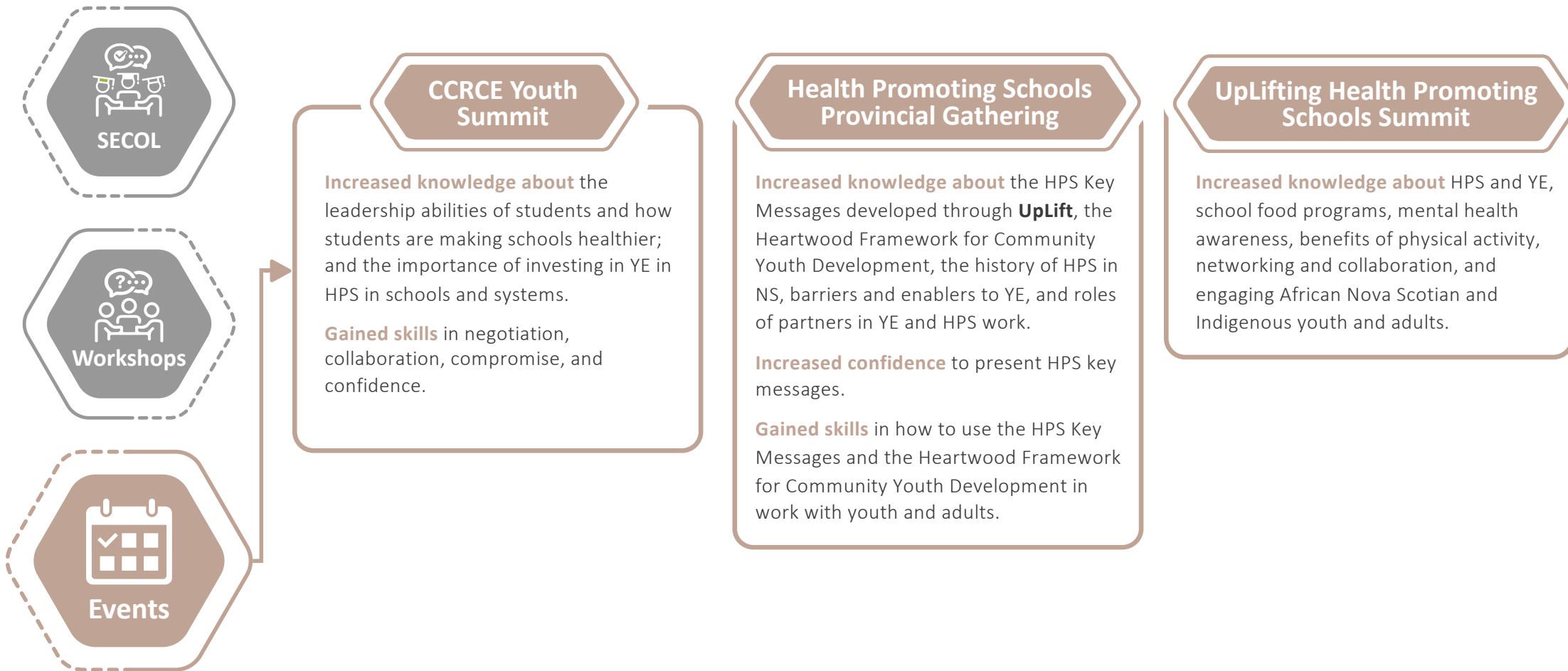
Gained skills in how to develop an HPS plan including using data, aligning Student Success Planning with HPS, and supporting YE in HPS.

Municipal Policy Project

Increased knowledge about YE and community engagement in policy development; supporting physical activity, outdoor play, and active travel in communities; and how policy actions can impact a community.

Gained skills in how to do engagement/facilitation, and develop a physical activity policy.





Increased knowledge about the leadership abilities of students and how students are making schools healthier; and the importance of investing in YE in HPS in schools and systems.

Gained skills in negotiation, collaboration, compromise, and confidence.

Increased knowledge about the HPS Key Messages developed through **UpLift**, the Heartwood Framework for Community Youth Development, the history of HPS in NS, barriers and enablers to YE, and roles of partners in YE and HPS work.

Increased confidence to present HPS key messages.

Gained skills in how to use the HPS Key Messages and the Heartwood Framework for Community Youth Development in work with youth and adults.

Increased knowledge about HPS and YE, school food programs, mental health awareness, benefits of physical activity, networking and collaboration, and engaging African Nova Scotian and Indigenous youth and adults.

Student participation in the development and implementation of HPS initiatives helped to enhance their skills to support YE in HPS including budgeting, engaging and consulting with their peers, grant writing, using information technology, assembling equipment, negotiation, planning, and public speaking. Further, students noted that through **UpLift** they learned about the importance of health and how to better support their own health.

...It helped me in building leadership skills. Because we need to talk to people during these meetings, build relationships, and just know how to put our ideas up front, and communicate them thoroughly. I think it's really helped me to build some of those skills... (Student Focus Groups)

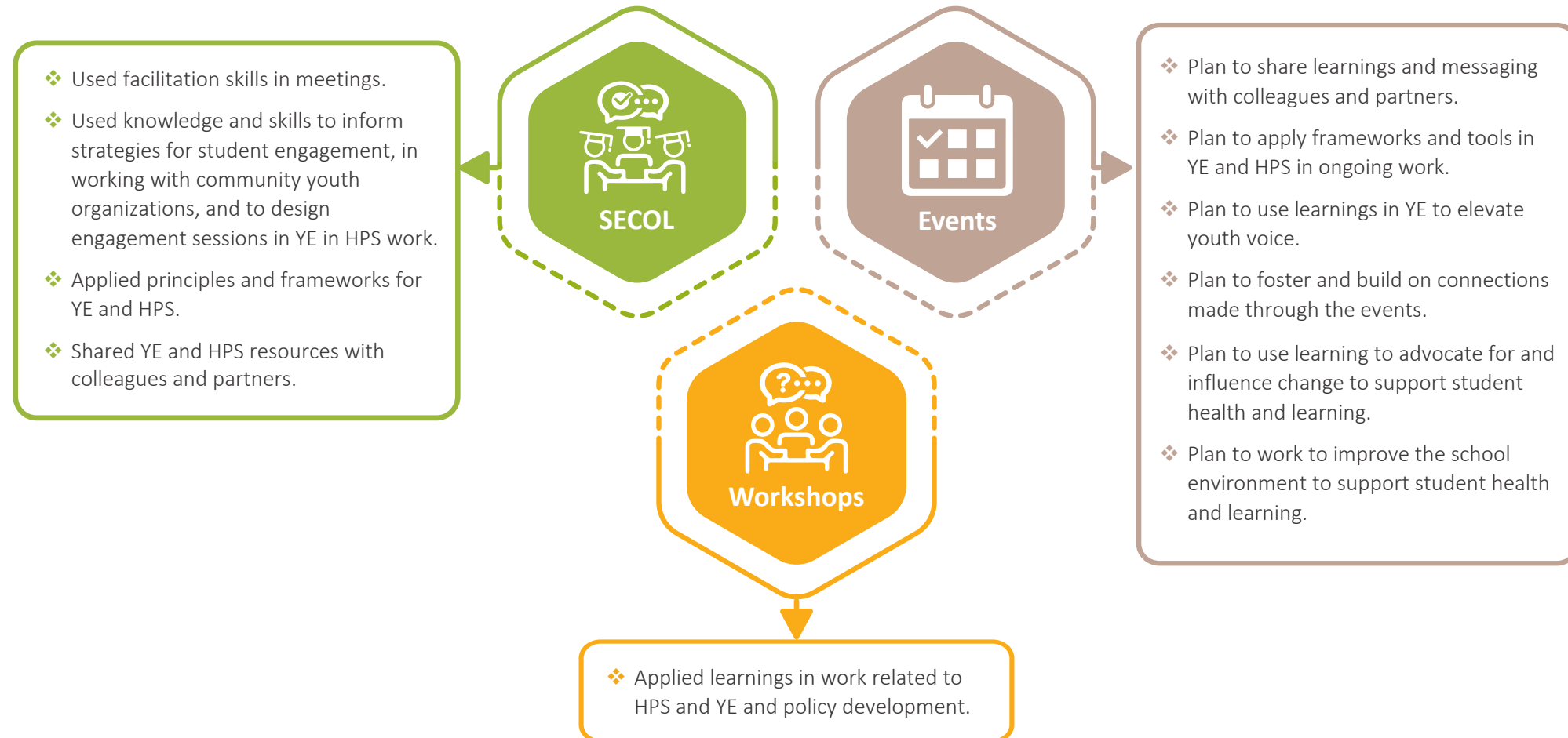
...I think that the skill development throughout the process was a great opportunity for students to learn leadership skills, a little bit on critical thinking, and how grant processes really work... (YEC Interviews)

School staff were supported to build knowledge, skills, and confidence related to YE in HPS and increased their capacity to develop and support new HPS and YE projects and to integrate HPS into classroom learning. The YECs shared that learning opportunities supported them to build their knowledge and skills in HPS and YE and community partners built their awareness and understanding of YE through their participation in the MPP project.

...Youth engagement is now not only in the system, but it's actually appreciated in the system, and I think that's really huge. And that will help it to be sustained... (Partner and Project Lead/PM Interviews)

➤ Enhanced application of knowledge and skills to support YE in HPS implementation

Application (or planned application) of knowledge and skills from the **three learning opportunities**:



An evaluation was conducted of capacity building to describe high level activities and measure outcomes.

Uplift supported the development and application of knowledge, skills, and confidence related to YE in HPS among various audiences including students, school staff and administration, and staff/leaders from partner organizations (e.g., academia, community organizations, CCTH, CSAP, municipalities, Public Health, RCEs) through:



Development and delivery of two workshops - the Building Healthy School Communities Through Youth Engagement Course and the Health Promoting Schools—Creating Healthy School Communities Modules, which will be sustained within the system through partner organizations (Public Health at NSH and ELCNS);



A process to engage youth in supporting policy development in communities through the MPP;



A community of practice for YE in HPS (SECOL);



Events focused on YE in HPS; and



Capacity building through engagement of students and school staff in the development and implementation of HPS initiatives.



The **Uplift** Partnership's vision was *a healthier Nova Scotia through a youth-engaged Health Promoting Schools approach*. In working towards this vision, a focus of the **Uplift** Partnership was to align with and enhance work that is currently underway to support the health and well-being of children and youth. This work focused on the effective implementation of the HPS model through catalyzing meaningful YE within the model. **Uplift** included the following areas of work: partnerships and leadership, capacity building, planning and evaluation, communications and KE, and school community engagement and action with a focus on YE.

The **Uplift** Partnership provided a significant investment of resources in Nova Scotia to support YE in HPS and student health and well-being. This investment has demonstrated the value of YE in HPS, culminating in an investment by NSH in nine YE focused positions across the province. Valuable products and processes have been developed, and many will be sustained to support YE in HPS moving forward. The vision of **Uplift** – *a healthier Nova Scotia through a youth-engaged Health Promoting Schools approach* – guided the work of the **Uplift** Partnership and will continue to guide HPS and YE work in Nova Scotia in the longer term. Continued investment in YE in HPS catalyzed through **Uplift** will help to ensure a sustainable and consistent approach across Nova Scotia, build healthy communities, and improve student achievement and health and well-being of Nova Scotian children and youth. The **Uplift** Partnership has achieved what it set out to do, and sustained YE is a critical legacy of the last 6 years.

Thank You

