

Pathways to Sustainable Communities

A Collaborative Model for Meaningful Community Engagement

THE PICTOU COUNTY 10 TABLES WORKSHOP

November 2026

Prepared by:

New Glasgow flourish

Foundation Clean

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Acknowledgement of place, people and responsibility

The Town of New Glasgow and Clean Foundation developed this report in Pictou County, located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq and within the lands covered by the Treaties of Peace and Friendship. We acknowledge Pictou Landing First Nation and Mi'kmaw communities across Nova Scotia, whose enduring relationships with land, water and community continue to shape this place. We recognize the historical and ongoing impacts of colonization and our responsibility to work, plan and make decisions with respect for Mi'kmaw rights, relationships and knowledge.

We also acknowledge the more than 400-year presence of African Nova Scotian communities and their lasting contributions to Pictou County and Nova Scotia. These communities have helped shape the social, cultural and economic life of the region while navigating historic and ongoing systemic barriers. Their histories, experiences and contributions are an important part of how communities in Pictou County understand place, belonging and our shared future.

The Pictou County 10 Tables workshop of Pathways to Sustainable Communities asked participants to think about the future of the region through ten connected themes, including land, water, housing, energy, food, health, mobility, work, belonging and resilience. These conversations were rooted in place and recognize that the future of Pictou County is shaped not only by the systems we rely on today, but also by the histories, cultures and experiences of the communities who live here. Building a more sustainable and resilient future therefore depends on how we care for land and water, how we work together across communities and how responsibility is shared in decisions about our collective future.



Executive summary

The Town of New Glasgow developed the Pathways to Sustainable Communities model with the support of Clean Foundation to bring people from across Pictou County together to identify shared sustainability priorities and opportunities for action. Pathways to Sustainable Communities is a locally developed engagement model that builds on community strengths, brings diverse perspectives together through a structured process and reveals connections across sustainability priorities that are often addressed separately.

The first application of the model, the Pictou County 10 Tables workshop, took place during the Pictou County Climate Summit, held in May 2026. The event brought together residents, municipal staff and elected officials, community organizations, businesses, institutions, Indigenous communities, subject matter experts and other regional partners for a structured day of dialogue. Participants explored what is already working in the region, identified opportunities for future action and examined how different sustainability issues connect.

The team designed the workshop around a simple idea: Pictou County already has significant knowledge, relationships and initiatives to build on. The goal was to bring people and ideas together, identify opportunities for collaboration and create a clearer picture of where future action could have the greatest impact.

Across ten thematic tables, participants identified existing wins and priority opportunities related to housing, transportation, health, food systems, climate adaptation, economic development, natural assets and belonging. Together, these conversations produced a set of 29 practical opportunities that can help guide future collaboration, planning and project development. The workshop also highlighted how closely connected many of the region‘s challenges are.

Several themes emerged consistently through the discussions. A detailed breakdown of all ten themes and identified priorities can be found in Part Two of this report, and a summary table can be found in **Appendix E.**

- **Pictou County has strong foundations to build on.**
  Participants repeatedly highlighted the strength of existing programs, organizations, relationships and community leadership across the region. A common message was that future success will depend on strengthening and connecting existing efforts rather than creating entirely new initiatives.
- **Capacity is a major barrier to implementation.**
  Across several themes, participants identified limitations in staff time, funding expertise, organizational resources and coordination support as barriers to move from planning to implementation. In many cases, additional capacity is required to move projects forward.
- **Regional collaboration is essential.**
  Many of the issues discussed, including housing, food systems, transportation, emergency preparedness and climate adaptation, cross municipal and organizational boundaries. Participants repeatedly identified a need for stronger regional coordination, collaboration and continued relationship-building.
- **Inclusion improves outcomes.**
  Participants emphasized the importance of including people with lived experience when identifying needs, shaping priorities and developing solutions. Transportation barriers, housing challenges, food insecurity, health concerns, emergency preparedness efforts and climate impacts do not affect everyone equally. Effective solutions must reflect the experiences of those most affected.
- **Relationships matter as much as infrastructure.**
  Participants identified physical infrastructure needs across many themes. They also highlighted the importance of less visible forms of infrastructure, such as communication networks, partnerships, local knowledge staffing and community capacity.
- **Many opportunities are practical and achievable.**
  Participants identified opportunities that could begin through stronger coordination, information sharing, resource mapping, working groups, shared resources and improvements to existing programs. Not every opportunity requires a major new initiative or large capital investment.
- **Sustainability matters are interconnected.**
  Participant discussions demonstrated how progress in one area can support progress elsewhere. Housing connects to transportation. Food systems influence resilience and economic development. Climate adaptation connects to natural assets, infrastructure and community well-being. The cross-table exercise helped participants better understand these relationships and identify opportunities that could create benefits across multiple areas.

The opportunities identified through Pathways to Sustainable Communities do not represent approved projects, funding commitments or implementation plans. They are a record of ideas and priorities identified by participants and provide a starting point for future action. Advancing these opportunities will depend on interested organizations, available resources, community support and alignment with existing plans and mandates.

PART ONE

About the Pathways to Sustainable Communities process

Why was this model needed, where it came from and how the Pictou County 10 Tables workshop was designed.

About the Pictou County Climate Summit

Pathways to Sustainable Communities is a structured engagement model designed to help communities identify strengths and explore opportunities to work together on shared sustainability and resilience priorities.

The model was first piloted at the 2026 Pictou County Climate Summit. The summit brought together residents, community organizations, municipalities, businesses, institutions and Pictou Landing First Nation to discuss issues that affect the region's long-term environmental, social and economic well-being.

The summit recognized a simple reality: many issues shaping Pictou County's future cross municipal, organizational and jurisdictional boundaries. Housing, transportation, food systems, emergency preparedness, watersheds, economic development and community well-being are closely linked. Addressing these often requires collaboration among many partners.

The workshop did not make decisions, allocate funding or develop a formal action plan. Instead, participants identified existing strengths, explored opportunities for future collaboration and built a shared understanding of where coordinated action may have the greatest impact.

The ideas in this report are not commitments. They are opportunities identified by the community to help inform future planning.





Why this matters for Pictou County

Pictou County functions as a connected region. Residents regularly cross municipal boundaries to work, access services, attend school, take part in recreation and connect with community organizations. Responsibility for many sustainability issues, however, is shared among municipalities, governments, organizations, businesses and institutions.

This creates both challenges and opportunities. Housing, transportation, health, food security, climate adaptation and watershed management are closely linked but organizations often address them separately.

How the Pictou County 10 Tables workshop was run

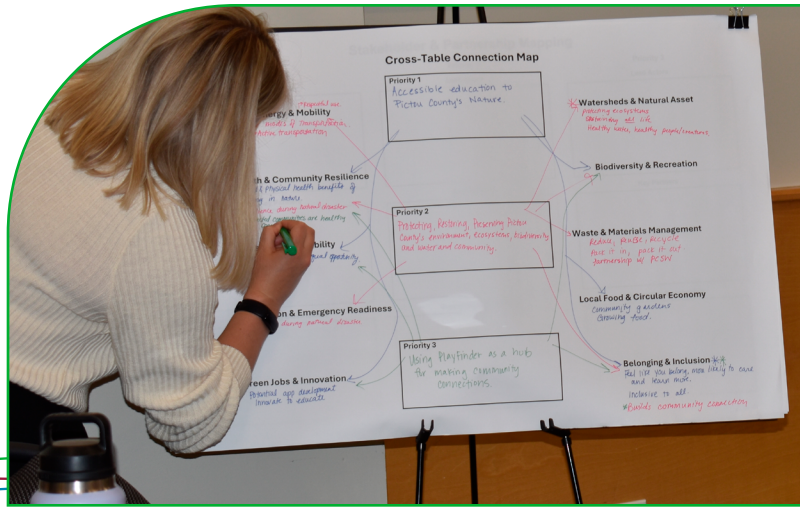
The Pictou County 10 Tables workshop helped participants move from discussion to practical opportunities for action. Participants joined one of 10 theme-based tables, each supported by a facilitator and note-taker.

Each table followed the same three-step process:

1. **Identified three existing wins**
   Participants identified three initiatives, programs, partnerships or approaches that are already underway or working well in Pictou County. Starting with existing successes grounded the discussion in local assets and current momentum. It also recognized that Pictou County already has a strong foundation to build on.

2. **Identified three priority opportunities**
   Participants identified three priority opportunities for future work. These were not project plans. Instead, they highlighted areas where participants saw a need for greater attention, coordination, alignment, investment or partnership over the next few years. Some opportunities may develop into future projects, while others may help guide future collaboration and planning.

3. **Identified at least one cross-table connection**
   Participants identified at least one connection between their table and another discussion area. This was a core feature of the Pathways to Sustainable Communities model. It encouraged participants to look beyond individual topics and consider how issues, interested parties and outcomes connect across Pictou County. This approach helped identify opportunities for collaboration and coordinated action.



This structure gave every table a consistent set of outputs:

- Three existing wins
- Two to three priority opportunities
- At least one cross-table connection

Together, participants identified 29 priority opportunities, along with existing initiatives, partnerships and areas of momentum. These findings form the foundation of this report.

The workshop was not designed to produce a final action plan. Instead, it established a shared starting point for future collaboration. By bringing together people with different experiences, expertise and responsibilities, the process helped build a common understanding of priorities and opportunities across Pictou County.

Understanding the priority opportunities

The priority opportunities identified through the Pictou County 10 Tables workshop provided a shared starting point for future work. Participants across the 10 tables identified these opportunities based on local needs, ideas and potential areas for action.

These opportunities are not commitments or approved projects. They do not assign responsibility for leadership, funding or implementation. Some opportunities may be ready to move forward, while others may require additional discussion, planning, funding, technical support or partnerships before they can advance.

The purpose of the report is not only to document what was discussed. It is to make the priority opportunities usable.

This report is intended to make these opportunities useful beyond the workshop. Findings can help partners:

- shape future conversations and partnerships
- identify areas for joint funding or project development
- inform municipal and organizational planning
- help turn broad ideas into more practical action

Different priorities may be advanced in different ways. Some may be led by municipalities or community organizations, while others may require regional coordination or new partnerships.

The workshop does not replace existing plans, mandates or decision-making processes. Instead, it provides a shared reference point that captures local knowledge, highlights existing strengths and momentum, and identifies opportunities for greater collaboration.

The workshop marked the beginning of the process, not the end. It created a foundation for future conversations, partnerships and action across Pictou County.

PART TWO

Table findings

What participants identified as existing strengths and priority opportunities across the ten locally relevant themes.

How to read the table findings

Each table section records the local focus of the theme, the perspectives represented, three existing wins or areas of momentum and the priority opportunities developed through the discussion. Opportunity profiles identify potential interested parties, practical next steps, enabling resources, readiness and cross-table connections. They are intended to support future collaboration and project development, not assign commitments. A summary of these priority opportunities can be found in **Appendix E.**



Table 1: Clean energy and mobility

What this table focused on

This table explored how Pictou County can build cleaner, more affordable and more reliable energy and transportation systems. Participants discussed energy use in buildings, transportation, infrastructure, technology and opportunities to improve these systems through collaboration.

Why this matters in Pictou County

Clean energy and mobility matter in Pictou County because they shape the costs and choices people face every day. In a largely rural region, many residents rely on personal vehicles to get to work, school, services, appointments and community activities. At the same time, Pictou County has an aging building stock that can be more costly to heat, cool and power, leaving households vulnerable to rising energy costs and energy insecurity.

Clean energy and mobility initiatives are more than reducing emissions. They are also about affordability, access, infrastructure and resilience. Improving building efficiency, supporting electrification and exploring locally appropriate energy and transportation solutions can help reduce costs, improve access and strengthen long-term community resilience across Pictou County.

Perspectives represented

This table brought together participants with experience in public policy, energy efficiency, transportation, Indigenous leadership, community advocacy, technical fields and local climate action.

This mix helped the table examine clean energy and mobility from several angles: public policy, local implementation, energy affordability, energy use in buildings, transportation needs, climate impacts, community concerns and the practical conditions needed to move projects forward.



What is already working

Participants identified the following existing wins, initiatives and areas of momentum in Pictou County:

- **Installed wind energy capacity in Pictou County**
  Pictou County already has significant wind generation in place, including large-scale projects such as Dalhousie Mountain and Glen Dhu. These projects show that renewable energy plays an important role in the county's energy system.

- **Biomass district energy and combined heat-and-power feasibility work**
  Feasibility and engagement work is underway for a biomass district energy and combined heat-and-power project concept, supported by provincial and federal partners. This shows growing interest in a locally based, lower-carbon energy system that could strengthen energy resilience.

- **Central Highlands Association of the Disabled (CHAD) Transit and Pictou County Transit bus systems**
  CHAD Transit and Pictou County Transit highlight investment in shared mobility and transportation options in a region where many residents rely on personal vehicles.

Priority opportunities

Each priority is captured as an opportunity profile. This format is intended to make priority opportunities useful for future collaboration, funding, support and project development without presenting them as implementation plans.

Priority 1.1: Regional clean energy dialogue and public understanding	
Opportunity type	Coordination effort / Policy or planning action / Community engagement
What this opportunity involves	Create a regional forum or engagement workshop to help communities understand where Nova Scotia's energy system is heading, why major energy decisions are being made and how projects affecting Pictou County fit within that broader context. Municipalities and community partners could convene the dialogue, with participation from provincial governments, utilities, industry, Indigenous communities, technical experts and residents.
Why it matters	Energy decisions affect land use, affordability, reliability, economic development, emissions and community well-being. Participants felt that communication around major energy projects has often been reactive and project-specific. Earlier, more transparent dialogue could help communities understand the goals, trade-offs and benefits of major energy decisions while creating space for local concerns and knowledge to inform discussions before projects become points of conflict.
Potential partners	Municipalities, Pictou Landing First Nation, residents and community organizations, IESO Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Power Inc., large energy users, industry partners and independent technical experts.
Possible next steps	Identify key information gaps, concerns and questions communities have about the energy transition. Use those findings to convene a regional dialogue focused on Nova Scotia's energy transition, including system goals, trade-offs, future infrastructure needs and how major projects fit within the broader energy picture.

What would be needed?	Plain-language information about energy systems and electrical grid, facilitation and communications support, staff capacity, technical expertise and resources to support meaningful community and Indigenous engagement.
Timeline	Near-term. An initial regional dialogue or working group could begin within two years. Ongoing engagement would need to continue as energy plans, policies and projects evolve.
Connections to other tables	▪ Belonging and inclusion ▪ Green jobs and innovation ▪ Climate adaptation and emergency readiness A regional clean energy vision would need to build public understanding, trust and meaningful participation while also identifying future workforce, innovation and local economic opportunities. Energy systems play an important role in emergency preparedness and community resilience.

Priority 1.2: Brownfield redevelopment for community energy projects

Opportunity type	Project / Policy or planning action / Study or assessment / Infrastructure / Funding or procurement
What this opportunity involves	This opportunity involves identifying previously developed or underused sites that could support community energy projects, such as solar, storage, district energy or other locally appropriate clean energy infrastructure.
Why it matters	Redeveloping underused sites can support cleaner energy generation while making better use of land that may currently provide limited community benefit. If designed carefully, these projects could also support local resilience, reduce energy costs and deliver benefits to nearby or underserved communities.
Potential partners	Municipalities, landowners, provincial and federal partners, Pictou Landing First Nation and other Indigenous partners, nearby residents, community organizations, utilities, technical experts and potential funders.
Possible next steps	Identify and assess potential sites across Pictou County, including ownership, environmental conditions, grid access, community fit and project feasibility.
What would be needed?	Funding, land and ownership information, environmental and technical assessments, grid data, community engagement, staff capacity and support from provincial and federal programs.
Timeline	Medium-term. Site identification and screening could begin in the near term, but project development would likely require feasibility studies, landowner agreements, funding and community engagement.
Connections to other tables	▪ Climate adaptation and emergency readiness ▪ Health and community resilience Community energy projects on underused sites could support local energy resilience, emergency preparedness and community well-being, particularly if benefits are directed toward areas facing higher energy or infrastructure vulnerability.

Priority 1.3: School bus transportation plan

Opportunity type	Program / Coordination effort / Pilot
What this opportunity involves	This opportunity involves exploring whether existing school buses could also be used for community transportation outside school hours, where practical.
Why it matters	Better use of existing buses could improve transportation for seniors, youth, workers and residents who do not have access to a vehicle, while making better use of existing public assets.
Potential partners	Education and school transportation partners, bus operators, drivers and union representatives, maintenance teams, municipalities, Pictou County Transit, CHAD Transit, local employers, residents and provincial partners.
Possible next steps	Conduct a feasibility assessment to review vehicle availability, routes, scheduling, insurance, driver capacity, maintenance needs, costs and governance considerations. The assessment should also identify how the service could complement, rather than replace, existing transit services.
What would be needed?	Staff capacity, transportation planning expertise, operational data, funding for feasibility studies or pilot work, insurance and legal review, employer participation and community input on routes and service needs.
Timeline	Near-term: Work with interested partners to define a project scope and explore funding opportunities. Medium-term: Complete planning and begin implementation.
Cross-table connections	▪ Housing and affordability ▪ Belonging and inclusion Better transportation options can reduce household costs, improve access to work and services and support participation for residents who do not have reliable access to a personal vehicle.

Table 2: Green jobs and innovation

What this table focused on

This table focused on how sustainable development can support local jobs, skills, entrepreneurship and innovation in Pictou County. The discussion explored how residents, businesses, institutions and employers can participate in a changing economy while strengthening the environment and community well-being.

Green jobs and innovation were considered together because they are closely connected. New ideas, technologies and business models can create employment opportunities, while local skills and workforce capacity help determine whether those opportunities can take root in Pictou County.

Why this matters in Pictou County

Green jobs and innovation matter in Pictou County because the local economy includes established industries, public institutions, small and medium-sized businesses and emerging sectors. As the region responds to environmental, demographic and economic change, sustainability-related work can help create local employment, build transferable skills, attract and keep skilled workers and strengthen economic resilience.

This includes opportunities connected to clean energy, construction and retrofits, circular practices, local food, care services and natural assets. The key challenge is ensuring residents and businesses can benefit from these opportunities through training, partnerships, business supports and better coordination.

Perspectives represented

This table included perspectives from employment services, post-secondary education, municipal leadership, youth and young professionals, consulting, entrepreneurship and engineering. This mix connected green jobs and innovation with workforce development, training pathways, local business growth, technical problem-solving, public policy and opportunities for residents to participate in a changing economy.

What is already working

Participants identified the following existing wins, initiatives, or areas of momentum in Pictou County:

- **Clean energy jobs and training**
  Solar and wind projects in Pictou County support local employment, skills development and momentum in the clean energy economy.

- **Marine, river and water-based innovation**
  Examples such as Discover the Strait, fishing gear technology and CarbonRun's West River alkalinity project show how Pictou County is fostering innovation in marine tourism, safer fishing practices, river restoration and environmental protection.

Small businesses and local projects
Organizations such as NS Works, Sun Kissed Energy and local solar retrofit projects help create employment opportunities, build technical skills and connect residents with careers in the growing green economy.

Priority opportunities

Each priority is captured as an opportunity profile. This format is intended to make the priority opportunities useful for future collaboration, funding, support and project development without presenting them as implementation plans.

Priority 2.1: Knowledge sharing and mentorship	
Opportunity type	Program / Coordination effort / Capacity building / Education and engagement
What this opportunity involves	This opportunity focuses on connecting residents, mentors, Elders, students, community leaders and local organizations to share knowledge, build relationships and create clearer pathways into green jobs and community innovation.
Why it matters	Pictou County already has knowledge, leadership and community assets that can support green jobs and innovation. A stronger mentorship and knowledge-sharing network could help residents connect to those assets, support resilience and create clearer pathways into training, employment, entrepreneurship and community-led innovation. Participants also emphasized the importance of passing local knowledge to younger generations, so that experience, valuable skills and community values are not lost.
Potential partners	The Mentoring Plus Strategy, Elders and Elders-in-residence at NSCC, Pictou County Partnership, Healthy Pictou County, First Nations leadership and community members, student support workers, industry associations, employers, educators and community organizations.
Possible next steps	An early step could be to bring together Mentoring Plus, NSCC, local Indigenous leaders, student support workers, employers and community partners to scope a pilot mentorship or knowledge-sharing series connected to green jobs and innovation.
What would be needed?	Coordination capacity, facilitation support, participation from mentors and Elders, employer and industry involvement, communications support, meeting space and funding for program design or pilot delivery.
Timeline	Near-term: This could begin within the next two years as a pilot or partnership-building effort, especially if existing organizations are able to convene the first conversations.
Connections to other tables	▪ Local food and circular economy ▪ Health and community resilience Knowledge sharing and mentorship can support local enterprise, community resilience, intergenerational learning and stronger pathways into community-based economic opportunities.

Priority 2.2: Pictou County resource directory

Opportunity type	Program / Coordination effort / Capacity building / Digital resource
What this opportunity involves	This opportunity involves creating a shared county-wide directory of local businesses, organizations, community groups, services and resources. The concept is similar to a modern digital version of a local phone book, helping residents, visitors, businesses and organizations find and connect with local resources and services. Participants noted that the region already has many assets, but they are often difficult to find and not always well connected. A shared directory would make them more visible and easier to access.
Why it matters	A shared resource directory could strengthen the local economy by making it easier for residents and visitors to find local businesses and services. It could also help organizations connect, build partnerships and increase awareness of local businesses, services and community resources.
Potential partners	Pictou County Chamber of Commerce, Pictou County Partnership, NS Works, Invest Nova Scotia, local businesses, Community Business Development Corporation - Northern Opportunities for Business Limited (CBDC NOBL), IGNITE Atlantic, municipalities, community organizations, tourism partners and residents.
Possible next steps	Convene key partners to define the purpose, audience, ownership, maintenance model and information to include in a pilot directory.
What would be needed?	Digital platform support, staff or partner capacity to maintain the directory, outreach to businesses and organizations, communications support, data collection and long-term ownership or governance.
Timeline	Near-term: Scope a pilot directory and identify potential partners. Medium-term: Launch and maintain the directory, promote its use and keep it current.
Connections to other tables	▪ Belonging and inclusion ▪ Waste and materials management ▪ Climate adaptation and emergency readiness. A shared directory could improve access to local services, help residents and organizations find resources and support stronger coordination across sectors during both day-to-day operations and disruptions.

Priority 2.3: No third priority was developed

The table identified several additional ideas but did not have enough time to develop and agree on a third priority opportunity. Rather than selecting one without full discussion, the report reflects two priorities the group fully developed during the session.



Table 3: Watersheds and natural assets

What this table focused on

This table focused on the role of natural systems in sustainable development, including rivers, lakes, wetlands, forests, soils, coastal areas and riparian zones (shoreline ecosystems). The discussion considered how these systems support clean water, reduce flood risk, provide habitat, support recreation and food systems and contribute to long-term community resilience.

Watersheds and natural assets were considered together because land, water and ecosystems are deeply connected. What happens on land can affect water quality and flooding downstream. Wetlands can help slow and absorb water, while forests and areas along rivers and streams support water quality, recreation and wildlife resilience. Looking at these systems together helps highlight the social, economic and environmental benefits they provide to communities.

Why this matters in Pictou County

Watersheds and natural assets matter in Pictou County because rivers, streams, forests, wetlands and coastal areas influence water quality, flooding, erosion, wildlife, recreation and infrastructure across the region.

These systems do not follow municipal boundaries. What happens upstream can affect downstream communities and infrastructure. Changes in one part of the watershed or coastline can have effects elsewhere.

As development patterns change and climate risks increase, communities need to work together to understand and protect these systems. Healthy forests, wetlands, waterways and coastal areas can reduce risk, support biodiversity, provide recreation and contribute to the long-term health and resilience of communities across Pictou County.

Perspectives represented

This table included perspectives from municipal government and elected leadership, forestry and woodland management, watershed restoration and river stewardship, environmental work, community organizations, private-sector innovation and resident experience. This mix helped participants consider natural systems from several angles, including land-use planning, forestry, restoration, coastal change, mapping and data, community knowledge and regional coordination.

What is already working

Participants identified the following existing wins, initiatives, or areas of momentum in Pictou County:

- **Regional forest stewardship**
  Forest stewardship work in Pictou County helps restore and protect local forests and areas along rivers and streams while supporting biodiversity and climate resilience. Participants highlighted the use of Forest Stewardship Council standards and local municipal forestry leadership as a strong foundation for broader regional approaches.

Coastal policy and planning already underway
Coastal planning and policy work is already underway in communities including New Glasgow and Pictou. Participants saw this existing work as an opportunity to share local experience across the region as communities respond to erosion, sea-level rise, development pressure and the need to protect both residents and natural systems.

Strong partnerships for watershed and natural asset work
Participants pointed to successful partnerships among municipalities, watershed organizations, Indigenous organizations and communities, environmental organizations, researchers and private-sector partners. Examples discussed included river restoration, tree planting, coastal protection, work along rivers and streams, natural asset data collection, CarbonRun's River Alkalinity Project and the Pictou County Rivers Association's Fish Friends program. These examples show that collaboration is already a strength in Pictou County and provides a foundation for future work.

Priority opportunities

Each priority is captured as an opportunity profile. This format is intended to make the priority opportunities useful for future collaboration, funding, support and project development without presenting them as implementation plans.

Priority 3.1: District energy system	
Opportunity type	Project / Coordination effort / Infrastructure / Study or assessment / Community engagement / Funding or procurement
What this opportunity involves	This opportunity involves advancing a district energy and co-generation system that could make use of locally available lower-value or waste materials as part of a broader regional energy approach. The goal would be to improve energy security, keep more energy spending within the region and create a model that could potentially be used elsewhere in Pictou County. Participants broadened the discussion beyond a biomass-only concept so that the opportunity would not rely on a single technology or fuel source.
Why it matters	Participants saw this as an opportunity that links energy affordability, municipal operating costs, community resilience, natural resource management and local economic activity. Several years of work on the concept have created a stronger foundation than a completely new initiative.
Potential partners	Town of New Glasgow and other municipalities, Pictou Landing First Nation and other Indigenous partners, residents and affected communities, the provincial government, utilities, private woodlot owners and forestry partners, technical and engineering specialists, environmental organizations and potential funders or investors.
Possible next steps	Continue working with utility and provincial partners to understand the energy and regulatory requirements while beginning meaningful community engagement during early project planning. Further work should confirm the appropriate scale, potential fuel or resource sources, forest-management safeguards, local benefits and how rural suppliers and communities could participate. Existing feasibility and implementation work provides a foundation for the next stage.

What would be needed?	Technical and regulatory expertise, utility and grid coordination, community engagement capacity, sustainable resource and forest-management planning, project financing, municipal staff capacity, land and infrastructure information and continued feasibility and implementation support.
Timeline	Medium-term: Continue planning and development work, including engagement, partnerships, technical studies and regulatory review. Long-term: Implement the project once approvals, funding, agreements and planning requirements are in place.
Connections to other tables	▪ Clean energy and mobility ▪ Green jobs and innovation ▪ Housing and affordability Energy costs and reliability affect households and community resilience, while a district energy system could create local opportunities in forestry, technical work and operations and construction. Participants also emphasized the importance of meaningful engagement so that potential benefits and impacts are understood by communities across the county.

Priority 3.2: Region-wide natural asset and wetland inventory

Opportunity type	Project / Coordination effort / Policy or planning action / Study or assessment / Capacity building / Funding or procurement
What this opportunity involves	Building on existing information about watersheds, wetlands, forests, coastal areas and other natural features to create a shared county-wide inventory. The work would identify existing information, fill key gaps and organize data in a common form that municipalities and partners can use to support planning, restoration and investment decisions. Over time, the inventory could support a broader regional natural asset strategy or inform municipal plans.
Why it matters	A clearer understanding of the county's natural systems would help municipalities understand the benefits these systems provide and make better land-use and infrastructure decisions. Participants identified potential co-benefits for stormwater and wastewater management, wildlife and biodiversity, recreation, flood and drought planning and protection of cold-water areas in local rivers.
Potential partners	Municipalities and GIS/environmental staff, Pictou County Rivers Association and other watershed groups, landowners and woodland owners, Pictou Landing First Nation and other Indigenous partners and knowledge holders, Ducks Unlimited Canada and environmental organizations, researchers, community groups, relevant provincial departments and technical consultants.
Possible next steps	Bring together municipal and community partners to identify what already exists, agree on what should be included, identify information gaps and determine who could coordinate the work. Early outreach to landowners would also be important. Participants noted the need to clearly explain how the information will be used and, just as importantly, what it would not mean for property taxes, property values, setbacks, insurance or land-use requirements.

What would be needed?	GIS and mapping expertise, staff capacity, shared data standards, funding for field verification and gap-filling, landowner and community engagement, Indigenous knowledge and guidance, research support, data sharing governance and communications resources.
Timeline	Near-term: Bring partners together and compile existing data and information. Identify what is already known, what data is available and where key gaps exist. Medium-term: Complete additional data collection, validate findings and engage interested parties. Finalize the inventory and begin using it to inform planning, project development and decision-making.
Connections to other tables	▪ Biodiversity and recreation ▪ Climate adaptation and emergency readiness ▪ Health and community resilience. Better natural asset information can support habitat protection, recreation, flood and drought planning, public health and community well-being and more transparent land-use decisions. Local and Indigenous knowledge also plays an important role in building a more complete understanding of the landscape.

Priority 3.3: Regional coastal planning

Opportunity type	Coordination effort / Policy or planning action / Study or assessment / Education and engagement / Funding or procurement
What this opportunity involves	Develop a more coordinated regional approach to coastal planning, education and policy across Pictou County. The goal is not necessarily to create one identical policy for every community. Instead, municipalities could work together to better understand coastal hazards, share information, communicate with residents and use common evidence to guide future development and adaptation decisions.
Why it matters	Coastal erosion, sea-level rise, flooding and development pressures affect communities along the Northumberland Strait. A regional approach could help reduce duplication, share lessons, and make information easier for residents and decision-makers to understand. It could also create greater consistency in how coastal risks are considered across municipal boundaries.
Potential partners	Town of Pictou and other coastal municipalities, all municipalities in Pictou County, Pictou Landing First Nation and other Indigenous partners, coastal residents and landowners, community organizations, planners, scientists and researchers, watershed and environmental groups, provincial partners and other North Shore communities where appropriate.
Possible next steps	Begin with regional needs assessment and public education efforts. This could include identifying vulnerable areas, reviewing existing coastal work, bringing municipalities and partners together and providing coastal residents with clear information about hazards, options and responsibilities. Participants emphasized that public engagement and education should come before or alongside policy development. Existing natural asset information and local knowledge could help support decisions about where and how adaptation is needed.
What would be needed?	Staff and coordination capacity, coastal and climate data, mapping and natural asset information, planning and policy expertise, community engagement and education resources, funding, scientific and technical support and sustained participation from municipalities, residents, Indigenous partners and relevant provincial agencies.

Timeline	Near-term: Bring partners together to share information and build public awareness. Conduct a regional needs assessment to identify priorities, gaps and opportunities. Medium-term: Use the needs assessment results to align policies, complete technical analyses, engage the public and develop implementation plans. Support municipal decision-making and identify next steps for action.
Connections to other tables	▪ Climate adaptation and emergency readiness ▪ Biodiversity and recreation ▪ Health and community resilience. Coastal decisions affect flooding and erosion risk, public access and recreation, ecosystems, property and community well-being. Better coordination could also help residents understand and respond to changing coastal risks.

Table 4: Biodiversity and recreation

What this table focused on

This table focused on the relationship between biodiversity and how people access, use and enjoy natural spaces in Pictou County. The discussion included parks, trails, shorelines, coastal access, open spaces, recreational areas and informal natural areas that support both ecological health and community life.

Biodiversity and recreation were considered together because they are closely connected. Healthy natural areas support high-quality outdoor experiences, while thoughtful planning and management help protect sensitive habitats as more people use these spaces.

Why this matters in Pictou County

Biodiversity and recreation matter in Pictou County because natural landscapes, shorelines, trails, parks and green spaces support physical activity, mental well-being, cultural connection, tourism and access to nature.

At the same time, increased use of natural areas can put pressure on habitats and wildlife if they are not managed carefully. Stronger coordination across municipalities, community partners, land managers, tourism interests and conservation groups can help improve access to nature while protecting the places people value.

Perspectives represented

This table included perspectives from municipal government, youth and students, school and community support staff, Indigenous and Mi'kmaw representation and resident experience. This mix helped connect biodiversity and recreation with local planning, community access, education, cultural connection, youth engagement and the value natural spaces bring to everyday life in Pictou County.

What is already working

Participants identified the following existing wins, initiatives, or areas of momentum in Pictou County:

- **School-based environmental education and youth stewardship**
  Programs and partnerships such as Pictou County Forest School and Pictou County Solid Waste Education support schools, tree planting, litter cleanups, recycling activities and land-based learning. These initiatives help young people build stronger connections to nature and environmental stewardship.

- **Public parks, trails, beaches and outdoor spaces**
  Pictou County already has a strong network of parks, trails, beaches, camping areas and other public outdoor spaces. These places support recreation, access to nature, community well-being, tourism and local identity.

- **Equipment lending and local recreation programming**
  Equipment loan programs and municipal recreation initiatives help reduce barriers to outdoor activity. These programs make it easier for residents to participate in recreation, especially when cost, transportation or access to equipment might otherwise limit participation.

Priority opportunities

Each priority is captured as an opportunity profile. This format is intended to make the priority opportunities useful for future collaboration, funding, support and project development without presenting them as implementation plans.

Priority 4.1: Accessible education for Pictou County's nature	
Opportunity type	Project / Coordination effort / Education and engagement / Funding or procurement / Digital resource
What this opportunity involves	This opportunity involves developing a digital education tool, such as a mobile-friendly website or app, that helps residents and visitors learn about Pictou County's natural areas. The tool could be connected to QR codes at parks, trails, beaches and other recreation areas and provide information on local recreation opportunities, ecosystems, species, habitat and, where appropriate, cultural connections to the land guided by Indigenous partners.
Why it matters	This tool could help people better understand the spaces they are visiting and the plants, animals and the ecosystems around them. It could also share information about cultural connections to land, guided by Indigenous leadership. Participants saw an opportunity to use education to encourage respectful use of natural spaces and build a stronger connection to the places people live and visit.
Potential partners	Municipalities, Pictou County Partnership, Pictou Landing First Nation and other Indigenous partners, Elders and knowledge holders, subject matter experts, universities or researchers, historical societies, the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources, local trail groups, Pictou County Trails Association, recreation partners, schools, Pictou County Forest School and community members.

Possible next steps	Bring interested partners together to define the purpose, audience, content and delivery model for the tool. This conversation should also consider cultural protocols and Indigenous leadership from the beginning. Partners could explore whether the idea could be built on existing platforms, such as PlayFinder, rather than starting from scratch.
What would be needed?	Funding, staff capacity, technical expertise, ecological and cultural knowledge, Indigenous leadership and guidance, data on recreation spaces, communications support, community participation, platform development, signage or QR code infrastructure and a clear plan for maintaining and updating the information.
Timeline	Near-term to medium-term: Begin discussions with partners within two years. Full implementation would depend on approach chosen and whether the tool can be built on existing infrastructure or platforms.
Connections to other tables	▪ Belonging and inclusion ▪ Health and community resilience ▪ Green jobs and innovation. Better information about local natural areas could help residents feel more connected to their communities, encourage outdoor activity and support well-being. It could also create opportunities for local digital development, education, interpretation and stewardship.

Priority 4.2: Coordinated environmental protection policy

Opportunity type	Coordination effort / Policy or planning action / Education and engagement
What this opportunity involves	This opportunity involves municipalities across Pictou County working together to review and strengthen policies that protect the region's environment, natural areas, water and communities. This could include reviewing existing policies, identifying gaps and strengthening how environmental protection is reflected in land-use planning, parks and trails, operations, infrastructure decisions and community stewardship.
Why it matters	Clearer and more consistent policy could help protect biodiversity, natural areas and water while also strengthening climate resilience and supporting community well-being. Working together could also help municipalities learn from one another and provide clearer direction for decisions that affect land, water and natural spaces.
Potential partners	Municipal staff and elected officials, Pictou County Rivers Association, Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, Pictou Landing First Nation, Pictou County Solid Waste, environmental organizations, trail and park user groups, community organizations, residents and relevant provincial partners.
Possible next steps	A first step could be to bring municipalities, Indigenous partners, environmental organizations and community groups together to discuss existing policies and identify shared gaps. The group could then identify where greater alignment would be useful and determine who is best positioned to lead the next step.
What would be needed?	Staff capacity, technical and policy expertise, environmental and land-use data, community participation, Indigenous leadership and guidance, governance support, communications and resources to support education and implementation.
Timeline	Medium-term: Begin with awareness-building and a policy scan. Advance policy development and integration through sustained coordination, political direction, technical review and community engagement.

Connections to other tables	▪ Watersheds and natural assets ▪ Climate adaptation and emergency readiness ▪ Clean energy and mobility Environmental protection policies can support watershed health, protect natural assets, reduce climate risks and help guide land-use decisions connected to infrastructure, energy, transportation and development.

Priority 4.3: Connecting people through nature-based recreation

Opportunity type	Program / Coordination effort / Capacity building / Education and engagement / Funding or procurement
What this opportunity involves	This opportunity involves using Playfinder as a hub to help residents find nature-based recreation opportunities, community groups, programs and outdoor spaces across Pictou County. Rather than creating a new platform, the goal is to build on an existing tool to make it easier for people to find activities, connect with others and participate in outdoor recreation.
Why it matters	Nature-based recreation supports physical health, mental well-being, social connection and a stronger relationship with local natural spaces. By using an existing platform, this opportunity could be a practical, low-barrier way to make recreation opportunities easier to find, strengthen connections between community groups and help more residents take part.
Potential partners	Municipalities, Pictou County Partnership, Playfinder, recreation staff, community groups, schools, community centers, local media, youth-serving organizations and residents.
Possible next steps	Strengthen municipal and community support for Playfinder, onboard more community groups and recreation opportunities and clarify what support is needed to keep the platform active and up to date.
What would be needed?	Funding, staff capacity, technical support, community participation, communications, platform maintenance, governance support and support for onboarding community groups and recreation partners
Timeline	Near-term: The platform already exists and is part of a three-year pilot, with approximately two years remaining. This makes the opportunity relatively ready to explore, provided municipal, partner and community support continues.
Connections to other tables	▪ Belonging and inclusion ▪ Housing and affordability ▪ Health and community resilience Better access to information about local recreation can help residents build social connections, participate in low-cost activities and improve quality of life regardless of income or housing situation. It also connects with health and community resilience through the physical and mental health benefits of time spent outdoors.

Table 5: Waste and materials management

What this table focused on

This table explored how materials are used, reused, recovered and disposed of across Pictou County. Participants discussed waste reduction, recycling, organics, procurement, construction and demolition materials, and the movement of products and materials through local systems.

The discussion considered waste and materials management together because decisions made throughout a product's life cycle affect the amount of waste generated. Purchasing choices, product use, building design and construction practices, as well as systems for collection, reuse and recycling all influence whether materials retain their value within the community or become waste.

Why this matters in Pictou County

Waste and materials management affect municipal services, environmental outcomes and residents' daily lives. Residents, businesses, institutions and municipalities all rely on these systems, many of which operate across municipal boundaries.

Stronger coordination could help people understand how to properly recycle, reuse and dispose of materials, increase participation in existing programs and make better use of materials before they become waste. It could also create local opportunities for repair, reuse, recycling and other circular economy activities, helping to keep more value and resources within the community for longer.

Perspectives represented

This table included perspectives from municipal government, Pictou Landing First Nation, waste diversion and solid waste management, community organizations, housing and reuse non-profits, youth and post-secondary education, and supply chain and sustainability practitioners. This mix helped connect waste and materials management with municipal services, resident behaviour, circular economy opportunities, procurement, reuse, community education and the practical systems needed to reduce waste across Pictou County.

What is already working

Participants identified the following existing wins, initiatives and areas of momentum in Pictou County:

- **County-wide curbside collection**
  Pictou County Solid Waste provides curbside collection of food waste and recyclables across the county. This makes it easier for residents to divert materials from disposal and reduces the need for individual trips to waste facilities.

- **Waste education and public engagement**
  Pictou County Solid Waste and Divert Nova Scotia provide education and outreach to schools and communities. These efforts help residents, students and youth better understand waste reduction, recycling, composting and their role in the local waste system.

Reuse through thrift stores and community-based organizations
Thrift stores, community organizations and local institutions provide opportunities for residents to donate, purchase and reuse items. Examples such as Habitat for Humanity ReStore, Salvation Army and other local second-hand stores help keep usable items in circulation and out of the waste stream.

Priority opportunities

Each priority is captured as an opportunity profile. This format is intended to make the priority opportunities useful for future collaboration, funding, support and project development without presenting them as implementation plans.

Priority 5.1: Reducing food waste in Pictou County	
Opportunity type	Project / Program/ Coordination effort / Study or assessment / Education and engagement / Funding or procurement
What this opportunity involves	This opportunity involves identifying where food waste is being generated in Pictou County and exploring ways to prevent, recover and redirect usable food. The work could include households, farms, grocery stores, restaurants, institutions, community groups and businesses.
Why it matters	Reducing food waste could lower disposal costs, reduce unnecessary transportation and keep more usable food within the community. It could also support food security by improving connections between residents, farmers, businesses, food banks, community kitchens and other organizations that help people access food.
Potential partners	Community groups, church groups, food banks, community kitchens, farmers' markets, local farm groups, grocery stores, restaurants, institutions, the Pictou County Chamber of Commerce, the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture, Second Harvest, municipalities, Pictou County Solid Waste and residents.
Possible next steps	Convene partners from the food system, waste management sector, business community, farming sector and community support partners to map where food waste is being created and what recovery efforts already exist. This could help identify gaps, potential pilot projects and potential lead organizations or working groups.
What would be needed?	Funding, staff capacity, food waste data, coordination support, transportation or storage capacity, food safety guidance, communications support, participation from businesses and farms, community organization capacity and funding for a pilot food recovery initiative.
Timeline	Near-term to medium-term: Begin mapping food waste sources and coordinating partners within two years. Develop and implement food recovery or redistribution initiatives, supported by funding and operational partnerships.
Connections to other tables	▪ Local food and circular economy ▪ Health and community resilience ▪ Belonging and inclusion. ▪ Green jobs and innovation Food waste reduction can support local food systems, reduce pressure on waste systems, improve food access and strengthen community connections. It may also connect with the green economy if new roles, services, or social enterprise opportunities emerge around food recovery, transportation or redistribution.

Priority 5.2: Improving options for reusing and repairing items

Opportunity type	Program / Coordination effort / Study or assessment / Pilot / Education and engagement / Funding or procurement
What this opportunity involves	This opportunity involves increasing local options for residents to reuse, repair and extend the life of household items, furniture, equipment and other materials. The work could include mapping existing reuse and repair options, identifying gaps and coordinating events such as repair workshops, swap events and partnerships with second-hand and reuse organizations. This opportunity could also include exploring the potential for a reuse center at the Pictou County Solid Waste management site.
Why it matters	Reuse and repair help keep useful items out of landfills and retain their value within the community. These options can also improve affordability by helping residents access lower-cost goods, repair items they already own and participate in practical, community-based waste reduction.
Potential partners	Pictou County Solid Waste, Habitat for Humanity ReStore, Divert Nova Scotia, thrift stores, charities, community organizations, Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC), universities and colleges, repair volunteers, local businesses, municipalities and residents.
Possible next steps	Research existing reuse and repair options, identify community needs and review successful models used at other waste management facilities. This could include exploring the feasibility of establishing a reuse center at the Pictou County Solid Waste site, alongside repair workshops, swap events and other pilot initiatives.
What would be needed?	Funding, staff capacity, repair expertise, volunteers, tools and equipment, workshop space, communications support, community participation, transportation or storage options, coordination with reuse organizations and support for event planning and risk management.
Timeline	Near-term: Launch a pilot or event-based initiative within two years, building on existing organizations, reuse organizations and waste education programs.
Connections to other tables	▪ Local food and circular economy ▪ Housing and affordability ▪ Green jobs and innovation Reuse and repair reduce waste while helping residents access lower-cost goods and household items. It may also connect with the local economy through skills development, repair services, social enterprise and local circular economy opportunities.

Priority 5.3: Waste education for practical change

Opportunity type	Program / Coordination effort / Capacity building / Education and engagement / Funding or procurement
What this opportunity involves	This opportunity involves identifying gaps in waste education across Pictou County and developing targeted resources to help residents, schools, businesses, institutions and community groups better understand how to reduce waste, sort materials properly and participate in diversion programs.

Why it matters	Clear and consistent information can improve diversion rates, reduce contamination, lower pressure on waste systems and help save taxpayer money over time. It can also make waste reduction feel more practical and achievable by giving people better information about what to do, why it matters and how their actions connect to local environmental and financial outcomes.
Who may need to be involved	Divert Nova Scotia, Pictou County Solid Waste, schools, municipalities, relevant municipal committees, businesses and industry programs, community organizations, youth, residents and local communications partners.
What could move this forward	Identify the main waste education gaps, including areas where residents, businesses, schools or institutions are experiencing confusion or where diversion rates could be improved. Use those findings to develop targeted campaigns, school programming, business outreach and updated public-facing resources.
Support or resources needed	Staff capacity, funding, education and communications expertise, waste diversion data, school and community partnerships, outreach materials, translation or accessibility supports where needed, and participation from residents, businesses, institutions and municipal partners.
Readiness / time horizon	Near-term: Begin gap analysis and targeted education initiatives within two years, building on existing education programs led by Pictou County Solid Waste and Divert Nova Scotia.
Cross-table connections	▪ Health and community resilience Cleaner communities, better waste practices and stronger public understanding support community well-being, reduce environmental impacts and build shared responsibility for local systems.

Table 6: Local food and circular economy

What this table focused on

This table focused on how Pictou County can strengthen local food systems while reducing waste and keeping more value in the local economy. The discussion explored food production, processing, distribution, access and recovery, as well as circular approaches such as reuse, repair, sharing and local value-added activity.

Participants highlighted how these areas connect. Stronger local food and circular economy systems can support local businesses, reduce waste, improve access and make the region more resilient when outside supplies and services are disrupted.

Why this matters in Pictou County

Food and materials move across the entire county. A coordinated regional effort can increase the impact of local actions.

Local food and circular economy work also connects to some of the issues that affect everyday life, including food costs, waste, local jobs, transportation, health and community well-being. Strengthening local systems can help keep more money and resources in the region while making better use of existing resources.

Perspectives represented

Table six brought together people working in agriculture, local food, food security organizations, community development, local government, markets and regional support organizations. This mix helped shape a discussion grounded in practical experience, including food access, entrepreneurship and community needs. Participants highlighted how food systems are connected and noted that understanding the movement of food, packaging, materials and resources can create opportunities for sustainability and economic development.

What is already working

Participants identified the following existing wins, initiatives, or areas of momentum in Pictou County:

- **Local entrepreneurship and business support**
  Pictou County has a growing network of organizations that support local businesses, food producers and social enterprises. Farmers' markets and local food businesses receive support from organizations such as the Pictou County Partnership, IGNITE Atlantic, Pictou County Chamber of Commerce, Invest Nova Scotia, Perennia Food Development Agency and Community Business Development (CBDC) Northern Opportunities for Business Limited (NOBL). Together, these organizations help local businesses launch, grow and keep economic and social value within the region.

- **Collaboration and partnerships**
  Participants identified a strong network of food-focused organizations and community groups already working together. Examples discussed included Summer Street Industries, the Pictou County Food Bank, Scotsburn Community Food Forest, Nova Scotia Health and the New Glasgow Farmers Market. These partnerships help improve food access, build food-related skills and support community well-being.

- **Food security and education initiatives**
  Pictou County has several initiatives that support food literacy, growing food locally and improving food access. Organizations, businesses and initiatives like SchoolsPlus, the New Glasgow Farmers Market, Summer Street Industries, the Karma Closet at Northumberland Regional High School and Small Holdings Farm help residents build skills, access healthy food and strengthen connections to locally grown food.

Priority opportunities

Each priority is captured as an opportunity profile. This format is intended to make the priority opportunities useful for future collaboration, funding, support and project development without presenting them as implementation plans.

Priority 6.1: Capacity building for local food and circular economy work	
Opportunity type	Capacity building / Program / Coordination effort
What this opportunity involves	Increase the coordination, staffing and operational support needed to strengthen local food and circular economy initiatives. Participants highlighted the need for more capacity to support food education, food infrastructure, waste reduction and collaboration among organizations.

Why it matters	Many successful initiatives already exist, but organizations often operate with limited staff and resources. Additional capacity could help existing programs reach more people, improve local food access, strengthen emergency preparedness and create stronger connections between food security, economic development and waste reduction.
Potential partners	Local governments, Pictou County Partnership, schools, food security organizations, food producers, community groups, provincial departments, funding agencies and local businesses.
Possible next steps	Identify where organizations face the biggest capacity gaps and bring interested partners together to explore possible solutions. These could include funding, shared staffing models, coordination support, facilities and infrastructure, and joint project development.
What would be needed?	Operational funding, staffing support, coordination capacity, facility and infrastructure investment, grant funding and partnership development.
Timeline	Near-term to medium-term: Many organizations and programs already exist, making this an opportunity that could move forward quickly if partners and resources can be identified.
Connections to other tables	▪ Health and community resilience ▪ Green jobs and innovation ▪ Climate adaptation and Emergency readiness ▪ Belonging and inclusion Stronger local food systems can support food access, community resilience, local employment and the ability to respond to disruptions or emergencies.

Priority 6.2: Mapping the local food system

Opportunity type	Study / Assessment / Planning action
What this opportunity involves	Create a shared picture of local food system assets across Pictou County. The work could identify producers, processors, distributors, markets, food programs, infrastructure, transportation options and where residents can access food. It could also identify gaps or opportunities to improve connections across the system.
Why it matters	Participants noted that many food-related organizations, businesses and programs already exist, but there is no shared understanding of how they fit together. A local food map would help identify what is already working, where services or infrastructure are missing and where organizations could collaborate.
Potential partners	Municipal governments, Pictou Landing First Nation, food producers, community organizations, farmers' markets, food banks, schools, support agencies and economic development organizations.
Possible next steps	Define what information would be most useful, identify partners who could contribute data and establish a working group to guide the work. Partners could explore funding to collect, organize and map food system data across the region.
What would be needed?	Data collection capacity, project funding, GIS and mapping expertise, participation from interested parties and research support.
Timeline	Near-term: This work could begin within two years and could provide information that supports many future projects and partnerships.

Connections to other tables	▪ Health and community resilience ▪ Belonging and inclusion ▪ Green jobs and innovation A clearer understanding of the local food system could identify gaps in food access, infrastructure, services and economic opportunities.

Priority 6.3: Strengthening food system partnerships

Opportunity type	Coordination effort / Partnership development
What this opportunity involves	Strengthening connections among organizations working on food, food access and local economic development. Participants discussed opportunities to share services, staff, infrastructure and knowledge. They also identified opportunities to improve food distribution, support local entrepreneurs, strengthen food security and support Indigenous food sovereignty and foodway reclamation.
Why it matters	Many organizations face similar challenges related to staffing, administration, distribution and coordination. Working together could reduce duplication, make better use of limited resources and help organizations achieve outcomes they may not be able to achieve on their own.
Potential partners	Food producers, entrepreneurs, community organizations, Pictou Landing First Nation, municipalities, farmers' markets, food banks, regional development organizations, schools and provincial partners.
Possible next steps	Establish a regional food systems network or partnership platform where organizations can regularly connect, identify shared priorities and explore collaborative opportunities.
What would be needed?	Coordination staff, operational funding, meeting and communications platforms, partnership development support and a shared governance structure.
Timeline	Medium-term: While many relationships already exist, additional coordination and formal structures would be needed to support long-term collaboration.
Connections to other tables	▪ Belonging and inclusion ▪ Health and community resilience ▪ Green jobs and innovation ▪ Waste and materials management Stronger partnerships could improve food access, support local businesses and jobs, reduce waste and strengthen community resilience.

Table 7: Climate adaptation and emergency readiness

What this table focused on

This table focused on how communities prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies and other disruptions. The discussion included climate adaptation, emergency preparedness, infrastructure, essential services and community capacity to respond to challenges such as flooding, storms, erosion, extreme heat and other climate-related risks.

Participants explored how local governments, organizations and communities can work together to reduce risks, prepare for emergencies and strengthen community capacity to recover from disruption.

Why this matters in Pictou County

Climate adaptation and emergency readiness matter in Pictou County because many risks cross municipal boundaries. Flooding, wildfire, erosion, extreme weather and infrastructure challenges can affect several communities at the same time and often require a coordinated response.

This work also connects to infrastructure, health, housing, transportation, natural assets and community well-being. Strengthening preparedness today can reduce future risks, improve emergency response and help communities recover more quickly from disruptions. Because these challenges affect the entire region, municipalities, organizations and communities must work together to build long-term resilience.

Perspectives represented

This table brought together perspectives from municipal government, emergency management, public health and addiction services, community organizations, local climate leadership and social service organizations. This mix helped connect emergency readiness and climate adaptation with practical emergency response, public health, community support, local planning and the needs of people who may be most affected by emergencies.

What is already working

Participants identified the following existing wins, initiatives, or areas of momentum in Pictou County:

- **Regional Emergency Management Organization (REMO)**
  Pictou County's Regional Emergency Management Organization (REMO) provides a foundation for coordinated emergency planning, preparedness, response and recovery across the region. Participants recognized the value of having regional emergency management capacity and the growing collaboration among municipalities and community partners.

Municipal climate adaptation planning
Local governments across Pictou County are developing climate adaptation plans that identify local risks, priorities and actions related to issues such as flooding, wildfire and coastal erosion. These plans provide a foundation for future projects, funding applications and decision-making while also creating opportunities to identify shared regional priorities.

Funding and support for resilience initiatives
Programs such as Clean Foundation's Community Climate Capacity Program help communities build capacity, develop projects and access funding for climate and resilience work. Participants noted that these programs help communities move beyond planning to implementation.

Priority opportunities

Each priority is captured as an opportunity profile. This format is intended to make the priority opportunities useful for future collaboration, funding, support and project development without presenting them as implementation plans.

Priority 7.1: Dedicated climate and resilience staff for Pictou County municipalities	
Opportunity type	**Capacity building / Coordination effort**
What this opportunity involves	Establish dedicated positions to support climate adaptation, resilience and emergency preparedness across Pictou County. Participants discussed the potential value of at least two regional positions that could help coordinate initiatives, identify funding opportunities and support project development and move climate and resilience priorities toward implementation.
Why it matters	Climate adaptation and emergency readiness involves multiple organizations and municipalities. Dedicated staff could help build continuity, improve coordination of work across the region and make it easier to identify and pursue funding and other resources.
Potential partners	Municipal councils, municipal staff, REMO Pictou County, climate advisory committees, Pictou County Partnership, provincial partners and community organizations.
Possible next steps	Discuss the concept with municipal partners and the Pictou County Partnership to determine support for a regional approach.
What would be needed?	Funding for the positions, administrative support, municipal commitment and regional coordination resources.
Timeline	Medium-term: Existing climate adaptation planning provides a strong starting point. The next step would require municipal support, agreement on a regional model and funding for the positions.
Connections to other tables	▪ Green jobs and innovation ▪ Belonging and inclusion Additional staff capacity strengthens local employment and skills while helping ensure that climate and resilience work considers the needs of different communities and populations.

Priority 7.2: Regional engagement and collaboration plan

Opportunity type	Coordination effort / Education and engagement
What this opportunity involves	Develop a regional approach to community engagement around climate adaptation, emergency readiness and resilience. The goal would be to help municipalities, organizations and residents share information, understand local risks and participate in planning and preparedness activities. The approach would include meaningful and inclusive engagement, with attention to residents and communities that may be less likely to participate in traditional planning workshops.
Why it matters	People are better able to prepare for emergencies when they understand the risks, know where to find information and know how they can help. A better-coordinated regional approach could make communication clearer and more consistent while creating more opportunities for residents and community organizations to contribute to resilience planning.
Potential partners	REMO Pictou County, municipalities, Pictou Landing First Nation, public health organizations, community organizations, Pictou County Partnership, CLIMAtlantic and residents.
Possible next steps	Bring together interested partners to explore current engagement approaches, gaps and opportunities to work together. The group could then identify practical tools and approaches for reaching residents, sharing information and involving communities in climate adaptation and emergency preparedness.
What would be needed?	Community-engagement expertise, climate data and interpretation support, communications support, funding, staff capacity and participation from key partners, including CLIMAtlantic where appropriate.
Timeline	Near-term: Existing relationships provide a strong foundation for this work. The first step could be a regional conversation to identify shared needs and opportunities.
Connections to other tables	▪ Health and community resilience ▪ Belonging and inclusion Effective engagement can help ensure that resilience planning reflects community needs and that residents have access to information and opportunities to participate.

Priority 7.3: Building capacity to secure funding

Opportunity type	Capacity building / Funding and procurement
What this opportunity involves	Strengthen the region's ability to identify, apply for and manage funding for climate adaptation, emergency readiness, infrastructure and resilience projects. This could include shared funding information, training, grant-writing support and better coordination.
Why it matters	Funding is often one of the biggest barriers to moving projects from planning to implementation. Stronger grant-writing and funding coordination capacity would help local governments and organizations secure additional investment in Pictou County.
Potential partners	Municipalities, REMO Pictou County, Clean Foundation, regional organizations, funders and community partners.

Possible next steps	Assess how current funding opportunities are identified and managed across the region. Partners could then identify where additional support would be useful, such as shared funding information, grant-writing assistance, staff training or coordinated applications for projects that benefit multiple communities.
What would be needed?	Funding expertise, staff resources, training opportunities, shared funding databases and regional partnerships.
Timeline	Near-term to medium-term: Existing partnerships and planning work provide a strong starting point. Additional resources may be needed to expand funding coordination and support more organizations in pursuing opportunities.
Connections to other tables	▪ Housing and affordability ▪ Local food and circular economy ▪ Watersheds and natural assets While the priority connects to all table themes, funding and implementation capacity shape progress across sustainability, housing, health, food systems, natural assess and community development initiatives.



Table 8: Health and community resilience

What this table focused on

This table focused on people, services and community networks that help residents stay healthy and support one another during everyday challenges and times of disruption. The discussion included physical and mental health, access to services, transportation, social connection, community space, food security and the role of local organizations in supporting well-being.

Participants explored how stronger connections between people, organizations and services can improve quality of life and help communities prepare for and respond to future challenges.

Why this matters in Pictou County

Health and community resilience are about more than health care alone. Access to transportation, food, housing, community support, recreation and social connections all affect the health outcomes of people and their quality of life. As the population ages and service needs change, stronger collaboration between municipalities, organizations and community groups can help residents access the support they need.

Perspectives represented

This table brought together perspectives from healthcare, mental health and addiction services, municipal government, emergency planning, community development, social services, youth and family support and local climate leadership. This mix combined frontline experience and broader community planning perspectives, with a strong focus on access to services, reducing isolation, supporting well-being and strengthening community connections.

What is already working

Participants identified the following existing wins, initiatives and areas of momentum in Pictou County:

- **Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library**
  The Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library provides community spaces and access to information, programs and resources across the region. Participants identified libraries as an important part of the community support network and highlighted opportunities to build on their role as accessible, trusted places where residents can connect with information, services and one another.

- **Pictou County Transit**
  The expansion of Pictou County Transit has improved access to services for residents across the region. Participants noted that transportation is closely connected to health, food security, employment, education and social inclusion. Reliable transportation helps reduce barriers for youth, seniors and other residents who may have difficulty accessing services or traveling independently. It also improves access to health care, recreation, food and other basic needs.

Pictou County Community Health Centre

The Community Health Centre was recognized as an important example of collaboration and community-based health care. Through partnerships with municipalities, businesses, physicians and the Nova Scotia Department of Health, the centre is helping improve access to care through recruitment efforts, outreach initiatives, mobile services and community-building programs. Participants noted that the Centre's strengths-based approach helps residents navigate both health and social support systems.

Priority opportunities

Each priority is captured as an opportunity profile. This format is intended to make the priority opportunities useful for future collaboration, funding, support and project development without presenting them as implementation plans.

Priority 8.1: Community plus program	
Opportunity type	Program / Coordination effort / Capacity building
What this opportunity involves	Create the county-wide "Community Plus" program inspired by the SchoolsPlus model. Libraries would serve as community hubs where residents could find information about programs, services, supports and resources. The program would include a community navigator role focused on helping people access existing services that best meet their needs.
Why it matters	Many supports already exist, but residents may not know what is available or where to find it. A community navigation model could make it easier for residents to find services, connect with organizations already working in the community, identify gaps in support and strengthen community resilience.
Potential partners	Regional libraries, municipal governments, community organizations, schools, SchoolsPlus, social enterprises, churches, provincial departments and service providers.
Possible next steps	Develop a program concept and explore how it could build on existing community services and the SchoolsPlus model.
What would be needed?	Operational funding, staffing, library space, partnership agreements, communications support and provincial funding support.
Timeline	Near-term to medium-term: The concept builds on existing library infrastructure and the SchoolsPlus model. Further work would be needed to determine the appropriate structure, partners, funding and scope.
Connections to other tables	▪ Belonging and inclusion ▪ Local food and circular economy ▪ Biodiversity and recreation The common thread is access. Residents need access to services, community activities, social connections and resources that support their well-being.

Priority 8.2: Walkable and connected communities

Opportunity type	Infrastructure / Planning action / Coordination effort
What this opportunity involves	Create healthier and more connected communities by improving walkability, accessibility and active transportation options across Pictou County. This could include walkability audits, accessibility reviews, trail and sidewalk improvements, and coordinated investment in infrastructure that makes it easier for residents to travel without relying entirely on personal vehicles.
Why it matters	Walkable and accessible communities support physical health, mental well-being and social connection. They reduce isolation and improve mobility for residents who face barriers, including seniors and youth, and help residents access jobs, food, recreation and health care more easily.
Potential partners	Municipal governments, provincial and federal governments, Pictou County Transit, Pictou County Cycle, Bicycle Nova Scotia, YMCA, Hike Nova Scotia, accessibility advisory committees and community organizations.
Possible next steps	Conduct a county-wide audit of existing walking, cycling and active transportation infrastructure. This could identify gaps, accessibility concerns, connections between communities and opportunities to prioritize future investments.
What would be needed?	Infrastructure funding, technical expertise, planning support, accessibility reviews, public engagement and ongoing maintenance resources.
Timeline	Medium-term: Planning work would begin immediately, while infrastructure upgrades would likely require several years of planning, funding, design and construction.
Connections to other tables	▪ Clean energy and mobility ▪ Belonging and inclusion ▪ Watersheds and natural assets This opportunity connects to transportation, accessibility, recreation, public space and the ways communities are designed and connected.

Priority 8.3: Pictou County food security strategy

Opportunity type	Strategy / Coordination effort / Capacity building
What this opportunity involves	Develop a county-wide food security strategy focused on improving access to affordable, healthy and locally produced food. Participants envisioned a coordinated approach that supports local food production, community food initiatives, food literacy, emergency preparedness and equitable food access.
Why it matters	Food security affects health, community resilience, economic development and emergency preparedness. Strengthening local food systems can help communities prepare for disruptions to the food supply. A coordinated approach could help connect existing food producers, community organizations, health services, emergency planning and food access programs.
Potential partners	Municipalities, Pictou Landing First Nation, Nova Scotia Health, local farmers, grocery stores, REMO Pictou County, community gardens, community kitchens, foragers, NSCC, Pictou County Solid Waste and community organizations.

Possible next steps	Bring food system partners together to identify existing programs, gaps and opportunities using a similar model to the 10 Tables workshop. A working group could then determine whether a county-wide food security strategy would add value and, if so, identify the scope, partners and resources needed to develop it.
What would be needed?	Staff capacity, coordination support, funding, food systems expertise, community participation and partnerships with food-related organizations.
Timeline	Near-term to medium-term: Many organizations already work in food security and local food systems, creating a strong foundation for coordinated strategy.
Connections to other tables	▪ Local food and circular economy ▪ Belonging and inclusion ▪ Clean energy and mobility This opportunity connects to food access, affordability, transportation and community well-being.

Table 9: Housing and affordability

What this table focused on

Table nine focused on housing availability, quality and affordability in Pictou County. The discussion explored housing supply, affordability, development barriers, planning and zoning and how housing connects to transportation, health, employment and community stability. Participants focused on opportunities to increase the supply and range of housing while making development more efficient and responsive to community needs.

Why this matters in Pictou County

Housing and affordability affect residents across all income levels and life stages. Housing availability influences workforce retention, economic growth, access to services and overall community stability. Because housing needs and markets extend beyond individual municipal boundaries, collaboration among municipalities, housing organizations and community partners can help identify shared challenges and develop solutions that work across the region.

Perspectives represented

This table brought together representatives from municipal government, housing development, affordable housing providers, health care, community organizations, economic development and regional planning. This mix helped shape the discussion, grounded in practical development experience, housing service delivery, community needs and local planning realities. Participants also highlighted that housing is closely connected to health, workforce development, economic resilience and quality of life.

What is already working

Participants identified the following existing wins, initiatives and areas of momentum in Pictou County:

Pictou County Transit
The continued development and expansion of Pictou County Transit has improved access to employment, health care, social services and community activities for residents across the region. Participants identified transportation as an important part of housing affordability because transportation costs can add to overall cost of living. The service helps residents live more affordably by improving access to jobs, services and community amenities without requiring a personal vehicle.

Cross-government collaboration on housing
Participants highlighted the increasing collaboration among municipalities, provincial partners and community organizations to address housing challenges. Information sharing, recognition of shared needs and collaboration on planning and funding opportunities have helped build momentum around housing across the region.

Modernized planning and zoning policies
Participants highlighted the ongoing efforts to update planning strategies and land use bylaws in Pictou County. These changes can help reduce unnecessary barriers, streamline approvals and support new construction across the housing continuum, improving affordability and housing choice.

Priority opportunities

Each priority is captured as an opportunity profile. This format is intended to make the priority opportunities useful for future collaboration, funding, support and project development without presenting them as implementation plans.

Priority 9.1: Inventory of vacant and underused properties	
Opportunity type	Study / Assessment / Planning action
What this opportunity involves	Create a county-wide inventory of municipally owned vacant buildings and underused properties that could be redeveloped or used for housing. The inventory could identify opportunities for adaptive reuse, new housing development and partnerships with housing providers or developers.
Why it matters	Reusing existing buildings and sites can be more affordable and quicker than building new developments. It can also preserve community character, reduce waste and make use of properties that are already connected to roads, utilities and other services.
Potential partners	Municipal planning and development departments, housing organizations, developers, municipalities, economic development organizations and community groups.
Possible next steps	Identify what property information each municipality already has and determine whether it can be brought together into a shared regional inventory or map.
What would be needed?	Property data, GIS mapping support, staff time, planning expertise and funding for assessment or feasibility studies.

Timeline	Near-term: Municipalities already have much of the information needed to begin creating an inventory.
Connections to other tables	▪ Clean energy and mobility ▪ Waste and materials management ▪ Belonging and inclusion Reusing existing buildings can reduce waste, make better use of existing infrastructure and improve access to housing near services and transportation.

Priority 9.2: Pictou County housing collaborative

Opportunity type	Coordination effort / Partnership development
What this opportunity involves	Create a county-wide housing collaborative where housing organizations, municipalities, developers, service providers and other interested parties can share information, discuss challenges, coordinate efforts and explore funding opportunities together.
Why it matters	Many organizations address housing challenges independently. Greater collaboration could reduce duplication, improve information sharing, strengthen funding applications and support solutions that reflect regional needs.
Potential partners	Municipalities, housing providers, developers, community organizations and provincial housing partners.
Possible next steps	Bring together an initial roundtable of housing organizations, municipalities, developers and community partners to identify shared priorities, current gaps and opportunities for collaboration.
What would be needed?	Coordination support, meeting facilitation, communications tools, staff capacity and funding for collaborative activities.
Timeline	Near-term: Many potential parties are already active in this area and interested in working together more closely.
Connections to other tables	▪ Green jobs and innovation ▪ Health and community resilience ▪ Belonging and inclusion Housing affects workforce development, community well-being and equitable access to opportunities.

Priority 9.3: Library of pre-approved housing designs

Opportunity type	Planning action / Capacity building
What this opportunity involves	Develop a shared library of pre-approved housing designs that municipalities and developers can use for as-of-right development, meaning projects can proceed without additional rezoning approvals when they meet existing requirements. The library could include a variety of housing types that respond to local needs, zoning requirements, accessibility considerations and different household sizes.
Why it matters	Pre-approved designs can reduce development costs, shorten approval timelines and encourage the construction of housing that meets community needs. This approach can make the development process more predictable and easier to navigate for builders.

Potential partners	Municipal planning and development departments, architects, builders, housing providers, community organizations and representatives from groups with diverse housing needs.
Possible next steps	Assess common housing needs across the region and explore opportunities to create a shared design catalogue that aligns with local planning priorities.
What would be needed?	Design expertise, planning support, staff resources, accessibility expertise, technical reviews and funding for the development of design templates.
Timeline	Medium-term: Additional planning and technical work would be required, but the concept builds on existing planning reforms and shared housing needs.
Connections to other tables	▪ Health and community resilience ▪ Green jobs and innovation ▪ Belonging and inclusion Housing design influences accessibility, workforce needs, affordability and community inclusion.

Table 10: Belonging and inclusion

What this table focused on

This table focused on how people experience belonging, access and participation in community life. The discussion explored inclusion, accessibility, cultural safety, transportation, communication, community support and how people connect with services and opportunities. Participants discussed both the practical barriers people face and the importance of creating communities where everyone feels valued, welcomed and able to participate.

Why this matters in Pictou County

Belonging and inclusion matter in Pictou County because community well-being depends on people feeling connected, informed and able to participate in local life. Barriers related to transportation, communication, culture, accessibility, income or past experiences can prevent people from accessing services and opportunities. Because these barriers can affect people across communities and organizations, improving belonging and inclusion requires coordinated action throughout the county.

Perspectives represented

This table brought together perspectives from residents, community organizations, health services, municipal government, economic development, Indigenous organizations and community volunteers. This mix helped shape conversations grounded in lived experience, community leadership, service delivery and a shared desire to create more welcoming and inclusive communities. Participants highlighted the importance of relationships, trust, communication and meaningful participation in everyday community life.

What is already working

Participants identified the following existing wins, initiatives, or areas of momentum in Pictou County:

- **Community culture of reciprocity and volunteerism**
  Participants described the strong culture of helping others that exist throughout Pictou County. Volunteer-led efforts such as Pictou County Safe Harbour, hospital auxiliary groups, churches, community dinners and countless informal acts of support help newcomers, seniors, vulnerable residents and community members feel welcomed and connected. This culture of volunteering strengthens community resilience and belonging in Pictou County.

- **Volunteer organizations and community programs**
  Organizations such as Summer Street Industries, YMCA programs, community centres, schools, churches and newcomer support initiatives create opportunities for participation, learning, employment, recreation and social connection. Participants identified these efforts as community-driven and supported by dedicated staff, volunteers and local partnerships.

- **Community networks and information sharing tools**
  Participants highlighted resources such as Hey Judy, PlayFinder, Pictou County Transit, CHAD Transit, libraries and community wellness centres as important ways to help residents discover programs, services, events and other opportunities. These networks improve access to information and help connect people to community life.

Priority opportunities

Each priority is captured as an opportunity profile. This format is intended to make the priority opportunities useful for future collaboration, funding, support and project development without presenting them as implementation plans.

Priority 10.1: Building relationships to advance reconciliation	
Opportunity type	Coordination effort / Partnership development / Education and engagement
What this opportunity involves	Strengthen municipal commitment to reconciliation by recognizing that reconciliation is the responsibility of settler institutions, not Indigenous communities. Participants emphasized the importance of creating stronger and more intentional relationships between Pictou Landing First Nation and the six municipal units through ongoing collaboration, dialogue, knowledge-sharing and joint decision-making. They also discussed the idea of developing a living charter or shared understanding to guide how municipalities and Pictou Landing First Nation work together and communicate.
Why it matters	Reconciliation requires municipal governments to build trust through consistent action and meaningful relationships. Given the reality of historical and ongoing systemic discrimination, participants underscored that trust must be earned. Stronger relationships between municipalities and Pictou Landing First Nation can create new opportunities for collaboration, support Indigenous voices in local decision-making and help build a more inclusive region.

Potential partners	Pictou Landing First Nation, all six municipal units, the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, community organizations, local institutions, local leaders and residents.
Possible next steps	Begin conversations between municipal leaders and Pictou Landing First Nation about what a shared framework or charter could look like, including its purpose, scope and how relationships would be maintained over time.
What would be needed?	Facilitation support, relationship-building activities, Indigenous-led guidance, staff time and resources for engagement and education.
Timeline	Near- to medium-term: Relationships and partnerships already exist, but additional dialogue and commitment would be needed to build a formal framework.
Connections to other tables	▪ Health and community resilience ▪ Housing and affordability ▪ Climate adaptation and emergency readiness ▪ Local food and circular economy While the priority connects to all tables, it most strongly connects where meaningful collaboration and Indigenous knowledge can increase the impact of outcomes.

Priority 10.2: Community communication and engagement network

Opportunity type	Coordination effort / Education and engagement / Resources
What this opportunity involves	Build on existing tools and networks to make information about community programs, services, opportunities and events easier to find and access. Participants discussed expanding tools such as Hey Judy, PlayFinder, while also sharing information through transit terminals and other community hubs. This would help residents without smartphones or reliable internet access find programs, services and events and improve both physical and digital access to community information.
Why it matters	Many services and opportunities already exist, but residents do not always know where to find them. Better connections among existing information tools could make services easier to find, reduce isolation, improve participation and strengthen community belonging.
Potential partners	Pictou County Partnership, municipalities, Pictou Landing First Nation, community organizations, libraries, Pictou County Transit, schools, churches and app developers.
Possible next steps	Map the existing communication tools, including Hey Judy and PlayFinder and identify where information is missing, duplicated or difficult to access. Partners could then outline opportunities to better connect or promote existing tools.
What would be needed?	Technology support, communications expertise, funding, community partnerships and ongoing content management.
Timeline	Near-term: Various platforms already exist and could be expanded through stronger coordination and promotion.
Connections to other tables	▪ Clean energy and mobility ▪ Local food and circular economy ▪ Health and community resilience Better access to information can help residents find transportation, housing, health care, food and other community services and participate more fully in community life.

Priority 10.3: Including people experiencing housing insecurity in climate and emergency planning

Opportunity type	Program / Coordination effort / Planning action
What this opportunity involves	Ensure that climate adaptation, emergency planning and community services pay particular attention to the needs of people experiencing homelessness, housing insecurity, poverty and other forms of housing-related vulnerability. This could include strengthening relationships with service providers and planning how people will access shelter, services and other support during emergencies and climate-related disruptions.
Why it matters	People experiencing housing insecurity are often among those most affected by extreme weather, service disruptions and emergencies. Participants highlighted that resilience planning must include those most at risk so that emergency and climate planning reflect the needs of the entire community.
Potential partners	Municipalities, Pictou Landing First Nation, REMO Pictou County, Nova Scotia Health, housing organizations, social service providers, community organizations and residents with lived experience of housing insecurity.
Possible next steps	Review current emergency and climate adaptation plans and ask whether they adequately meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness, housing insecurity and poverty. This review should include organizations and people with direct experience of these challenges.
What would be needed?	Planning resources, engagement funding, service provider participation, lived experience expertise and coordination among agencies.
Timeline	Near-term to medium-term: The work can begin immediately through better coordination and inclusion of priority populations in existing planning workshops, including stronger relationships with service providers and people with lived experience.
Connections to other tables	▪ Housing and affordability ▪ Climate adaptation and emergency readiness ▪ Health and community resilience

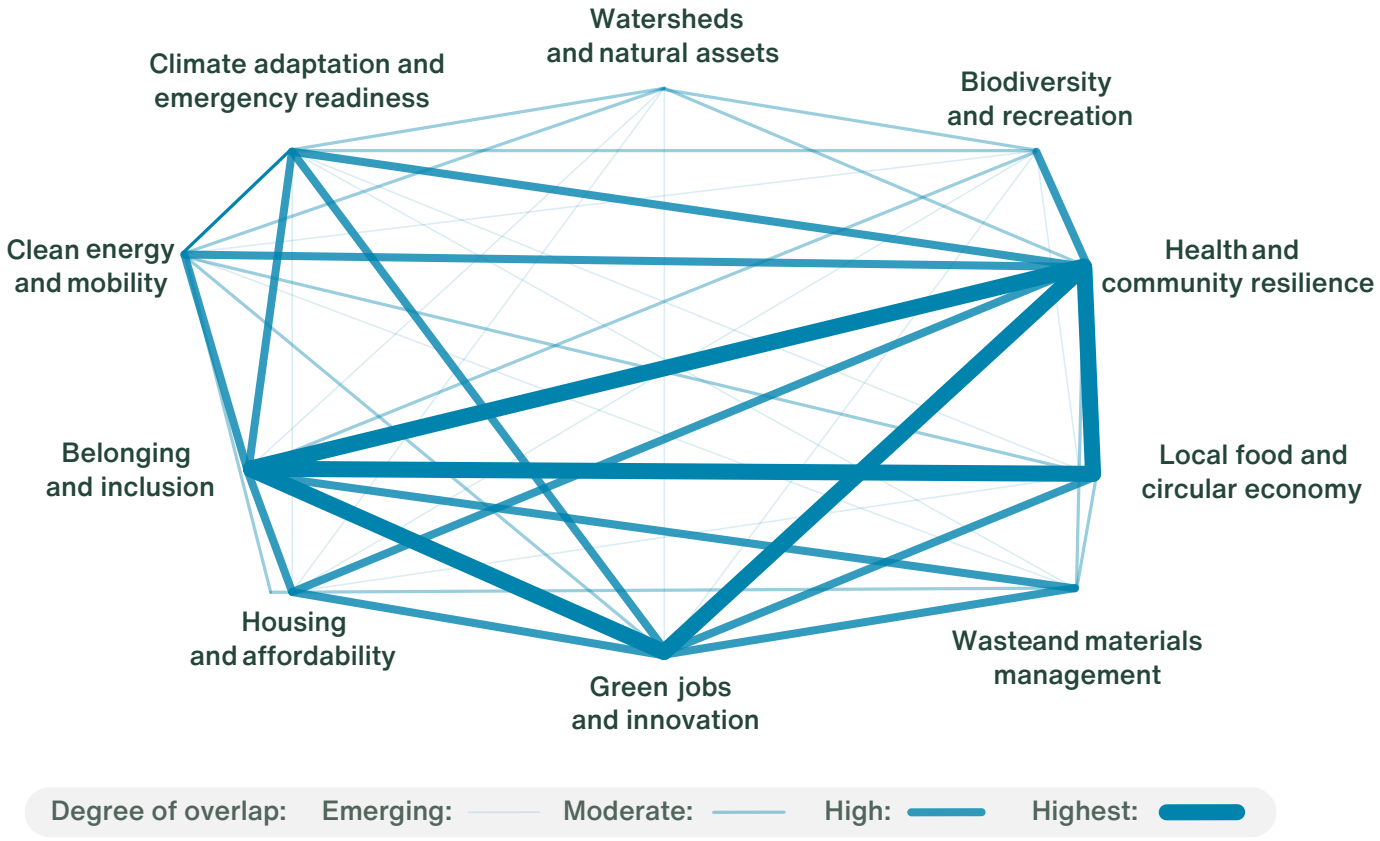


PART THREE

Pathways to a Sustainable Pictou County

Integrated sustainable development map

This network graphic illustrates how sustainability themes connect through the priority opportunities identified during the 10 Tables dialogue process. It highlights 42 unique connections among the 10 themes and reveals areas of integration across the priorities. Thicker lines indicate a greater degree of overlap between themes based on shared priority opportunities.



Methodology

The 10 Tables exercise encouraged participants to identify opportunities requiring collaboration across sustainability themes, with each table asked to identify at least one cross-theme priority.

Themes are connected when participants identified a priority opportunity as relevant to more than one theme. **Appendix F** provides the relationship matrix used to develop this graphic.

The analysis excludes two cross-cutting priorities, *Building Capacity to Secure Funding (7.3)* and *Building Relationships to Advance Reconciliation (10.1)* because participants identified them as relevant

across all ten themes. Excluding these priorities helps highlight differences in how frequently themes overlap across the identified priorities.

Understanding theme relationships

The graphic reveals a high degree of integration across the ten sustainability themes. Five relationships show the greatest overlap, involving four themes: **health and community resilience, belonging and inclusion, green jobs and innovation** and **local food and circular economy.**

While these themes shared the most connections, the overall findings suggest that many priority opportunities contribute to multiple sustainability themes, highlighting their interconnected nature.



PART FOUR

Next steps

The Pictou County Pathways to Sustainable Communities workshop identified existing strengths, priority opportunities and connections across sustainability and resilience themes. While the opportunities identified in this report are not formal commitments or recommendations, they provide a shared starting point for future planning, collaboration and action.

The following next steps are offered to municipalities, community organizations, regional partners and funders seeking to build on the work completed through the dialogue.

Municipal governments

Municipalities can review the priority opportunities in this report and consider how they align with existing plans, priorities and mandates. Several opportunities already support municipal strategic plans, climate adaptation initiatives, infrastructure investments, housing strategies, recreation plans and economic development efforts.

Municipalities may wish to:

- Explore opportunities for regional collaboration on shared priorities.
- Consider relevant opportunities during budgeting and strategic planning.
- Identify opportunities to align existing municipal initiatives along with priorities raised through the dialogue.
- Continue discussions with neighboring municipalities and Pictou Landing First Nation on issues that cross administrative borders.

Many opportunities identified by participants are regional in scope and may benefit from coordinated action.

Community organizations

Community organizations play an important role in advancing many of the opportunities identified through the workshop. Participants frequently highlighted the value of community leadership, volunteerism, partnerships, local knowledge, and existing programs.

Organizations may wish to:

- Review opportunities related to their work.
- Identify projects, initiatives and partnerships where they can contribute.
- Explore opportunities with organizations working toward similar goals.
- Use the report to inform funding applications, program development and strategic planning.

The dialogue showed that many organizations already contribute to this work and that stronger connections could increase impact.

Regional partners

The dialogue highlighted many opportunities that would benefit from coordination across sectors, organizations and jurisdictions.

Regional organizations, networks and collaborative groups may wish to:

- Convene partners across shared priorities.
- Identify opportunities where organizations are working toward similar outcomes.
- Coordinate efforts to reduce duplication and strengthen impact.
- Support information sharing and relationship building across sectors.
- Explore joint project development, funding applications and implementation efforts.

Many opportunities identified in this report offer insight into local priorities, emerging partnerships and areas where communities see potential for future action.

Funders and supporting agencies

The opportunities identified in this report provide insight into local priorities, emerging partnerships and areas where communities see potential for future action.

Funders, provincial agencies and supporting organizations may wish to:

- Use the report to better understand local needs and opportunities.
- Identify areas where investment could support regional collaboration.
- Support feasibility studies, pilot projects, capacity building and partnership development.
- Consider how funding programs can help communities move from ideas to implementation.

The report provides a snapshot of community-identified priorities that may help inform future investment decisions.

Maintaining momentum

One of the strongest outcomes of the dialogue was the relationships and connections participants built across sectors. The workshop marked the beginning of an ongoing conversation, not the end.

Maintaining momentum may include:

- Sharing updates on emerging projects and opportunities.
- Connecting organizations working on related priorities.
- Reconvening participants to review progress and identify new opportunities.
- Strengthening relationships across municipalities, Pictou Landing First Nation, organizations, businesses and residents.

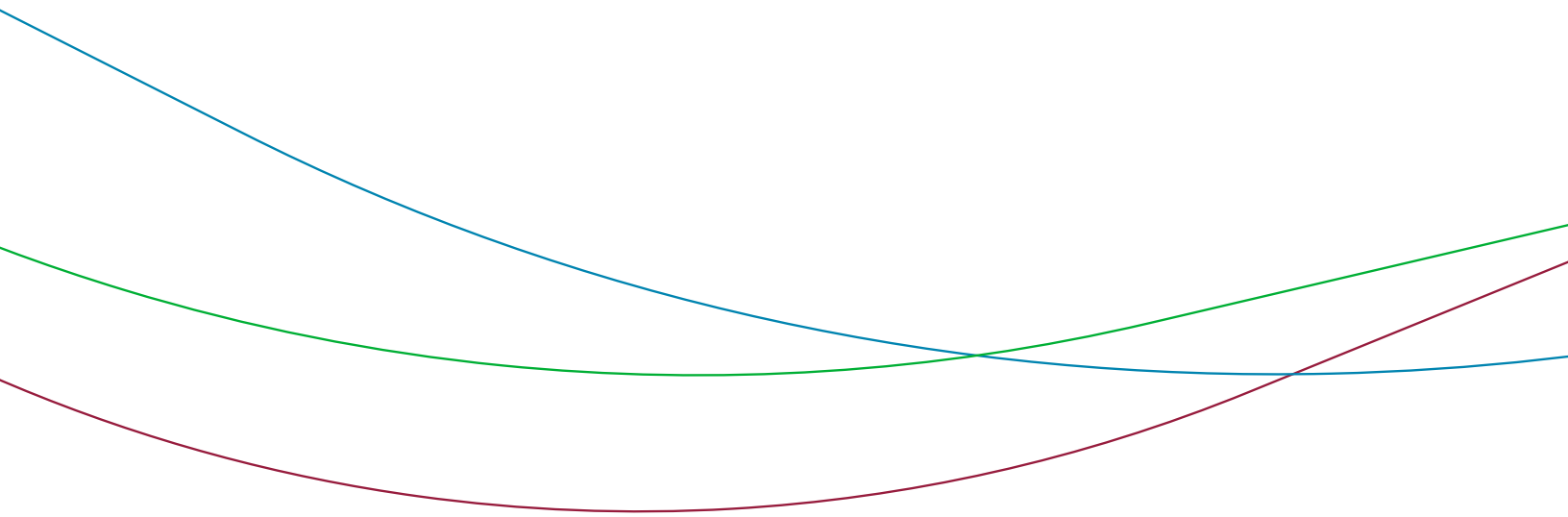
The greatest long-term value of the dialogue may come from the relationships, shared understanding and collaborative capacity developed through the workshop.

Looking ahead

The Pathways to Sustainable Communities process demonstrated strong interest in county-wide conversations that bring people together around shared challenges and opportunities.

This report is a starting point for future action, not a final plan.

The opportunities identified in this report reflect the participants' perspectives, experiences and priorities at the time of the dialogue. Progress will depend on leadership, partnerships, available resources and ongoing community engagement. Together, these opportunities provide a foundation for continued collaboration to strengthen sustainability, resilience and community well-being in Pictou County.



PART FIVE

Conclusion

The Pathways to Sustainable Communities Dialogue demonstrated a strong commitment to collaboration across sectors, communities and areas of expertise. Throughout the process, participants identified existing strengths, emerging priorities and important connections among issues that are often addressed separately. The dialogue did not produce a final plan. Instead, it established a shared foundation for future action.

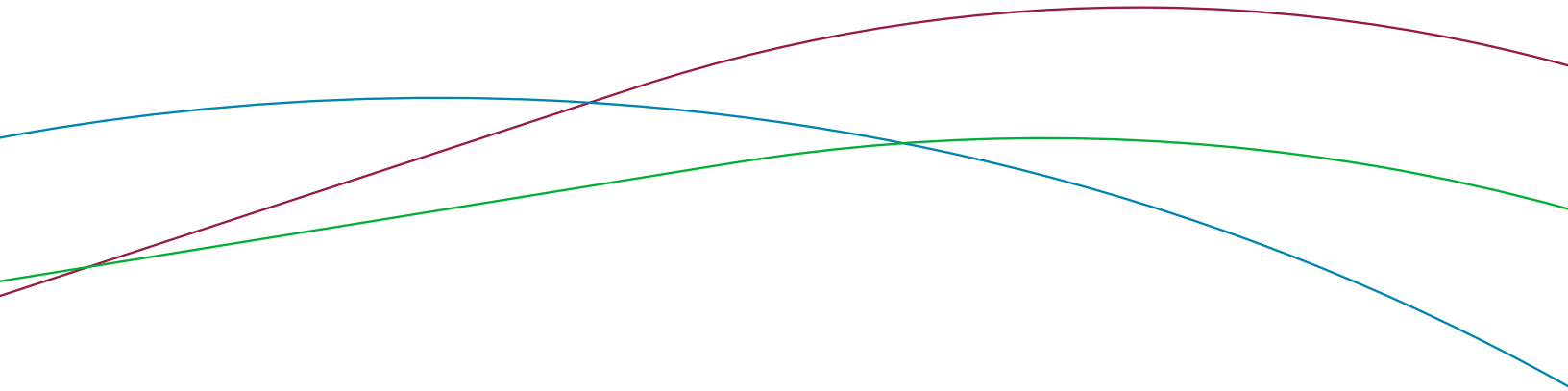
The opportunities captured in this report reflect the perspectives, experiences and priorities of those who participated. Some opportunities may move forward through existing initiatives, partnerships and funding programs. Others will require additional discussion, planning, investment, capacity or coordination. Taken together, they highlight where participants believe collaboration and focused effort can create the greatest benefit for Pictou County.

The dialogue also reinforced an important reality: no single municipality, organization, sector or community can address the region's most complex changes alone. Housing, health, energy, transportation, food systems, economic development, natural assets and social inclusion are closely linked. Progress depends on collaboration, shared learning and coordinated action across traditional boundaries.

The value of this report will ultimately be measured by what happens next. Its impact will come from the conversations, partnerships and actions it helps inspire. Whether communities and organizations use it to inform strategic planning, strengthen partnerships, support funding applications, guide community engagement or develop new projects, the report is intended to serve as a practical resource that supports decision-making and collaboration over time.

The first application of the Pathways to Sustainable Communities model showed that place-based, cross-sector dialogue can build relationships, strengthen understanding and identify practical opportunities for action. As communities respond to changing environmental, social and economic conditions, they can build on this foundation to strengthen collaboration and advance a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable future for Pictou County.

Throughout the process, participants explored a simple but important question: What becomes possible when people come together around shared challenges and shared goals? This report captures one set of answers. What happens next depends on the communities, organizations, partners and residents who choose to turn these opportunities into action.



Acknowledgements



The Pictou County Pathways to Sustainable Communities workshop was shaped by contributions from across the region.

We thank the Pictou County Partnership and the Pictou County Climate Summit organizing committee for bringing participants together in this regional conversation. We also thank the municipalities of Pictou County and Pictou Landing First Nation for their participation, leadership and commitment to regional collaboration.

Thank you to the table administrators and the many organizations, community groups, businesses, students and residents whose participation, ideas, experiences and insights informed the opportunities identified in this report.

The Town of New Glasgow's Rohan Mishra led the development of the Pathways to Sustainable Communities model and report framework, with process, design and project coordination support from Clean Foundation.



PART SIX

Appendix A: References

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Appendix B: Workshop participants

Participant affiliations show the range of perspectives represented in the workshop. For consistency, the appendix identifies participants by the organization or broad affiliation through which they participated, rather than by their job title, elected position or specific role.

Where no organizational affiliation applied, participants are listed as "Community member."

Students are identified by their school and student status.

Affiliations are based on workshop records and any corrections provided by participants. They identify participants' connections to the workshop and do not represent a complete or current description of their identity, expertise or employment.

Table	Name	Organization / Affiliation
Table 1		
Table 1	Peter-Blair MacKinnon-Nicholson	Clean Foundation – Table administrator
Table 1	Cindy Thompson	Town of New Glasgow – Table administrator
Table 1	Adam Cochrane	Crombie REIT
Table 1	Barry Francis	Pictou Landing First Nation
Table 1	Haleigh Keefe	Efficiency Nova Scotia
Table 1	Marco MacLeod	Province of Nova Scotia
Table 1	Nirvan Choolhun	Efficiency Nova Scotia
Table 1	Richard Barnett Williams	Community member
Table 1	Shyanna Denny	Assembly of First Nations Youth Council
Table 1	Dominic Denny	Pictou Landing First Nation
Table 1	Jamie Stephen	Torchlight Bioresources
Table 1	Jason Hurst	Living Ecosystems and Power
Table 1	John Maclellan	Community member
Table 2		
Table 2	Rashelle Williams	Clean Foundation – Table administrator
Table 2	Madison Marshall	CLIMAtlantic – Table administrator
Table 2	Ann MacGregor	Nova Scotia Works
Table 2	Cindy Brown	Nova Scotia Community College
Table 2	Cathy Merriman	Independent consultant
Table 2	Mary Henderson	Community member
Table 2	Moataz Ibrahim	Clear Impact Solutions
Table 2	Clyde Fraser	Town of New Glasgow
Table 2	Corey Smith	SolutionSmith Engineering Inc.

Table 3		
Table 3	Emily Hodgson	Town of Pictou / Municipality of Pictou County – Table administrator
Table 3	Scott Osmond	Clean Foundation – Table administrator
Table 3	Allie Rivers	Community member
Table 3	Blair Peruniak	Federation of Nova Scotia Woodland Owners
Table 3	Lennie White	Town of Westville
Table 3	Marc Theriault	Community member
Table 3	Patrick Duke	CarbonRun
Table 3	Season Brennan	Pictou County Rivers Association
Table 3	Tony Mummery	Town of New Glasgow
Table 3	Lisa M. MacDonald	Town of New Glasgow
Table 3	Reg Crewe	West Branch Community Hall
Table 3	Robert Parker	Municipality of Pictou County
Table 4		
Table 4	Veronica Deno	Town of New Glasgow – Table administrator
Table 4	Evan Spencer	Clean Foundation – Table administrator
Table 4	Tracy Feit	Town of New Glasgow
Table 4	Eva Barnes	Community member
Table 4	Jillian Mummery	North Nova Education Centre - Student
Table 4	Avery Verduzco	Northumberland Regional High School - Student
Table 4	David MacIsaac	Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities
Table 4	Penny Carr	Town of Stellarton
Table 4	Clare Orritt	Northumberland Regional High School - Student
Table 4	Fred MacKenzie	Community member
Table 4	Christian Francis	The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq
Table 4	Jillian Hennick	Northumberland Regional High School - Social worker
Table 5		
Table 5	Deborah Searle	Pictou County Solid Waste – Table administrator
Table 5	Lynn MacLean	Federated Women's Institutes of Canada – Table administrator
Table 5	Alison Tait	Town of New Glasgow
Table 5	April Nicholas	Pictou Landing First Nation
Table 5	Ava White	St. Francis Xavier University - Student
Table 5	Harsh Patel	Habitat for Humanity
Table 5	Kathryn Bremner	Divert Nova Scotia
Table 5	Melanie Doiron	Community member
Table 5	Ronnie Baillie	Municipality of Pictou County
Table 5	Patrick Oluwadamilare Abiodun Olaniyi	Community member

Table 6		
Table 6	Monica Rivers	Rooted Gatherings – Table administrator
Table 6	Sheri Young	ICLEI Canada – Table administrator
Table 6	Cathy Munro	Summer Street Farm
Table 6	Darren Nobel	Creekside Farm Maple
Table 6	Erika Rolston	Rural Communities Foundation of Nova Scotia
Table 6	Kristi Russell	New Glasgow Farmers Market
Table 6	Lindsay Corbin	Nourish Nova Scotia
Table 6	Michaela Elise Aikens	Town of Stellarton
Table 6	Raina McDonald	Nourish Nova Scotia
Table 6	Courtney Sharpe	Pictou County Food Bank
Table 7		
Table 7	Alison Girroir	Nova Scotia Health – Table administrator
Table 7	Patrick Haddad	Clean Foundation – Table administrator
Table 7	Ashlie Cormier	Nova Scotia Health, Mental Health and Addictions
Table 7	Azor Vienneau	Town of New Glasgow
Table 7	Ed Kennedy	Community member
Table 7	Jon DeCoste	Municipality of Pictou County
Table 7	Kevin Henderson	Community member
Table 7	Lolita C. Ward	John Howard Society - EDGE Program
Table 7	Nancy Dicks	Town of New Glasgow
Table 7	Paige Draper	Town of Stellarton
Table 8		
Table 8	Emily Cowin	How We Thrive – Table administrator
Table 8	Stephane Feuer	Nova Scotia Health – Table administrator
Table 8	Adrienne Thompson	Nova Scotia Health
Table 8	Anne-Marie Leger	Municipality of Pictou County
Table 8	Dawn Peters	Town of New Glasgow
Table 8	Heather Head-MacDonald	Healthy Pictou County
Table 8	Jess Currie	Nova Scotia Health
Table 8	Kaylin Comeau-Leil	SchoolsPlus
Table 8	Lori Morison	Kids First Association
Table 8	Maria Gahlinger	50 Plus Club
Table 8	Nicole LeBlanc	Healthy Pictou County
Table 8	Tara Rodgers	Truth Tara
Table 9		
Table 9	Danielle McCabe	Nova Scotia Health – Table administrator
Table 9	Juli Bishwokarma	Ecology Action Centre – Table administrator
Table 9	Danny MacGillivray	Province of Nova Scotia
Table 9	Donna Williamson	Habitat for Humanity Nova Scotia

Table 9	Dwayne Wright	Northstar Shelter and Support Services; Community Housing Transformation Centre
Table 9	Janine DeWitt	Nova Scotia Health
Table 9	Kaila Reid	Town of New Glasgow
Table 9	Kathryn Tanner	YMCA of Pictou County
Table 9	Lynne Jamieson	Pictou County Partnership
Table 9	Alec Dove	Town of Trenton
Table 9	Jeremy Brake	Jeremy Brake Photography
Table 10		
Table 10	Victoria Campbell	Nova Scotia Health – Table administrator
Table 10	Gay Harley	Clean Foundation – Table administrator
Table 10	Janet Wallace	Community member
Table 10	Karagan MacPherson-Wessel	Northumberland Regional High School (Karma Closet) - Student
Table 10	Michelle Ward	Town of New Glasgow
Table 10	Lori McCracken	Nova Scotia Health
Table 10	Adele Budge	Nova Scotia Health
Table 10	Sarah Santos	Pictou County Partnership
Table 10	Valerie Leighton	Pictou County Chamber of Commerce
Table 10	Michele Williams	The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq
Table 10	Daniel Morka	Judy Intelligence

Appendix C: The conceptual basis for Pathways to Sustainable Communities

The project team developed the Pathways to Sustainable Communities model specifically for Pictou County. Rather than adopting a single framework, the team drew on several established approaches and adapted them to fit the county's size, resources and goals. The model brings people together to identify existing community strengths, explore opportunities for collaboration and identify actions that could move the region forward.

Inspiration from the 17 Rooms Model

One of the model's primary influences was the 17 Rooms Model developed by the Brookings Institution and The Rockefeller Foundation. The model organizes conversations around the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, with each "room" focused on a specific goal.

Its strength lies in bringing people together across sectors to identify practical actions while maintaining a broader systems perspective.

A direct application was neither practical nor necessary for Pictou County. Organizing 17 separate discussions would have required more facilitators, participants and coordination than a county-wide event could reasonably support. In addition, some global goals do not align directly with local planning and decision-making.

Instead, the project team adapted key elements of the model, including structured discussion, cross-sector collaboration and a focus on action, to better suit the local context.

Using ICLEI pathways to connect systems

A second key influence was the work of International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), a global network that supports local governments in sustainable development planning. ICLEI organizes local sustainability work into interconnected development pathways, including low-emission, nature-based, circular, resilient and equitable and people-centered development (ICLEI, n.d.).

These pathways help connect global sustainability concepts to the systems that local governments and communities work with every day. They also provide a practical way to understand sustainability as a set of interconnected systems rather than a collection of separate issues.

From 17 Rooms and ICLEI Pathways to the Pictou County 10 Tables Workshop

The Pathways to Sustainable Communities model combines these influences into a format designed for a county-wide setting.

The project team translated the five ICLEI pathways into ten locally relevant discussion themes that reflect Pictou County's geography, environment, communities, infrastructure, governance and economy.

The team also integrated economic development throughout the model rather than treating it as a standalone category. This approach reflects the local context, where jobs, local businesses, food systems and repair and reuse activities are closely connected to the movement of materials, services and resources throughout the region. Embedding economic development across all themes helps keep those connections visible.

The ten discussion tables were intentionally designed to support focused conversations while recognizing the interconnected systems that shape life in Pictou County.

Translating pathways into local themes

ICLEI pathway	10 Tables local theme	Why these themes matter in Pictou County
Low-emission development 	Clean energy and mobility	Energy and transportation shape household costs, commuting, infrastructure decisions, greenhouse gas emissions, access to services and jobs across Pictou County. In a largely rural region, communities must work together to improve these systems.
Nature-based development 	Watersheds and natural assets; biodiversity and recreation	Healthy rivers, streams, wetlands, forests, coastal areas, parks, trails and natural landscapes support clean water, reduce flood risk, support wildlife and provide places for recreation and tourism. These systems cross municipal boundaries and require shared stewardship.
Circular development 	Waste and materials management; local food and circular economy; green jobs and innovation	Reducing waste, reusing materials, supporting local food and encouraging innovation helps to keep resources and economic benefits in the region. These activities support local businesses, create jobs, reduce environmental impacts and strengthen the local economy.
Resilient development 	Climate adaptation and emergency readiness; health and community resilience	More frequent storms, flooding, heat and other climate challenges affect communities across Pictou County. Building resilience helps protect people, infrastructure, emergency services, health systems and services, during and after these events.
Equitable and people-centered development 	Housing and affordability; belonging and inclusion; health and community resilience	Strong communities depend on safe housing, good health, opportunities to participate and a sense of belonging. Focusing on these areas helps ensure everyone can benefit from and contribute to a sustainable future.

Why this structure matters locally

The Pathways to Sustainable Communities model was designed to make complex conversations more practical.

Rather than approaching sustainability as a single topic, the workshop was organized around ten themes that reflect issues residents encounter every day in Pictou County. This allowed each table to focus on a specific topic while recognizing connections across issues.

For example, housing conversations connected to transportation, energy costs and community well-being. Discussions about watersheds connected to recreation, biodiversity, infrastructure and emergency preparedness. Local food discussions also touched on waste reduction, economic development and health. This structure allowed participants to explore topics in depth while identifying overlaps with other areas.

The structure also reflected how Pictou County functions. While the county includes several municipalities, Pictou Landing First Nation, community organizations, businesses and institutions, many opportunities and challenges are shared across the region. Water systems cross municipal boundaries. People travel throughout the county for work, education and services. Housing, transportation, emergency preparedness and economic development all affect communities across Pictou County.

To encourage cross-sector thinking, each table was asked to identify at least one priority connected to another table's discussion theme. This encouraged participants to think beyond their own area of expertise and consider where partnerships or other opportunities for collaboration could create greater impact.

The resulting workshop balanced focused discussions with broader collaboration. Participants contributed their knowledge on specific topics while helping build a more complete picture of sustainability in Pictou County. The goal was not only to identify opportunities for action, but also to better understand existing connections, highlight areas of ongoing collaboration and identify opportunities to further work together across the region to strengthen future action.

Appendix D: Reflections and refinements

The Pictou County workshop was the first application of a locally developed model for county-wide sustainability and resilience dialogue. The event demonstrated the value of bringing people together across sectors, communities and areas of expertise to identify existing strengths, explore opportunities for collaboration and understand how issues connect.

The post-event debrief also identified ways to strengthen the model. The lessons below are intended to improve future applications while preserving the elements that contributed to the success of the first workshop.

Build from what is already working

A key strength of the workshop was the opportunity to recognize and celebrate existing work across Pictou County. Participants valued the opportunity to identify successes that may not be widely visible beyond individual organizations, municipalities or communities.

Starting with existing strengths helped ground the conversation in momentum rather than focusing solely on challenges. It also reinforced a key message that emerged across the table discussions: Pictou County is not starting from zero.

Participants identified programs, partnerships, initiatives, relationships and local knowledge that provide a strong foundation for future work. This asset-based approach was a core feature of the model and contributed to the tone and productivity of discussions. Beginning with existing strengths before exploring future opportunities remains an important characteristic of the approach.

Make relationship-building an intentional outcome

The workshop also demonstrated the value of creating space for people to connect. Participants met others working on related issues and gained a better understanding of how their work connects to broader county-wide priorities.

Relationship-building emerged as an important outcome of the workshop. Responsibility for sustainability, resilience and community well-being is shared across municipalities, Pictou Landing First

Nation, community organizations, institutions, businesses and residents. Stronger relationships can support future collaboration, even when a specific opportunity does not move forward immediately.

The experience suggests that relationship-building is more than a byproduct of dialogue. It is one of the prominent ways that county-wide conversations can contribute to longer-term collaboration.

Recruit for diversity and balance

Recruitment for the first Pictou County workshop was broadly successful. Participants represented a range of sectors, roles, ages and experience levels, including youth, working professionals, community members and retired residents.

Different forms of knowledge contributed unique value to the discussion. Technical expertise helped identify practical opportunities, while lived experience and community knowledge connected those discussions to local contexts and community needs.

The process also highlighted the role that recognition can play in supporting continued participation. Participants, facilitators and table administrators contributed significant time and expertise to the workshop. This report documents those contributions as a tangible output for a broader audience and helps participants understand how their input informed the discussion and outcomes. This was particularly valuable for youth and emerging professionals, who often look for meaningful ways to contribute, build experience and understand the impact of their involvement.

The recruitment process also provided useful lessons. Outreach efforts included direct invitations, in-person engagement, social media, community events, school-based outreach, sector conversations and public opportunities.

Public outreach remains important for building awareness and trust. However, future recruitment for structured working sessions may benefit from greater emphasis on networks where people are already engaging in community issues, professional responsibilities, student leadership, organizational priorities or civic activities.

These observations suggest that different recruitment approaches may serve different purposes: Broad outreach can help build awareness and establish trust, while targeted outreach may be effective to recruit participants who can commit the time and focus required for the working session.

Be intentional about table composition

The debrief reinforced the importance of participant balance. The quality of discussion at each table depended in part on the mix of perspectives represented. Some tables benefited from strong professional, municipal or organizational expertise, while others may have benefited from more resident voices and the sharing of lived experience.

A productive table was not necessarily the largest or the most technical. Productive discussions emerged when lived experience, local knowledge, professional expertise, institutional responsibility and community perspectives could interact meaningfully.

Give participants more time to refine priorities

A one-day format created momentum and made participation more accessible. At the same time, it presented limitations.

Participants had time to explore their theme, share perspectives and identify opportunities during the morning discussions. Refining those conversations into three refined priorities within a single day required significant focus and energy.

The workshop debrief identified value in providing more time between these stages. Options discussed included:

- A short follow-up session
- Facilitator review and validation after the event
- Circulating draft priorities for feedback
- A reporting-back workshop before priorities are finalized

It was noted that a two-day format could create additional opportunities for informal networking and cross-table discussion.

Continue investing in facilitation

Facilitation was another important area of learning. Most discussions were respectful and productive, contributing significantly to the success of the day.

The debrief highlighted the importance of supporting and preparing facilitators, particularly when managing disagreement, maintaining focus and ensuring all participants have an opportunity to contribute.

Meaningful dialogue requires skilled facilitation, especially when participants bring different experiences, priorities and levels of technical knowledge.

Create more opportunities for tables to connect

One of the workshop's strongest features was the requirement for tables to identify connections with other themes. This encouraged participants to think beyond their immediate area of interest and consider how issues influence one another.

The debrief identified opportunities to build on this strength by encouraging more direct interaction between tables.

Examples included:

- Cross-table exchange
- Gallery walks
- Shared mapping exercises
- Reviews of emerging priorities before finalization

Keep the structure, but allow room for local discussion

The structured output format was another strength of the model. Asking each table to identify three existing strengths, three priority opportunities and at least one cross-table connection created consistency across the discussions while allowing participants to explore their assigned table theme in a locally relevant way.

The structure made the results easier to compare and organize, while open discussion allowed participants to contribute their own knowledge and experience. The workshop demonstrated the value of balancing clear discussion prompts with flexibility for local context and priorities.

Pay attention to the room and group size

The physical setting also influenced the quality of dialogue. Spaces that support hearing, focus, and small-group conversation can improve participation.

The debrief identified several factors that may support future sessions:

- Greater separation between tables
- Quieter discussion spaces, where possible
- Careful consideration of table size
- Accessibility and comfort considerations

Be clear about how conversation leads to action

The debrief highlighted the importance of clearly explaining what happens after the dialogue. Participants benefitted from understanding that the workshop identifies opportunities and informs future work but does not make funding or implementation decisions.

Clear expectations help maintain trust and reduce assumptions about how ideas will move forward after the workshop.

Build follow-up into the model

The dialogue created new connections and identified shared priorities. The debrief concluded that continued communication will be important if those connections are to lead to action.

Potential follow-up approaches may consider:

- Providing updates on relevant opportunities
- Convening participants around specific priorities
- Connecting organizations working on related opportunities
- Checking in with participants after six or 12 months

These approaches could help extend the dialogue beyond a single event and support ongoing collaboration.

Keep the model adaptable

The first application of the Pathways to Sustainable Communities model demonstrated the value in its adaptable approach. The 10 themes used in the Pictou County workshop reflected local priorities. Future applications may require different themes as local priorities evolve. For example, tourism may warrant greater attention because of its connections to recreation, coastal access, local businesses, transportation, biodiversity and place-based economic development.

This flexibility is a strength. Place-based dialogue is most effective when it reflects local priorities, relationships and opportunities.

Looking ahead

These refinements do not change the core value of the Pathways to Sustainable Communities model. Instead, they highlight opportunities to strengthen and adapt the model over time.

Key strengths include:

- A clear purpose
- Locally relevant themes
- Diverse participation
- Facilitated table discussions
- An asset-based starting point
- Structured priority setting
- Cross-table connections
- A focus on practical, collaborative opportunities

The first Pictou County workshop serves as a strong proof of concept for place-based, cross-sector sustainability and resilience dialogue.

The lessons documented in this appendix provide a foundation for future refinement while preserving the model's core strengths. They also demonstrate the value of adapting the approach to reflect the local context for future communities who may wish to apply this model.

Appendix E: Priority opportunities at a glance

How to read this table

All 29 participant-identified priority opportunities are shown. They are intended to support future collaboration and project development, not assign commitments. Part Two of this report's main body includes additional details regarding partners, resources, equity and cross-table connections.

Table 1	**Clean energy and mobility**	**ICLEI pathway: Low-emission development**
Priority opportunity	**Opportunity in brief**	**What could move it forward**
1.1 Regional clean energy dialogue and public understanding	Create a regional forum explaining energy decisions and projects, connecting them to affordability, reliability, land use, economic development and community well-being.	Identify information gaps, then convene municipal, provincial, utility, Indigenous, industry, technical and community voices.
1.2 Brownfield redevelopment for community energy projects	Reuse suitable brownfield or underused sites for clean energy infrastructure, lowering costs, strengthening resilience and directing benefits to nearby communities.	Screen sites for ownership, environmental conditions, grid access, community fit and feasibility.
1.3 School bus transportation plan	Explore community use of school buses outside school hours to improve mobility for seniors, youth, workers and residents without vehicles.	Assess vehicles, routes, scheduling, insurance, drivers, maintenance, costs, governance and transit coordination.
Table 2	**Green jobs and innovation**	**ICLEI pathway: Circular development**
Priority opportunity	**Opportunity in brief**	**What could move it forward**
2.1 Knowledge-sharing and mentorship	Connect mentors, Elders, students, employers and organizations to share knowledge and create pathways into green jobs, training, employment and entrepreneurship.	Scope a pilot mentorship or knowledge-sharing series with existing partners.
2.2 Pictou County resource directory	Create a county-wide directory that makes local businesses, services and community resources easier to find and strengthens local connections.	Define its audience, ownership, maintenance and minimum information for a pilot.
Table 3	**Watersheds and natural assets**	**ICLEI pathway: Nature-based development**
Priority opportunity	**Opportunity in brief**	**What could move it forward**
3.1 District energy system	Advance district energy and co-generation using local lower-value or waste materials to support affordability, resilience, resource management and economic activity.	Confirm scale and resources, continue regulatory and utility discussions, and engage communities and Indigenous partners early.

3.2 Region-wide natural asset and wetland inventory	Build a shared inventory of watersheds, wetlands, forests and coasts to guide land use, infrastructure, restoration, resilience and investment.	Define scope, consolidate data, identify gaps, establish coordination and plan landowner outreach.
3.3 Regional coastal planning	Coordinate regional coastal planning, education and policy to reduce duplication and improve responses to erosion, flooding, sea-level rise and development.	Assess regional needs, identify vulnerable areas and clarify local hazards, options and responsibilities.
Table 4	**Biodiversity and recreation**	**ICLEI pathway: Nature-based development**
Priority opportunity	**Opportunity in brief**	**What could move it forward**
4.1 Accessible education for Pictou County's nature	Use a mobile-friendly, QR-linked tool to explain recreation, ecosystems, habitat and Indigenous cultural connections, encouraging respectful use of natural spaces.	Define content and cultural protocols with Indigenous leadership, using PlayFinder where practical.
4.2 Coordinated environmental protection policy	Coordinate municipal policy reviews to close gaps and strengthen environmental protection across land use, infrastructure, operations, parks, trails and stewardship.	Compare policies with Indigenous, environmental and community partners and identify priority areas for alignment.
4.3 Connecting people through nature-based recreation	Expand PlayFinder as a county-wide hub for nature-based recreation, improving participation, well-being, social connection and relationships with natural spaces.	Add opportunities, broaden municipal and community participation and confirm ongoing content support.
Table 5	**Waste and materials management**	**ICLEI pathway: Circular development**
Priority opportunity	**Opportunity in brief**	**What could move it forward**
5.1 Reducing food waste in Pictou County	Prevent, recover and redirect usable food waste to lower disposal costs and connect producers, food businesses and food-access organizations.	Map waste sources, recovery efforts, gaps and pilots with food-system and waste partners.
5.2 Improving options for reusing and repairing items	Expand repair, reuse, swaps and potential reuse-centre options to reduce landfill waste and improve access to affordable goods.	Map existing options and needs, then assess promising pilots and reuse-centre models.
5.3 Waste education for practical change	Target waste education to reduce confusion, contamination and costs while connecting daily choices to local environmental and financial outcomes.	Identify low-diversion areas and tailor campaigns, school programs, business outreach and resources.
Table 6	**Local food and circular economy**	**ICLEI pathway: Circular development**
Priority opportunity	**Opportunity in brief**	**What could move it forward**
6.1 Capacity building for local food and circular economy work	Increase coordination, staffing and support so local food and circular-economy initiatives can expand access, resilience, infrastructure and waste reduction.	Identify capacity gaps and explore shared staffing, infrastructure, funding and project development.
6.2 Mapping the local food system	Map producers, processors, markets, programs, infrastructure, transportation and food-access points to reveal strengths, gaps and opportunities for stronger connections.	Define priority data, form a working group and secure support for regional mapping.

6.3 Strengthening food system partnerships	Build a regional food-systems network to reduce duplication, share capacity and advance distribution, entrepreneurship, food security and Indigenous food sovereignty.	Convene organizations regularly to identify shared priorities and collaborative opportunities.
Table 7	**Climate adaptation and emergency readiness**	**ICLEI pathway: Resilient development**
Priority opportunity	**Opportunity in brief**	**What could move it forward**
7.1 Dedicated climate and resilience staff for Pictou County municipalities	Create shared regional climate and resilience positions to improve coordination, funding capacity and implementation across Pictou County municipalities.	Test municipal and Pictou County Partnership interest in a shared staffing model.
7.2 Regional engagement and collaboration plan	Coordinate inclusive public engagement so residents understand climate risks, prepare for emergencies and influence regional adaptation and resilience planning.	Review current approaches, identify participation gaps and develop practical regional methods.
7.3 Building capacity to secure funding	Build shared capacity to find, apply for and manage funding, helping regional resilience projects move from planning into implementation.	Assess current practice and explore shared information, training, grant writing and applications.
Table 8	**Health and community resilience**	**ICLEI pathway: Resilient development**
Priority opportunity	**Opportunity in brief**	**What could move it forward**
8.1 Community plus program	Create library-based Community Plus hubs and navigation support to connect residents with services, link organizations and identify gaps.	Develop the concept using existing library, community-service and SchoolsPlus models.
8.2 Walkable and connected communities	Improve walkability, accessibility and active transportation to strengthen health, social connection and access to jobs, food, recreation and healthcare.	Audit regional walking and cycling infrastructure, accessibility gaps and investment priorities.
8.3 Pictou County food security strategy	Develop a county-wide food security strategy linking production, access, health, literacy and emergency planning while strengthening supply resilience.	Map programs and gaps, then define the strategy's value, scope, partners and resources.
Table 9	**Housing and affordability**	**ICLEI pathway: Equitable and people-centred development**
Priority opportunity	**Opportunity in brief**	**What could move it forward**
9.1 Inventory of vacant and underused properties	Inventory municipally owned vacant and underused properties for housing or adaptive reuse, making better use of serviced land and infrastructure.	Combine municipal property information into a shared regional inventory or map.
9.2 Pictou County housing collaborative	Create a county-wide housing collaborative to share information, coordinate efforts, strengthen funding applications and pursue solutions reflecting regional needs.	Convene a roundtable to identify shared priorities, gaps and collaboration opportunities.

9.3 Library of pre-approved housing designs	Develop pre-approved housing designs across building types, household sizes and accessibility needs to reduce costs, delays and uncertainty.	Assess regional needs and align a shared catalogue with zoning and accessibility requirements.
Table 10	**Belonging and inclusion**	**ICLEI pathway: Equitable and people-centred development**
Priority opportunity	**Opportunity in brief**	**What could move it forward**
10.1 Building relationships to advance reconciliation	Build an enduring relationship framework between Pictou Landing First Nation and six municipalities through dialogue, knowledge sharing and joint decision-making.	Begin leadership discussions on purpose, scope and long-term stewardship.
10.2 Community communication and engagement network	Connect tools such as Hey Judy and PlayFinder so residents can find programs, services, events and opportunities more easily.	Map current tools and gaps, then explore better connections and promotion.
10.3 Including people experiencing housing insecurity in climate and emergency planning	Include people experiencing homelessness, housing insecurity and poverty in climate and emergency planning so shelter, services and supports reflect their needs.	Review plans with service providers and people with lived experience to identify gaps.

Appendix F: Summary of detailed connections matrix

How to read this table

This table provides a summary of the cross-table connections identified between priority opportunities established through workshop discussions. It may be interpreted using the legend table below. Priority opportunities 7.3 and 10.1 are described as connecting to all tables, so all other themes are shaded.

	Originating table
	Cross-table connection
Blank	No connection identified

Priority opportunity	1 Clean energy and mobility	2 Green jobs and innovation	3 Watersheds and natural assets	4 Biodiversity and recreation	5 Waste and materials manage-ment	6 Local food and circular economy	7 Climate adaptation and emergency readiness	8 Health and community resilience	9 Housing and affordability	10 Belonging and inclusion
1.1 Regional clean energy dialogue and public understanding										
1.2 Brownfield redevelopment for community energy projects										
1.3 School bus transportation plan										
2.1 Knowledge-sharing and mentorship										
2.2 Pictou County resource directory										
3.1 District energy system										

Priority opportunity	1 Clean energy and mobility	2 Green jobs and innovation	3 Watersheds and natural assets	4 Biodiversity and recreation	5 Waste and materials manage-ment	6 Local food and circular economy	7 Climate adaptation and emergency readiness	8 Health and community resilience	9 Housing and affordability	10 Belonging and inclusion
3.2 Region-wide natural asset and wetland inventory			■	■			■	■		
3.3 Regional coastal planning			■	■			■	■		
4.1 Accessible education for Pictou County's nature		■		■				■		■
4.2 Coordinated environmental protection policy	■		■	■			■			
4.3 Connecting people through nature-based recreation				■				■	■	■
5.1 Reducing food waste in Pictou County		■			■	■		■		■
5.2 Improving options for reusing plus repairing items		■			■	■			■	
5.3 Waste education for practical change					■			■		
6.1 Capacity building for local food and circular economy work		■				■	■	■		■

Priority opportunity	1 Clean energy and mobility	2 Green jobs and innovation	3 Watersheds and natural assets	4 Biodiversity and recreation	5 Waste and materials manage-ment	6 Local food and circular economy	7 Climate adaptation and emergency readiness	8 Health and community resilience	9 Housing and affordability	10 Belonging and inclusion
6.2 Mapping the local food system										
6.3 Strengthening food system partnerships										
7.1 Dedicated climate and resilience staff for Pictou County municipalities										
7.2 Regional engagement and collaboration plan										
7.3 Building capacity to secure funding										
8.1 Community plus program										
8.2 Walkable and connected communities										
8.3 Pictou County food security strategy										
9.1 Inventory of vacant and underused properties										

Priority opportunity	1 Clean energy and mobility	2 Green jobs and innovation	3 Watersheds and natural assets	4 Biodiversity and recreation	5 Waste and materials manage-ment	6 Local food and circular economy	7 Climate adaptation and emergency readiness	8 Health and community resilience	9 Housing and affordability	10 Belonging and inclusion
9.2 Pictou County housing collaborative										
9.3 Library of pre-approved housing designs										
10.1 Building relationships to advance reconciliation										
10.2 Community communication and engagement network										
10.3 Including people experiencing housing insecurity in climate and emergency planning										