

Specialist Practice Support Program (Tier 1)

Frequently Asked Questions

Content

About the Program	1
Eligibility	2
Application Process	3
Verification, Payment and Appeals	4
Common Questions	5
Quick Eligibility Checklist	6

About the Program

1. What is the Specialist Practice Support Program?

The Specialist Practice Support Program is an incentive established under the 2023 Physician Agreement to help eligible specialists offset the infrastructure and operational costs associated with maintaining a medical practice in Nova Scotia. The program recognizes that specialists who maintain office-based practices incur expenses that support patient care and access to services throughout the province.

2. How much is the payment?

Eligible specialists receive an annual payment of **\$25,000** through the Practice Support Program.

3. Who administers the program?

Applications are administered by **Doctors Nova Scotia (DNS)** on behalf of the **Department of Health and Wellness (DHW)**. Doctors Nova Scotia collects applications and supporting documentation, while DHW verifies eligibility and processes approved payments.

Eligibility

1. Who is eligible for the incentive?

The incentive is available to eligible specialists practicing in Nova Scotia, including:

- Royal College-certified specialists
- Functional specialists whom **Nova Scotia Health (NSH)** or **IWK Health (IWK)** would replace with a Royal College-certified specialist

The program applies to specialists practicing in all health zones throughout Nova Scotia.

2. What eligibility requirements must be met?

To qualify for the incentive, physicians must:

- Pay for rental/leasing of office space in the community or within an NSH/IWK facility
- Meet the required billing threshold
- Participate in a 'Facility On Call' schedule, if required for their specialty or site
- Maintain active clinical practice in Nova Scotia
- Use Ocean and the centralized eReferral process where applicable
- Actively use a DHW-approved electronic medical record (EMR)

All eligibility criteria must be satisfied.

3. What office expenses qualify?

The program is intended to support physicians who incur **rent or lease expenses for office space used to provide insured clinical services**. Rent or lease costs may be incurred in either community-based offices or NSH/IWK-owned facilities.

4. Are other overhead expenses considered?

No. Costs such as utilities, office equipment, furnishings, supplies, maintenance fees, staffing expenses, information technology costs, and other business expenses are not considered when assessing eligibility. **Only rent or lease costs are eligible** for consideration.

5. Can I qualify if I own my office space?

No. Ownership costs are **not eligible**.

6. What is the billing threshold?

Applicants must have a minimum of **\$150,000 in MSI billings or equivalent specialty contract payments** during the previous fiscal year (i.e., assessment period). Eligibility is verified by DHW.

7. What does "actively practicing" mean?

Active practice generally means that a physician has **maintained clinical practice in Nova Scotia and continues to provide insured patient care**. DHW will verify active practice status using billing activity and other available information.

8. Is EMR use required?

Yes. Applicants must actively use a **DHW-approved EMR** as part of their practice. These include Med Access (Telus) and Accuro (QHR).

9. Is Ocean and the central e-referral process absolutely required?

Physicians must use **Ocean and the centralized referral process** when it is applicable to their specialty and practice. If not applicable, then the requirement is waived.

Application Process

1. Do I need to apply every year?

Yes. Physicians must **complete the application process each year** to confirm their continued eligibility and provide any updated practice information.

2. I received the payment previously. Do I still need to apply?

Yes. Previous receipt of the incentive does not guarantee future eligibility. An annual **application is required to confirm that all program criteria continue to be met**.

3. What information is required in the application?

Applicants must provide:

- Name and contact information
- CPSNS license number
- Office address

- Information about office rent or lease arrangements
- EMR information
- Confirmation of participation in 'Facility On Call' schedules, where applicable
- Confirmation of the use of Ocean and the centralized e-referral process, where applicable

4. Will supporting documentation be required?

Applicants may be asked to provide supporting documentation, including:

- Lease agreements
- Proof of rent/lease payments
- Contact information for a landlord or leasing agent
- Documentation that confirms the office location associated with the lease arrangement

Providing requested documentation promptly will help avoid delays in application review.

Verification, Payment and Appeals

1. How is eligibility verified?

DHW verifies eligibility using information from the application, billing data, contract payment information, active practice records, and any supporting documentation submitted by the physician.

2. When will I know if my application has been approved?

All applicants will be notified once application review and eligibility verification have been completed. Timing may vary depending on application volumes and the need for additional information. Generally, applicants are notified in December.

3. When are payments issued?

Approved payments are processed following **completion of the application review and verification activities**. While payment timing can vary, eligible physicians are typically paid in late December.

4. What are the most common reasons applications are not approved?

Common reasons include:

- Missing or incomplete application information
- Inability to verify rent or lease expenses
- Failure to meet one or more program eligibility criteria

5. Is there an appeal process?

If an application is denied because information is incomplete or additional documentation is required, **physicians may be given an opportunity to provide clarification or submit additional materials for review.** Questions regarding a denied application should be directed to incentives@doctorsns.com.

6. If additional information is submitted after the application deadline, will payment be delayed?

Possibly. Applications requiring additional review or verification may take longer to process than applications that are complete at the time of submission. **Payment timing depends on when eligibility can be confirmed and approved.** If an appeal is approved after the end of November, you can then expect your payment in January.

Common Questions

1. I work at an NSH/IWK facility. Am I automatically eligible?

No. Physicians practicing in NSH/IWK facilities **must still meet all program requirements**, including the requirement to incur eligible rent or lease expenses and satisfy all other eligibility criteria.

2. What if I do not participate in a 'Facility On Call' schedule?

Participation is only required **where a 'Facility On Call' schedule applies to the physician's specialty or practice location.** Applications are reviewed individually, and physicians may be asked to explain circumstances where on-call participation does not apply.

3. What if I changed office locations during the year?

Applicants should **report any changes to their office location and be prepared to provide updated documentation** supporting their rent or lease arrangement.

4. What if I took a leave of absence?

Applications involving leaves of absence **will require additional review**. Physicians who believe a leave has affected their eligibility are encouraged to contact **DNS** at incentives@doctorsns.com to discuss their circumstances.

5. Who can I contact if I have other questions?

Questions about the Specialist Practice Support Program may be directed to incentives@doctorsns.com. Physicians may also contact their **DNS Physician Advisor** for assistance.

Jennifer Girard Physician advisor (Zone 4-Central) 902-240-6301 jennifer.girard@doctorsns.com	Lindsey Mattinson Physician advisor (Zone 2-Northern) 902-305-2058 lindsey.mattinson@doctorsns.com
Noelle Moulaison Physician advisor (Zone 1-Western) 902-740-5240 noelle.moulaison@doctorsns.com	Liz Fraser Physician advisor (Zone 3-Eastern) 902-549-2500 liz.fraser@doctorsns.com

Quick Eligibility Checklist

Before applying, confirm that you:

- ☒ Pay rent or lease costs for office space used to provide insured clinical services
- ☒ Meet the required billing threshold
- ☒ Participate in 'Facility On Call', where required
- ☒ Maintain active clinical practice in Nova Scotia
- ☒ Use Ocean and participate in the centralized referral process, where applicable
- ☒ Actively use a DHW-approved EMR

If you can answer "yes" to all the above, you are likely eligible to apply for the Specialist Practice Support Program (Tier 1). Final eligibility is determined through the verification process conducted by DHW.