

DALHOUSIE FAMILY MEDICINE
STRATEGIC PLAN
2018-2023



Message from the Department Head

This strategic plan is the result of extensive input and discussion both within the Department of Family Medicine and with others in our academic and practice communities. It has been developed with a clear attention to the issues of action and implementation at each step and presents a framework for decision-making. It has been aligned with the Faculty of Medicine and other partners' strategic plans and directions, while recognizing our own responsibilities and opportunities.

The strategic plan is the first step in a five-year journey. It will guide priority setting and choices, as we assess opportunities and overcome challenges to make important contributions to our communities. It may challenge us to rethink some of our usual activities and organizational structures, as well as celebrate the many strengths and accomplishments the department has had to date.

We wish to thank all those within the department, along with our many partners and stakeholders who took the time to participate by offering ideas, thoughtful reflection, and advice. We also want to thank Stephanie Heath of Research Power Inc. This work would not have been possible without her continuing expertise and leadership as she guided and challenged us each step of the way.



David Gass, MD, FCFP
Professor and Interim Head
Department of Family Medicine
Dalhousie University



Gregory Archibald, MD, CCFP
Professor and Head
Department of Family Medicine
Dalhousie University

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

- Background

2. Vision, Mission, and Values

3. Environment Scan

- Building Our Strengths
- Capitalizing on Opportunities

4. Strategic Directions

- Education Goal
 - Objectives
 - Actions
- Research Goal
 - Objectives
 - Actions
- Serving Our Communities Goal
 - Objectives
 - Actions
- Engagement & Partnerships Goal
 - Objectives
 - Actions

5. Enablers for Moving Forward

- Leadership and Structure
- Resources
- Accountability
- Communication

1. Introduction



Background

The Department of Family Medicine at Dalhousie University is the only fully-distributed, tri-provincial academic department of family medicine in Canada with a matrix environment of education, administrative, clinical, and research activities. In the fall of 2017 a strategic planning process began, led by a strategic plan working group that was chaired by the department head, and composed of department faculty including distributed sites, senior management, and staff.

An environment scan was completed including a review and analysis of key department documents; interviews with external stakeholders; and interviews and/or focus group sessions with internal stakeholders. The purpose of the environment scan was to help identify strengths and potential opportunities for the department over the next five years. The findings from the environmental scan were used by the strategic plan working group to develop a draft vision and mission, and strategic directions, goals, objectives, and high-level actions. An online survey and podcast of the draft vision, mission, strategic directions, goals, objectives, and actions were developed and distributed to all faculty and staff for review.

The findings from the survey were used by the strategic plan working group to create the final strategic plan for the department, presented in this report.

2. Our Vision, Mission and Values

Vision

A collaboration supporting the advancement of family medicine through education, research, and comprehensive clinical care to meet the needs of Maritime communities.

Mission

Serving Maritime communities and learners through education, research, clinical care, and engagement and partnerships. *Community. Learning. Research*



3. Environment Scan

Interviews were conducted with leaders in the health system from Departments of Health and Wellness in the three Maritime provinces, regional health authorities, the IWK Health Centre, and the Faculty of Medicine at Dalhousie to inform the strategic plan. Interviews and/or focus groups were also completed with a variety of internal stakeholders including: site leads, preceptors, department management, staff, and residents. Planning sessions were also held with existing department structures including the undergraduate and postgraduate committees, faculty development site leads, primary care research unit, portfolio directors, and education and administrative staff.

Building on Our Strengths

While establishing a strong, credible family medicine program, the department has built many strengths. These strengths provide a solid foundation on which to continue to expand the work and priorities of the department over the next five years.

Strengths	Description
Excellent and committed faculty and staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty, management, and staff are committed to achieving excellence • Many faculty are recognized and respected within the Faculty of Medicine and among external organizations for community based medicine • Participation of faculty and staff on influential regional, provincial, and national bodies • Strong collaborative team including a mix of faculty and staff with many years of experience and new faculty and staff who bring diverse perspectives
Distributed programs and faculty across the Maritimes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success in expanding the distributed education model to more sites • Demonstration of the community as an effective setting for education • Distributed leadership model • Faculty have a good understanding of community needs and context given their involvement at the local level
Strong educational program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resident experiences enhanced • Selection process attracts high quality applicants and match results in very capable candidates with significant success in the CCFP exam
Established network of preceptors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The department has an established network of preceptors across the Maritimes

Strengths	Description
High profile researchers and project with established infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong research team with leadership from the director • High profile research projects such as growth of MaRNet (Maritime Family Practice Research Network) embedded in the national Canadian Primary Care Sentinel Surveillance Network, Collaborative Research for Primary Healthcare (COR-PHC), Primary and Integrated Healthcare Innovations Network, etc. • Striving to align research with partner priorities • Opportunities for resident research
Increasing profile in undergraduate medical education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model and promote family medicine as a career choice for undifferentiated medical students • Student experiences enhanced with undergraduate offering remaining highly sought after
Continuing professional development and faculty development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impressive continuing professional development program to support community physicians in their role • Faculty development now offers a fundamental and advanced teaching skills program certificate of completion
Strong relationships with other departments in the Faculty of Medicine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative projects with others such as pediatricians, general internists, dieticians, academic pharmacist, shared mental health, and prenatal clinics
Interest in organizations in partnership opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Viewed as a valuable partner by many organizations to address key system issues

Capitalizing on Opportunities

In development of the department's plan, the Faculty of Medicine's strategic plan was reviewed to ensure alignment of key strategic areas. The Faculty of Medicine areas of focus include research, education, and serving and engaging society. The department is well-positioned to contribute to key priority initiatives of the Faculty of Medicine such as catalyzing system change and partnering with communities to improve health outcomes. In addition to alignment with The Faculty of Medicine's strategies and priorities, it is also important to understand potential trends within the macro environment such as health system trends and population health needs so that the department can contribute to advancing the priorities and aims of our partners including health authorities, departments of health and wellness, and national bodies. Opportunities to contribute to the discipline of family medicine and system priorities include:

- Partnerships and collaboration with health authorities, departments of health and wellness, and national organizations
- Inter-professional education and collaborative practice models of care
- Patient and community engagement
- Electronic health records
- Continuous quality improvement

4. Strategic Priorities

As depicted in the following figure, the strategic plan includes four directions and associated goals: education, research, serving our communities, and engagement and partnerships. In addition to a goal, each strategic direction includes several objectives and associated high-level actions which are presented in this section.



Education Goal

The continuum of family medicine education programs to support the provision of comprehensive care that meets the evolving needs of Maritime communities.

Education Objectives	High Level Actions
Create, innovate, and evaluate comprehensive training that responds to learner and community needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and address comparability of comprehensive training communities • Review and adjust curriculum on a regular basis to identify important and emerging topics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Prioritize simulation training and ensure access across all postgraduate sites • Address emerging needs including rural and indigenous health curricula • Facilitate learner participation in interprofessional education and collaborative care
Build capacity of Maritime physicians and their communities to support learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement a coordinated preceptor recruitment strategy • Work with partners to address barriers to teaching such as infrastructure, remuneration, and technology • Support and develop community preceptors and leaders
Grow family medicine participation and presence in undergraduate medical education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement strategies to improve the visibility and enhance integration of family medicine content in the pre-clerkship curriculum/units • Further develop and implement strategies to promote family medicine as a career choice • Review and address gaps in the capacity of family medicine faculty and residents to engage in innovative use of resources to participate in undergraduate teaching across all communities
Lead, innovate, and support faculty development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide leadership and collaborate with partners to support faculty development across the Maritimes • Build a network of community faculty engaged in faculty development using innovative methods • Support new and existing preceptors with their individual faculty development needs including preceptor resiliency

Research Goal

Primary care policy and practice are advanced through family medicine research and scholarship.

Research Objectives	High Level Actions
Lead inter-disciplinary research and support innovation to strengthen primary healthcare in Maritime communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a primary healthcare research chair in the department with a focus on family medicine research • Participate in national and local programs that support capacity building for research • Create a research agenda with priority areas identified
Grow the department's capacity for scholarship and research across Maritime communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a strategy to advocate for protected time for clinicians in the department to participate in research • Strengthen collaboration between quality improvement and research to support improvements in clinical care • Provide mentoring opportunities • Build community capacity and networks for research
Strengthen learner capacity for scholarship and research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a strategy to engage learners in primary healthcare research and family medicine • Explore the development of a graduate program in family medicine including a clinical scholar program • Support supervisors of research projects to ensure they are well informed and have the tools to effectively support learners
Build a better understanding within the department and externally about primary healthcare research and its value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build an identity for the Primary Care Research Unit to foster greater recognition and create a higher profile for scholarship and research • Build research partnerships with collaborating organizations • Create a knowledge translation strategy including: celebrating and sharing successes, and building understanding within communities about the importance of primary care and primary care research • Develop and implement tools to define the value proposition of primary healthcare research for funders
Inform primary healthcare policy and practice with research that responds to and influences partner strategic priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build relationships/partnerships with health authorities, provincial government departments, universities, and others so that Dalhousie Family Medicine is recognized and engaged as a research resource to support partner priorities • Collaborate with certificates of added competencies and enhanced skills to build research topics of interest within these areas • Facilitate comparative research in the three health systems of the Maritimes • Support engagement with potential funding partners • Support a strategy to introduce patient engagement in research teams and research planning • Translate research into action recommendations to meet the needs of patients with complex needs and multiple co-morbidities

Serving Our Communities Goal

Priority concerns of Maritime communities are addressed through education, research, and clinical activities.

Serving Our Communities Objectives	High Level Actions
<p>Prepare learners to address the health needs of all populations, including underserved communities and those with complex needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for reflection on diversity, inclusion, and cultural responsiveness in Maritime communities • Partner with the Faculty of Medicine and health authorities to develop and implement packaged/modular cultural competency and diversity training sessions for students, faculty, and staff within Dalhousie Family Medicine • Educate medical students and residents about the health and social issues facing indigenous peoples to help them attain competencies to provide culturally safe care • Enhance the diversity of preceptors and faculty members and staff over time within the department
<p>Participate in and influence a variety of innovative practice models</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build partnerships with provincial initiatives in primary care and family medicine • Identify and support faculty and staff engaged in interprofessional and collaborative care models such as the Patient's Medical Home • Educate learners about evolving interprofessional and collaborative care models
<p>Advocate for the reduction of disparities in health outcomes and access to quality primary healthcare</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify key health disparities at the provincial and community level • Identify and support faculty and staff who are advocating for the reduction of disparities in health outcomes and access to quality primary healthcare • Partner with community groups who are addressing health disparities

Engagement and Partnerships Goal

Partnerships formed to advance family medicine education and research, along with clinical and service delivery priorities.

Engagement and Partnership Objectives	High Level Actions
Partner with external stakeholders to support and ensure excellence in undergraduate and postgraduate family medicine education and research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with the health authorities to support rebuilding undergraduate education networks in distributed environments • Engage and build partnerships with departments of health and wellness to support family medicine education • Encourage preceptors to engage learners in their organizational partnership activities
Develop and support partnerships to influence and contribute to health system priorities and advance the department's programs/priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a strategy to increase department participation within departments of health and health authority structures within the Maritime provinces <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify structures and committees where the department should increase participation • Respond positively to partner invitations to participate in structures/processes that are in alignment with the department's strategic priorities • Invite partner organizations such as departments of health, health authorities, professional associations, and community partners to participate on department structures to help ensure alignment of strategies, goals and objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify working groups and settings to invite partner participation • Engage and build partnerships with other educational institutions to ensure efficient use of resources and maximize capacity • Develop and implement a communication strategy to build awareness among partners of the resources, strengths and priorities of the department throughout its distributed environment
Engage communities to support and facilitate learners in their environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage community leadership in the planning and evolution of teaching sites • Identify and support activities that connect learners with communities and their members
Create an identity for the community of undergraduate and postgraduate preceptors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an organizational structure that represents and supports community preceptors' unique roles and voice • Develop networking and socialization opportunities to strengthen the identity of the preceptor group

5. Enablers for Moving Forward

We have identified four enablers to help ensure the successful implementation of our strategic plan, which are described below.

Leadership and Structure

Implementation of the strategic plan will require leadership from across the department, including the distributed sites throughout the Maritimes. While those in senior leadership have an important role to play in guiding the work, all those in the department, from preceptors and staff to the executive and governance levels, need to champion the actions within the strategic plan.

The strategic plan was developed through a collaborative process that engaged stakeholders from across the Maritimes, both within and external to the department. The actions included here reflect this shared work and it will be a shared responsibility to support implementation. Collaboration and cooperation within the department and with external stakeholders is needed to ensure success.

The working group established to support creation of the strategic plan will continue to support the development of operational plans and guide the implementation process. This group will review existing department structures to ensure there is adequate support for implementation of the actions. They will explore, and form new structures, as required.

Resources

We know that resources—human, financial, and physical, including information technology—are key enablers for the implementation of the strategic plan. Succession and leadership planning of staff and faculty, including the distributed sites, is important work for the department over the next few years. We will continue to support faculty and staff development and build a team environment where all feel valued and respected. Based on the priority actions identified through the strategic plan, the operational planning, financial, and human resources from within the department and externally, will be sought and/or reallocated to support implementation of the plan.

Accountability

As noted above, the strategic plan working group will support the development of operational plans and guide the implementation of the strategic plan. The operational plans will identify responsibility and create a timeline for each action, as well as indicators of success. The indicators are the foundation for monitoring implementation of the actions and the success of the strategic plan. Through ongoing tracking of the actions, adjustments can be made to continually improve the implementation process. Annual reports will be produced to track progress.

Communication

As we work to implement the strategic plan, communication within the department and with our partners will be critical. We know we need staff, faculty, and preceptors to feel they're connected to, and an integral part of, the strategic plan. A communication strategy will be developed and implemented to support promotion and implementation of the strategic plan.