

Faculty of Medicine

# *Dalhousie Family Medicine* Strategic Plan

2024-2029



**DALHOUSIE**  
UNIVERSITY





# Table of Contents

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<b>Message from the Department Head</b>	2
<b>Developing Our Strategic Plan</b>	3
Background	3
Building on Our Strengths	3
Capitalizing on Opportunities	5
<b>Our Vision, Mission and Values</b>	6
<b>Our Strategic Priorities</b>	8
Social Accountability	9
Education	10
Research and Other Scholarly Activities	11
Our People and Partners	12
<b>Moving Forward</b>	13

*Dalhousie Family Medicine is located in Wabanaki, the group of the four ancestral, unceded, and unsundered territories of Mi'kma'ki, Wolastoq, Penobscot, and Peskotomuhkati. Wabanaki are the 'People of the Dawn' or 'Easterners'.*

*We also recognize the histories, contributions, and legacies of the African Nova Scotian and African New Brunswick and African-Islanders people who have been here for over 400 years.*



# Message from the **Department Head**

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The Strategic Plan process and resulting report for the Dalhousie Department of Family Medicine is in itself an example of our vision in action – *“Healthy communities through excellence in distributed academic Family Medicine”*.

Through repeated and extensive input and active discussion across our entire department and a wide range of partners we have produced a document that is truly representative of our distributed structure and influence.

Created with action in mind, I am excited to work with you all over the next five years as we address the goals, objectives, and actions that will help us realize our vision and mission. As we continue to build on the strengths of our department, harness opportunities, and address the ever-changing challenges in realizing our vision, we will be guided by our values and focus on our strategic directions—Social Accountability, Education, Research and Other Scholarly Activities, and Our People and Partners.

In doing so, as a united department, the opportunities to shape and influence the health of our communities and education of our future family physicians in ways that truly meet the needs of our diverse communities are endless.

Thank you to our learners, staff and faculty, our extended partners and our consultants, Stephanie Heath, and Clare Levin of Research Power Inc who all worked so diligently on this process and final plan.

I am proud to be the head of such a committed, diverse, distributed, and dynamic department and I am excited about the possibilities ahead.

Dr. Kath Stringer  
*Department Head*





# Developing Our Strategic Plan

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## BACKGROUND

The Department of Family Medicine at Dalhousie University is the only fully distributed tri-provincial academic Department of Family Medicine in Canada. There is a tri-provincial undergraduate program and a postgraduate program with teaching sites across the Maritime provinces. In 2023 a process began to renew the department's strategic plan, 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.

Consultations were completed and included interviews with external partners; focus group sessions with faculty, staff and learners; and an online survey with learners, faculty, preceptors, and staff. The purpose of the consultations was to help identify current strengths and potential opportunities for the department over the next five years. We heard from over 200 internal and external partners and the feedback was used by the strategic plan working group to update the department's vision and mission, and strategic directions, goals, objectives, and high-level actions.

## BUILDING ON OUR STRENGTHS

Dalhousie Family Medicine has continued to grow and evolve responding to community needs and context, as well as working collaboratively to support system change and improvements. The department's strengths provide a strong foundation to address priority areas of work identified for the next five years.

*“The strength of Dalhousie Family Medicine is the decentralization and having sites in multiple cities and provinces...that is a big win.”*

*“DFM leaders all represent extraordinary leadership in a complex environment.”*

# Developing Our Strategic Plan

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## BUILDING ON OUR STRENGTHS

<b>RELATIONSHIPS &amp; PARTNERSHIPS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Relationships with partners</li><li>■ Collaborating to address community and system priorities</li></ul>
<b>DISTRIBUTED ENVIRONMENT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Programs across the Maritimes</li><li>■ Learning experiences in varying contexts/ environments</li><li>■ Relationships with communities</li></ul>
<b>LEADERSHIP, PRECEPTORS, FACULTY, AND STAFF</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Strong leaders in the department head, program directors, site directors, faculty, and senior staff</li><li>■ Committed preceptors, faculty and staff</li></ul>
<b>STRONG EDUCATION PROGRAM</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion</li><li>■ Faculty development and presence in undergraduate education</li><li>■ Leadership in collaborative models of care</li></ul>
<b>RESEARCH</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Strong research program in family medicine and primary health care</li><li>■ Leaders provincially and nationally</li></ul>

# Developing Our Strategic Plan

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## CAPITALIZING ON OPPORTUNITIES

In developing the department's plan, the Faculty of Medicine's strategic plan was reviewed to ensure alignment. The Faculty of Medicine areas of focus include excellence in education, high-impact research, serving and engaging society, and valuing people. 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. Also, like the Faculty of Medicine, the department will work to create supportive and healthy learning and work environments for all department members.

In addition to alignment with the Faculty of Medicine's 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 communities, health authorities, departments of health and wellness, and national bodies.

### **Opportunities to contribute to the discipline of family medicine and system priorities include:**

- Collaborative care and interprofessional teams including the Patient Medical Home
- Expansion of teaching sites and capacity
- Equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility
- Promoting family medicine as a career choice
- Advocacy, research, and leadership to advance primary care and community health outcomes
- Information technology

*“Dalhousie Family Medicine could be a leader or an advocate within Dalhousie to expand the work and relationship with Indigenous people, looking at the admissions process across the board.”*

*“There is still a need for more medical students to choose family medicine as a career. Teaching medical students and providing them with opportunities in family medicine and promoting family medicine as career choice needs to continue.”*

*“I think the department has a role in explaining and working with the decision makers at a government level about what is a successful family medicine practice model.”*

*“Let's not still be in a state of crisis 10 years from now – how does the foundation get re-established. It's going to look different.”*

# Our **Vision**, **Mission**, and **Values**

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## **VISION**

Healthy communities  
through excellence in distributed  
Academic Family Medicine.



## **MISSION**

To drive excellence in Family Medicine  
through socially accountable and  
connected communities supporting  
education, research and other  
scholarly activities.



## WHAT WE VALUE

The values from the Faculty of Medicine's Strategic Plan also guide the department's work:

### RESPECT

Work and learning environments grounded in high regard for the aspirations, rights, and traditions of all. Collegial, professional relationships that build feelings of trust, safety, and wellbeing.

### INCLUSION

A diverse mix of outstanding students, scholars, researchers, and staff who share an enriched sense of belonging and commitment to action. The power of diversity demonstrated through inclusive engagement with our communities.

### COLLABORATION

Genuine appreciation for what is important to one another, our partners and those whom we serve. Strong, productive relationships.

### ACCOUNTABILITY

Providing people with the tools, time, and other resources they need to do their work. Setting the bar for integrity in transparent communication. Setting new standards for high-quality and equitable approaches to medical education, research, and clinical practice.

### EXCELLENCE

Striving for enduring improvement in individual, community, population, and planetary health. An ongoing commitment to sustainable quality improvement.



# Our Strategic Priorities

As depicted in the following figure, our strategic plan includes four priority areas: Social Accountability, Education, Research & Other Scholarly Activities, and Our People & Partners. Education and Research & Other Scholarly Activities are the foundation of our work and drivers to achieve our vision – Healthy Communities through Excellence in Distributed Academic Family Medicine. The outer circle represents Social Accountability and Our People & Partners, which are also strategic priorities that encompass and inform Education and Research & Other Scholarly Activities.



**Each strategic direction has a goal, objectives, and high-level actions:**

- **GOAL:** Our desired result or outcome for each strategic priority. (Why)
- **OBJECTIVES:** Our strategies to achieve the goal. (What)
- **HIGH-LEVEL ACTIONS:** Our actions that outline, at a high-level, what will be done to move the objective forward. (How)



## SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The World Health Organization (1995) defined the social accountability of medical schools as “the obligation to direct their education, research, and service activities towards addressing the priority health concerns of the community, region, and/or nation they have a mandate to serve”. Dalhousie Family Medicine aims to support the social accountability goal guided by this definition and rooted in principles of anti-oppression, community engagement, and equity.

**GOAL: Social accountability is embedded throughout the department’s activities**

Social Accountability Objectives	High-Level Actions
<p>Lead, model, and advocate for social accountability in all that we do</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Apply our values (respect, inclusion, collaboration, accountability, excellence), within our social accountability strategies</li> <li>■ Align department activities with Maritime community needs</li> <li>■ Advocate internationally, nationally, provincially, and locally for social accountability priorities</li> </ul>

*World Health Organization. (1995). Defining and measuring the social accountability of medical schools. Retrieved from: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/defining-and-measuring-the-social-accountability-of-medical-schools>*





# EDUCATION

**GOAL: Innovative and integrated high quality family medicine education responsive to the evolving context of Maritime communities**

Education Objectives	High-Level Actions
<p>Create and evaluate innovative and comprehensive curricula that respond to learner and Maritime community needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Build competency and capacity for interprofessional education</li> <li>■ Contribute to the development, implementation, and evaluation of integrated clinical and educational Patient Medical Homes</li> <li>■ Continuously identify and respond to emerging priorities through curriculum renewal</li> </ul>
<p>Increase the number and diversity of applicants to family medicine that reflect Maritime communities and their needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Continue to grow family medicine participation, presence, and leadership in the undergraduate medical education curriculum</li> <li>■ Promote family medicine and profile the profession as a specialty and the value family medicine brings to communities and the health system</li> <li>■ Create supportive and inclusive learning environments that promote and support diversity</li> </ul>
<p>Lead, innovate, and support faculty development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Develop, implement, and evaluate high quality faculty development opportunities based on faculty, preceptor, and Maritime community needs</li> <li>■ Encourage participation in faculty development</li> </ul>
<p>Build distributed family medicine education capacity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Recruit, engage, and support a diverse base of community preceptors from across the Maritimes including new graduates</li> <li>■ Collaborate with partners to expand sites for learner experiences in family medicine</li> </ul>



## RESEARCH AND OTHER SCHOLARLY ACTIVITIES

There are four pillars of scholarship that include A) scholarship of discovery (individual research that advances knowledge); B) scholarship of integration (synthesis of knowledge and information); C) scholarship of application (application/implementation of existing knowledge); and D) scholarship of teaching (dissemination of existing knowledge).

**Goal: Primary care education, practice, and policy are advanced through family medicine research and other scholarly activities**

Research and Other Scholarly Activities Objectives	High-Level Actions
<p>Lead original research and other scholarly activities that advance knowledge to support and strengthen primary care, the discipline of family medicine, and family medicine education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Build understanding of research and other scholarly activities and their value</li> <li>■ Identify priorities for research and other scholarly activities</li> <li>■ Build capacity for research and other scholarly activities based on individuals' context</li> <li>■ Build and strengthen partnerships and collaborations for research and other scholarly activities throughout the Maritimes, nationally, and internationally</li> </ul>
<p>Foster a culture within the department to support research and other scholarly activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Promote the value of the diversity of areas of interest in research and other scholarly activities</li> <li>■ Promote existing and potential connections between research and other scholarly activities, and other Dalhousie Family Medicine work</li> <li>■ Encourage and facilitate participation in research and other scholarly activities at various levels and regardless of geographic location</li> </ul>





## OUR PEOPLE AND PARTNERS

**GOAL: A distributed Maritime department of people and partners working together to achieve shared goals**

Engagement and Partnership Objectives	High-Level Actions
<p>Foster a positive and inclusive working environment that promotes active participation, leadership, and wellbeing throughout the department</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Establish and model diverse, positive, and supportive work and learning environments</li> <li>■ Develop strategies to foster and promote personal career development and effective collaborative relationships</li> <li>■ Collectively identify department-wide needs and priorities and advocate for appropriate resources</li> </ul>
<p>Strengthen and expand partnerships supportive of distributed academic family medicine</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Develop strong collaborative relationships with our partners</li> <li>■ Build an understanding of distributed academic family medicine among our partners</li> </ul>



# Moving Forward

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To help ensure the work of the strategic plan is accomplished over the next five years, action plans will be developed for each strategic direction. Existing structures (e.g., Undergraduate Medical Education Committee, Faculty Development Coordinators Committee, Postgraduate Site Directors and Administrators, the Primary Care Research Unit) will guide the development of some action plans, and groups will be formed to develop action plans in other areas (e.g., Social Accountability, Our People and Partners). Leadership within the department (e.g., the Department Head, Program Directors, Associate Department Head, Portfolio Directors, Chief Operating Officer) will lead the working groups in developing and implementing the action plans.

In addition to action planning, other enablers, as described below, will be key to help ensure we successfully implement our strategic plan.

## LEADERSHIP AND STRUCTURE

Implementing the strategic plan will require leadership from across the department, including the distributed sites throughout the Maritimes. While those in senior leadership positions 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 internal and external partners from across the Maritimes. The strategic plan reflects this collaborative work, and it will be a shared responsibility to support implementation. Collaboration and cooperation within the department and with external partners is needed to ensure success.

## RESOURCES

We know that resources - human, financial, and physical are key enablers for the implementation of the strategic plan. Based on the priority actions identified through the strategic and action plans, the financial and human resources from within the department and externally will be sought and/or reallocated to support implementation of the plan.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

The action plans for each strategic direction will identify responsibility and a timeline for each action, as well as indicators of success. These 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. The action plans will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

## 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 and implementation plan has been developed to support the promotion and implementation of the strategic plan.



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