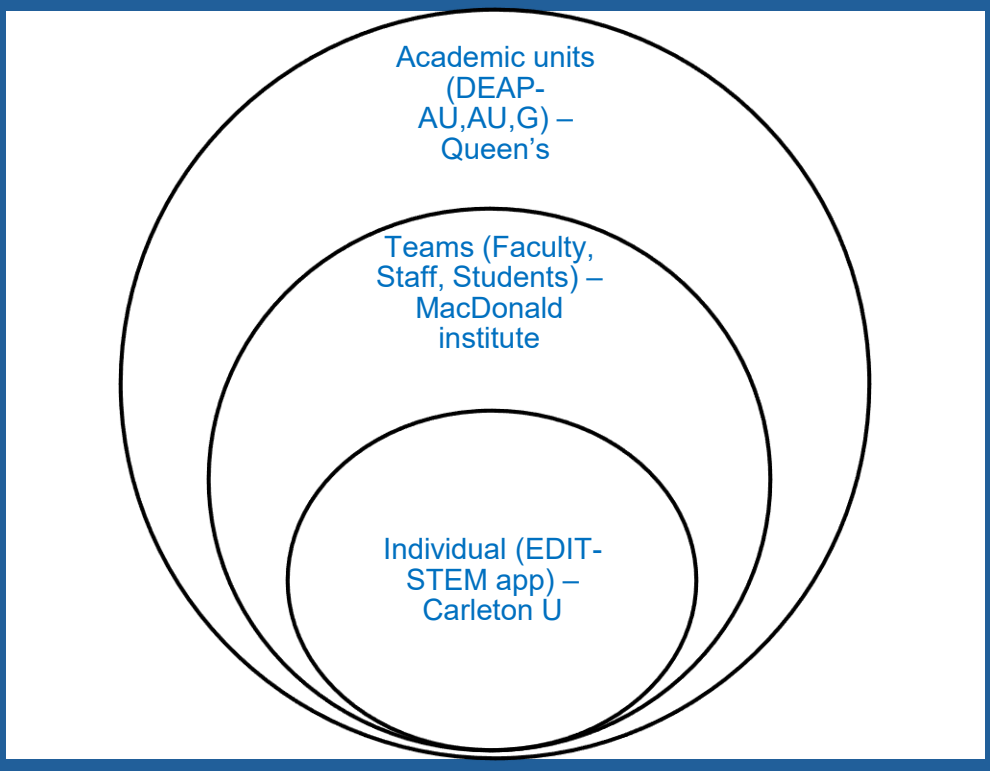


Diversity & Equity Assessment Planning (DEAP) Program 2025-2026 Report



Written by the DEA Program Officer – Dr. Tran Thanh Tam Pham

Appointed by the Office of Research Services and the Faculty of Science

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1. Executive Summary

The Diversity & Equity Assessment Planning (DEAP) Program is a faculty-wide initiative translating Dalhousie University's EDIA commitments into structured, measurable action. Over the past year, DEAP has progressed from design to pilot implementation and early uptake, establishing an integrated ecosystem of assessment tools, Academic Unit Climate Surveys (AUCS), and a developing DEAP Portal to support data-informed planning and accountability. The program's multi-level, cyclical model – spanning individuals, units, and governance – enables continuous improvement through self-assessment, goal-setting, and alignment with institutional priorities (e.g., Indigenous and African Nova Scotian Strategies). Initial implementation demonstrates strong potential, with foundational tools launched, climate surveys nearing completion, and governance integration frameworks underway. As DEAP moves toward institutional scaling, the focus is shifting to embedding the program within leadership structures, formal planning processes, and reporting systems. Immediate priorities include the full rollout of Governance and Academic DEAP, the launch of the DEAP Portal, and the coordinated implementation of the climate surveys.

Key Findings and Strategic Implications

- **Strong Foundation, Ready to Scale:** Integrated tools, surveys, and infrastructure are in place to move from EDIA commitments to measurable outcomes.
- **Engagement Gaps Require Leadership Action:** Uptake is uneven across units; sustained progress will depend on targeted outreach, capacity-building, and clear leadership endorsement.
- **Customization Drives Effectiveness:** A flexible, discipline-specific application is essential to ensure relevance and adoption across diverse academic contexts.
- **Governance Integration is the Critical Lever:** Embedding DEAP into strategic planning, accountability frameworks, and reporting systems is necessary for long-term impact.
- **From Data to Action Requires Facilitation:** Climate data must be paired with structured dialogue and support to translate insights into change.
- **Alignment Shapes Delivery:** Institutional coordination directly affects timelines and effectiveness, underscoring the need for synchronized leadership and communication.
- **Digital Infrastructure Enables Accountability:** The DEAP Portal will be central to tracking progress, enhancing transparency, and integrating with institutional systems.

DEAP has established a strong institutional foundation. Realizing its full impact will require sustained leadership commitment, deeper integration into governance, and coordinated implementation to ensure consistent uptake and measurable progress across the Faculty.

2. Introduction to the DEAP Program:

2.1 Faculty of Science Equity Planning Frameworks:

The Faculty of Science at Dalhousie University has adopted a comprehensive institutional equity planning framework including the DEAP program to advance inclusion across all dimensions of academic life. This framework is grounded in the understanding that achieving meaningful and sustained progress in equity, diversity, inclusion (EDI) requires a coordinated, systems-level approach that integrates strategy, data, tools, and community engagement.

The Faculty's approach emphasizes collective responsibility and shared leadership, engaging students, faculty, and staff members in co-creating inclusive environments. The institutional equity planning framework is anchored in the **Faculty of Science Equity Plan (2022–2027)**, which outlines a multi-phase, multi-year strategy:

- **Years 1–2:** Establish foundations, build capacity, and initiate tools
- **Years 2–3:** Expand implementation and deepen engagement
- **Years 3–5:** Scale impact, embed accountability, and sustain change

This phased approach ensures that equity work progresses from **vision and commitment** to **implementation** to **measurable impact**, supported by clearly defined priorities and timelines.

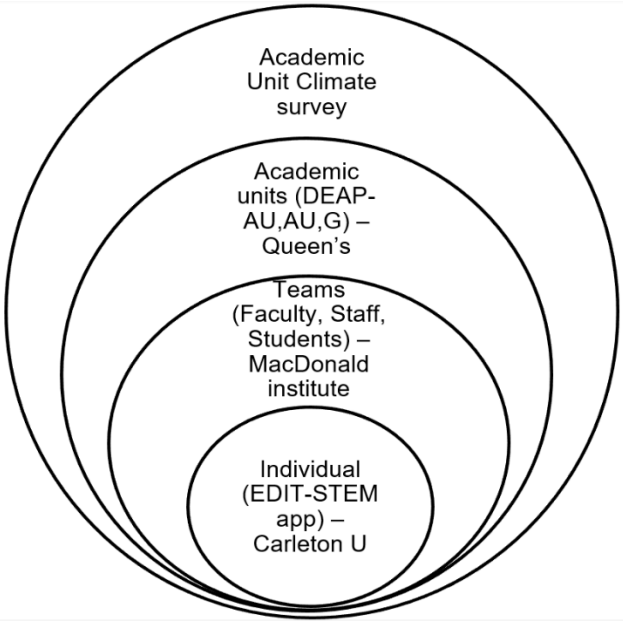


Figure 1 – The Faculty of Science Equity Planning framework from the individual changes (EDIT-STEM Collaborative Project – Carleton University) to the function team changes (DEAP for Staff, Students, Researchers & Instructors) to the academic units

(DEAP for Academic, Administrative and Governance Units) to the entire Faculty of Science (Academic Unit Climate Surveys (AUCS))

2.2 Definitions:

Before we begin with the introduction to the DEAP Program, it is important to establish a baseline understanding of what we mean by Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, in short EDI.

Equity is understood as a process ensuring just outcomes in the treatment of individuals, particularly by identifying and addressing historical and ongoing systems of exclusion and barriers that prevent equity-deserving groups from accessing opportunities and resources on an equal basis. At universities, it involves recognizing and valuing the diverse backgrounds, experiences, and identities of members of the academic community, with a commitment to building systems that provide equitable access to education, employment, and advancement opportunities and the flourishing of communities that have been denied such opportunities.

Diversity is a condition referring to the range of identities, perspectives, and experiences that characterize individuals within communities, including (but not limited to) differences in age, care responsibilities, citizenship, (dis)ability, ethnicity, impairment of health, gender, race, religion and belief, sexual orientation, and social class. In this context, there is a particular need and challenge to recognize the genuine quality of the intersectionality (i.e., interconnected nature) of discrimination experiences and structures of inequality.

Inclusion is an outcome involving the creation of environments where individuals are valued, respected, and empowered to fully participate and contribute to their communities including their academic communities.

DEAP Program:

When we discuss about the DEAP Program, we are talking about all components that support the program:

- DEAP suite of tools (6 in all):
    - DEAP for Researchers and Instructors, DEAP for staff teams, DEAP for student teams
    - DEAP portal digital platform for Academic Units, Administrative Units and Governance Units,
- Resources repository (a) Personalized journey and (b) on demand tools available in the DEAP suites,
- Academic Unit climate surveys to measure progress,
- DEAP Program Office – the institutional body which supports the DEAP Program deployment.

2.3 DEAP Tools:

The DEAP Tool for Academic, Administrative and Governance units was first developed in 2015 and introduced at Queen's University. It was then adopted by Dalhousie University in 2017 and underwent the process of approval from Dalhousie Institutional Effectiveness and Planning team, including a Privacy Impact assessment completed on 2023. The tool was further adapted and integrated as part of a coordinated, faculty-wide initiative to advance inclusion across the Faculty of Science at Dalhousie University.

DEAP for Research teams was first developed by Alexandra Pedersen at the McDonald Institute for Astroparticle Physics. The Faculty of Science at Dalhousie adapted the DEAP for Research teams into a DEAP for Researchers and Instructors tool, and added two new tools: DEAP for student teams, DEAP for staff teams.

Timeline	Events
November, 2025	Senate "Share Cuz we Care" session -Anne-Marie Delorey presented Queen's University's DEAP tool
2016	Established as a priority by HR; follow up by Senate Planning and Governance Committee, interest by acting Dean of Science Ian Hill, Tana Turner presents to Deans
2017	Purchased by HR (Arig Al Shaibah, Jasmine Walsh, Megan Wagstaff)
Mar, 2018	@ 5.2 Advisory committee meeting, "Discussions on developing DEAP v.2 at Dalhousie are underway with IT Services" (Leanne French-Munn)
Sept, 2022	Faculty of Science requests to use DEAP tool
Dec, 2022	Review and approval by Dal Analytics and Equity Office (Sonia Beattie, Megan Wagstaff, Theresa Rajack-Talley)
April, 2023	Privacy and confidentiality: DEAP does not require Privacy Impact Assessment (Brenda Williams, Legal Counsel)
May – Sept, 2023	Privacy and confidentiality: DEAP does not require Privacy Impact Assessment (Brenda Williams, Legal Counsel)
Oct, 2023	DEAP installed! Customization in process!
Oct, 2025	Multi-department access built in

Figure 2 – DEAP History at Dalhousie University

The DEAP framework emphasizes a collective, community-driven approach to embedding equity, diversity, inclusion (EDI) into all aspects of academic life. DEAP Tools are not standalone instruments, but rather part of a broader ecosystem of integrated tools and strategies designed to support institutional transformation. This ecosystem includes:

- Academic unit climate surveys
- Resource banks and training programs
- DEAP for teams (researchers, instructors, staff, students), and DEAP for higher level organizational units (Academic, Administrative and Governance)
- EDIT-STEM app for individuals, developed in collaboration with Carleton University, under the NSERC Alliance Grant program

Together, these components form a coordinated approach to assessment (DEAP flavors), action, and accountability (Climate surveys), aligning with the Faculty of Science Equity Plan (2022–2027) and broader institutional priorities.

In addition, the DEAP tools aim to:

- Translate institutional EDI commitments into practical, individual (EDIT-STEM app), teams (DEAP for researchers and instructors, students, staff) and unit-level actions (DEAP for Academic, Administrative and Governance units) assigned to specific indicators.
- Support evidence-informed decision-making
- Enable continuous reflection, planning, and improvement
- Strengthen accountability across academic and administrative structures

Ultimately, the DEAP Tools are designed to support the Faculty's mission of serving the public good through inclusive excellence in teaching, research, and community engagement.

2.3.1 Self-Assessment Framework

Furthermore, each DEAP tool (such as Teams level DEAP, Academic Unit level DEAP, and Institutional level DEAP) uses:

- DEAP for teams: A standardized assessment system consists the categorization of Novice – Mentorship – Advocate – Sponsor,
- DEAP for Academic, Administrative and Governance units: 0 – 5 assessment scale includes that demonstrates the transition from having no or little plans to fully implementing with validated impact,
- Reflective prompts across key indicators with the themes of strategic planning, policies and practices, accessibility, and community engagement.

Overall, these self-assessment frameworks enable consistent benchmarking across units.

2.3.2 Cyclical Implementation Model

Teams or units are asked to follow a continuous cyclical implementation model with the recommended 4 steps of the cycle in the DEAP Tools for Teams clearly illustrated in DEAP tool workflows (e.g., student, staff, researcher and instructors tools, pages 9–10):

1. Committing to action: Participants receive the support, take stock of one's current EDI journey and talk to team members of the intention to get started on the DEAP Tools review.

2. Self-assessment: Participants self-assess their EDI journey based on the guiding questions in indicators with the self-assessment categories.
3. Reflect and set goals: Participants review the DEAP indicators, collaboratively set and track three EDIA goals with their team using milestones and performance measures.
4. Revisit and refine: Participants regularly review and adjust their EDIA goals, timelines, and context, repeating the cycle to ensure continuous improvement to practices and team dynamics.

And a similar cycle for units, the recommended 3-step process of the DEAP Tool for Academic, Governance and Administrative on the DEAP Portal:

1. Assessment Survey and Review Score Card: Participants are invited to complete the assessment survey which provides a series of questions related to “Inclusion Indicators”. Next, participants are presented with their scorecard.
2. Participants will be invited to set goals based on the area(s) of priority highlighted in their scorecard. Units are then required to develop an action plan outlining the timeframe, the person responsible, the collaborators and what resources are required.
3. Participants will then complete a summary report highlighting their progress on their action plan.

2.4 Academic unit climate surveys (AUCS):

The Academic Unit Climate Surveys (AUCS) are a central component of the DEAP Program’s integrated approach to advancing EDI within the Faculty of Science. Designed to complement the DEAP Tools, the surveys provide a data-informed foundation for understanding the lived experiences of students, staff, and faculty within their specific academic environments.

Unlike institution-wide surveys (such as Dalhousie University Employment Equity Your Voice and Student Affairs surveys), the AU Climate Surveys are intentionally unit-focused, centering the academic unit (e.g., departments, research groups, and programs) as the primary site of teaching, research, and community engagement. This approach reflects the understanding that meaningful change must occur where academic work is experienced most directly.

The Academic Unit Climate Surveys serve multiple interconnected purposes within the DEAP Program:

- **Program Evaluation and Quality Improvement:** The surveys support the DEAP Program’s evaluation by establishing a baseline understanding of the current climate and cohort experiences within academic units.

- **Accountability Mechanism:** Units are supported—and held accountable—through the development of annual climate reports, enabling ongoing monitoring of progress and outcomes.
- **Evidence for Action Planning:** Survey findings directly inform DEAP self-assessment process and strategic planning processes, ensuring that action plans are grounded in lived experiences and data.
- **Alignment with Best Practices:** The survey design follows leading practices observed at peer institutions (e.g., Princeton University departmental climate survey), ensuring methodological rigor and comparability.

2.5 Collaborative Project - EDIT-STEM App:

Based on the Faculty of Science Equity Planning framework, we are additionally interested in individual state-of-mind change towards becoming more willing and open to engage and implement EDI-based principles in planning. Thanks to the NSERC Alliance Grants – Society, this collaborative project with multiple partners led by the Carleton University aims to develop novel interactive technologies as a transformative approach for addressing the challenges to EDI in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics(STEM). The use of persuasive technology (PT) platform to encourage transformative societal change through actions to advance EDI in STEM. The project partners include change-makers affecting Canadian society: Engineers Canada, IVADO, National Research Council, Perimeter Institute, and Réseau interuniversitaire québécois pour l'équité, la diversité et l'inclusion. Some of the expected outcomes for this collaborative project will include:

- An evidence-based technological design framework
- A coordinated suite of tools including persuasive games, AI personalized feedback components, and multimedia resources to address the complexity, scale, and interactivity challenges of EDI in STEM,
- A longitudinal evaluation of PT in realistic contexts.
- Enables real-world impact through national partnerships and deployment

Ultimately, it will deliver an evidence-based framework and integrated suite of tools to drive sustained, system-level EDI transformation in STEM.

2.6 Collaborative Project – Supporting SHIFTS in Research Practices:

Funded by the Connaught Fund – University of Toronto, this project adapts an existing Inclusive Science Self-Assessment Tool (ISSAT) into a broader, multidisciplinary **Inclusive Research Self-Assessment Tool (IRSAT)** to support equitable and

accessible research practices across post-secondary institutions. By combining individual feedback with aggregated institutional data, the tool addresses key gaps in researcher support, progress tracking, and tailored implementation of EDIA and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). Through needs assessments and co-development with researchers, the project ensures relevance across STEM, Medicine, and Social Sciences. Ultimately, SHIFTS aims to strengthen inclusive research cultures and enable system-wide change in Canadian post-secondary institutions. Faculty of Science has provided the DEAP Tool version for Researchers & Instructors to be reviewed by the SHIFTS focus group. We will be provided with feedback with identified gaps in our DEAP Program.

2.7 Resource repository and Workshops training:

A key component of the DEAP Program is the provision of curated, accessible resources that support individuals, teams, and academic units in translating reflection into meaningful action. Recognizing that advancing EDI commitments require both knowledge and practice, the DEAP Program Office has developed a dual-resource model consisting of:

1. On-Demand, Theme-Based Resources, and
2. Personalized Learning Journey Resources

This two-pronged approach ensures that users are supported both in immediate, task-oriented needs and in longer-term, reflective and developmental processes.

On-demand resources are designed to provide immediate, practical guidance aligned with specific DEAP indicators and themes. These resources are embedded directly within the DEAP tools and are intended to answer the critical question: *“How do we take action on this indicator?”.*

They are:

- Theme-based (e.g., leadership, accessibility, Indigenous engagement)
- Directly linked to DEAP Tool indicators
- Easily accessible and actionable
- Curated from both internal institutional resources and external expert sources

In contrast to on-demand resources, personalized learning journey resources are designed to support deep, reflective engagement and long-term professional development. These resources guide users through a structured process of self-reflection and growth, aligned with the DEAP philosophy of: *“Understanding and motivating the reasons why EDI acts as a foundation for meaningful change.”*

These resources:

- Follow a step-by-step pathway
- Emphasize self-reflection and identity exploration
- Encourage users to engage critically with systemic barriers within post-secondary education institutions

3. A Community-based Approach

The DEAP Program is grounded in a community-based, participatory, and systems-level approach that emphasizes collaboration, continuous learning, and shared accountability. This approach operates on three interconnected components: a multi-level engagement model across faculty-wide, a standardized self-assessment framework for the DEAP Tools within the co-creation process, and a cyclical implementation process for the DEAP Program.

Multi-Level Engagement Model

Upon examination of the Faculty of Science Equity Planning Frameworks, we have established that a multi-level engagement model would best address the needs for EDI commitments, foster inclusivity and belonging within our Faculty. Hence, we developed the Organizational DEAP Implementation Model within the Faculty of Science that integrates:

- **Individual level** (EDIT-STEM app)
- **Teams level** (DEAP for Students, Staff, Researchers and Instructors)
- **Academic Unit level** (DEAP for Academic with Departments and Programs)
- **Institutional level** (DEAP for Governance with the Dean's Office)

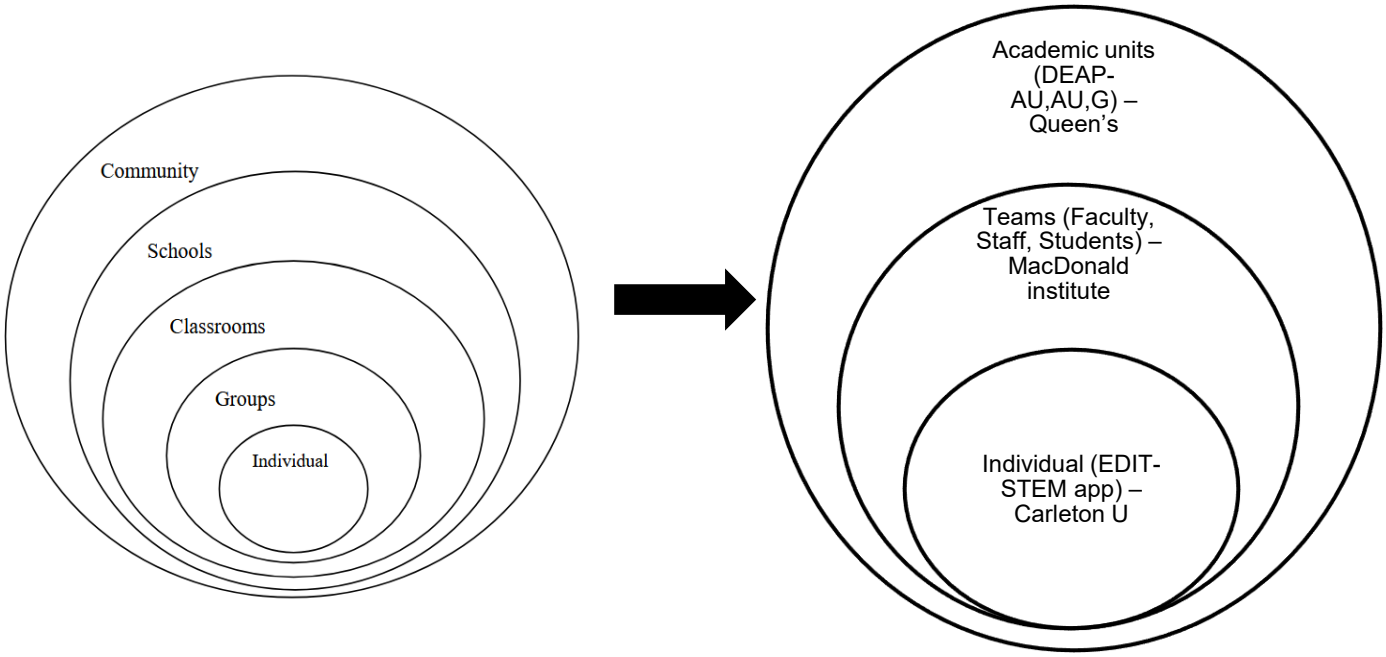


Figure 3 – Using the English as a Foreign Language community-based learning framework (action research concentric circles) adapted from "Action Research in Education" by Ernie Stringer.

4. DEAP Program Progress

4.1 DEAP for Teams (Students, Staff, Researchers & Instructors)

Over the past year, the DEAP Program has progressed from conceptual development to pilot implementation and early institutional uptake, culminating in the successful launch of three tailored DEAP tools for students, staff, and researchers & instructors. This work was guided by a structured four-phase development model: (1) design and resource development, (2) tool adaptation and refinement, (3) community engagement and validation, and (4) implementation and early scaling.

Phase 1: Foundation Building and Initial Development (April – June 2025)

The initial phase focused on establishing the strategic and methodological foundations of the DEAP Program.

Key accomplishments included:

- Developing a minimum viable product (MVP) of DEAP tools for students, staff, and researchers & instructors
- Designing and aligning DEAP indicators across all three cohort groups
- Initiating the development of Academic Unit Climate Surveys (AUCS) to complement DEAP tools
- Curating a comprehensive set of EDIA resources, including Dalhousie University institutional and external sources

In addition, during this phase, the DEAP Program Office included early coordination with Research Ethics Board (REB) to ensure that we are not required to seek for a REB approval with the development of the AUCS. It is important to note that as long as the AUCS data is used to strictly evaluate and improve the DEAP Program, then DEAP Program is not required to apply for REB approval.

Phase 2: Iterative Review, Refinement, and Alignment (July – September 2025)

The second phase emphasized extensive consultation and iterative refinement to ensure that the DEAP tools were contextually relevant and community informed.

Some of the key activities:

- Conducted multi-round reviews with Equity Champion (EC) groups (from the recruitment call in 2023 by the Faculty of Science) including:
    - Student ECs
    - Staff ECs
    - Faculty ECs

- Revised tools to improve inclusive and accessible language, reflect diverse lived experiences, and align with Dalhousie-specific policies and structures
- Strengthened alignment between: DEAP indicators, climate survey questions, and resource materials.

Overall, we have significantly enhanced the following features:

- Added clearer definitions, examples, and guidance within tools
- Incorporated accountability mechanisms and follow-up processes
- Tailored tools to reflect different levels of agency and roles (e.g., students vs. faculty power dynamics)

By the end of this phase, the student DEAP tool reached near-final completion, staff and researcher tools were fully revised and aligned with feedback from ECs.

Phase 3: Expanded Engagement and Finalization (October – December 2025)

This phase focused on broadening engagement across the Faculty of Science and finalizing tools for implementation.

Extensive Interested Parties Engagement:

We gathered feedback from many intra-faculty and institutional entities such as:

- Faculty of Science Dean's Office and Associate Deans
- Chairs of Departmental EDI Committees
- Student societies and equity leaders
- Employment Equity leads and institutional partners such as the Dalhousie People & Culture unit Employment Equity group, Office of Indigenous Relations, Human Rights & Equity Services, and Student Affairs teams.
- External advisors and cross-faculty collaborators such as Associate Deans of EDIA in other Faculty of Health, Engineering, Management, and Medicine.

Major Developments:

Through extensive review feedback from these interested parties, we highlight the following actions:

- Future integration of Indigenous and African Nova Scotian perspectives, including:
    - Mi'kmaq Treaty-based approaches
    - Etuaptmumk/Two-Eyed Seeing frameworks
- Ongoing updates to:
    - On-demand and personalized learning resources
    - Communication plan and launch strategies within the Faculty of Science
- Finalization of tool content and structure across all three user groups

Preparation for Launch:

In addition, we have also:

- Designed and coordinated DEAP Tool Workshop Series
- Developed communication plans in collaboration with Faculty communications
- Established phased rollout strategy:
    - Phase 1: DEAP Tools (Jan 2026)
    - Phase 2: Climate Surveys (September 2026)[1]
    - Phase 3: Governance and Academic tools (September 2026)

Phase 4: Launch, Implementation, and Early Adoption (January – March 2026)

The final phase marked the transition from development to implementation, including tool launches, early adoption, and refinement.

Successful Launch of DEAP Tools

Through this effort, we have successfully:

- Launched DEAP tools for:
    - Students (Jan 12, 2026)
    - Researchers & Instructors (Jan 14, 2026)
    - Staff (Jan 16, 2026)
- Hosted workshops and engagement sessions with participation from over 50 individuals across the Faculty including the original co-creators of the DEAP Tools at Queen's University Equity teams (McDonald Institute of Astroparticle Physics Research Institute, and Human Rights & Equity Office).

Post-Launch Refinements:

After the launch of DEAP Tools, we made some additional edits to the DEAP Tools that incorporated Faculty of Science launch participants feedback to:

- Improve accessibility (formatting, alt-text, usability) for all 3 DEAP Tools
- Clarify ethical boundaries (e.g., no self-identification requests) that ensures no identifiable information was disclosed and/or required to disclose from the engagement process.
- Develop discipline-specific adaptations such as the Economics department version of DEAP Tool for Researchers & Instructors

In early April, we were informed of the successful grant application for the Collaborative Project called SHIFTS at York University and the University of Toronto. We are currently

[1] Pending engagement with the new AVP Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Accessibility and Belonging, Shakira Weatherdon.

in early-phase engagement mode with the SHIFTS focus group for our DEAP for Researchers & Instructors version. The current expected outcome from this engagement will result in a systematic review of the DEAP for Researchers & Instructors assessment tool and identify potential gaps for the DEAP Program. In doing so, the DEAP Program Office can be able to take into account of these suggested recommendations for how to bridge those gaps.

Expansion of Implementation:

We have identified some unit specific interests in certain versions of DEAP Tools and engaged with the following units: Physics & Atmospheric Sciences, Psychology & Neuroscience, Biology, Economics, Mathematics & Statistics. In response to their varying degrees of interests to different versions of DEAP, we have then established multiple participation levels and implementation plan in which will be further explained in the **DEAP for Academic and Governance** section. During February, we continued with the current momentum to integrate with a clear organization implementation model and scale up that hopefully link to individual tools, unit-level tools, and governance-level planning.

4.2 Climate Surveys

Phase 1: Initial Design and Framework Development (April – June 2025)

The first phase focused on establishing the conceptual and structural foundation of the climate surveys. We have developed three parallel survey instruments: for Academic (Researchers & Instructors), Staff, and Students. We have also established a shared framework including self-identification (demographic) questions, DEAP indicators-linked questions (e.g., questions that discuss about belonging, communities support, resources, and accessibility), and institutional perception questions. We prioritized the designed surveys to be confidential and ethically grounded, time-efficient (10–15 minutes completion), action-oriented, with results linked to DEAP indicators and planning. The surveys were explicitly structured to provide unit-level insights while protecting anonymity through aggregation thresholds and data handling protocols.

Phase 2: Iterative Review and Community Engagement (July – September 2025)

The second phase emphasized multi-stakeholder consultation and iterative refinement to ensure relevance, inclusivity, and clarity.

Throughout the engagement process, we have:

- Conducted consultations with:
    - Equity Champion (EC) groups (students, staff, faculty)
    - Faculty of Science units and external stakeholders (e.g., DSS, Employment Equity Council, People & Culture)
- Incorporated feedback from:

    - Student representatives and EDI leads
    - Faculty and departmental stakeholders

Some key refinements with the AUCS were:

- Shifted from broad institutional questions to unit-specific climate questions to improve actionability
- Enhanced clarity through:
    - Definitions and examples embedded within questions
    - Improved alignment between survey language and DEAP indicators language
- Increased inclusivity by:
    - Expanding identity definitions and categories (e.g., Indigenous, African Nova Scotian, 2SLGBTQIA+, disability specific identities)
    - Ensuring respectful and community-informed terminology

By the end of this phase, all three surveys reached advanced draft stages, with student surveys nearing completion and staff/academic versions undergoing final alignment.

Phase 3: Alignment, Validation, and Finalization (October – December 2025)

This phase focused on validating survey content through broader institutional engagement and ensuring alignment with Dalhousie-specific priorities and frameworks.

Some key activities where we have:

- Incorporated feedback from:
    - Vice-Provost Indigenous Relations
    - Associate Deans and Faculty leadership
    - Student Affairs and institutional EDI units
    - Departmental EDI committees and student groups
- Strengthened integration of:
    - Mi’kmaq Treaty-based perspectives and Two-Eyed Seeing approaches
    - African Nova Scotian and Black community considerations

We also further:

- Improved question clarity and accessibility, particularly for student audiences
- Ensured consistency across all three survey versions
- Integrated open-response opportunities for qualitative insights
- Refined confidentiality language and ethical considerations

Additionally:

- Communication strategies were developed to support survey rollout

- Survey platforms (e.g., Qualtrics) and data governance considerations were explored

Delay in Survey Release and Institutional Considerations

While the surveys have reached a high level of readiness for deployment, the official release has been delayed to ensure institutional alignment and leadership support, specifically:

- The Faculty is currently awaiting the appointment of the Assistant Vice-President, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Accessibility and Belonging (AVP EDIAB) whose role is critical to:
    - Ensuring coordinated, institution-wide communication and distribution
    - Aligning the surveys with broader university-level climate surveys based upon institutional EDI strategies and priorities
    - Providing leadership endorsement and accountability structures for survey implementation and follow-up

This approach reflects a deliberate decision to ensure that the surveys are not only launched effectively but also supported by the appropriate institutional infrastructure for meaningful impact and response.

4.3 DEAP for Governance and Academic

The development of DEAP for Academic and Governance builds directly on the successful rollout of DEAP tools for students, staff, researchers, and instructors, extending the framework to medium- to large-scale units (50+ members) and institutional leadership structures.

Conceptual Design and Systems Integration (January – March 2026)

We initially focused on defining the scope, purpose, and structural positioning of DEAP for Academic and Governance within the broader DEAP ecosystem. Some of the key achievements included that we have:

- Established a clear distinction between:
    - DEAP for Governance Units (decision-making, leadership, and management structures)
    - DEAP for Academic Units (teaching, research, and academic operations)
- Developed the Organizational DEAP Implementation Model, integrating:
    - Team-based DEAP tools (students, staff, researchers & instructors)
    - Unit-level Academic DEAP
    - Institutional Governance DEAP

This model positioned DEAP as a multi-level system, ensuring alignment between individual practices, Departmental operations, and Faculty-level governance.

We then focused on translating the conceptual model into a practical implementation framework. Under the observation of varying degrees of interests from different Units, we have provided more definitions of participation scope by

- Identifying Pilot Units within the Faculty of Science (up to March 2026):
    - Physics & Atmospheric Science
- Establishing pathways, responsibilities and expectations for:
    - Pilot units (interested in full implementation)
    - Pre-pilot units (interested in near-term implementation)
    - Delayed-pilot units (longer-term engagement and a delay in near-term implementation)

We have also established a guideline for how the leadership and governance roles at the Faculty of Science will demonstrate throughout this implementation model. In particularly, we established clear roles for the Dean's Office (Dean and Associate Deans) and Unit Leaders (Department Chairs and EDI Committee Chairs). These leaders were tasked with facilitating DEAP engagement processes within their units, encouraging broad participation, leading reporting and accountability processes

Development of Participation and Strategic Planning Processes (2026)
Once we have established the DEAP for Academic and Governance implementation model with different participation levels, we started developing the following structured processes:

1. Unit Participation Process

A phased implementation process was established:

- Review of DEAP tools for individuals and teams (Jan–Feb, 2026)
- Review of DEAP for Academic and Governance (May, 2026)
- Determination of participation levels (May 2026)
- Input of results into the DEAP Portal (October 2026)
- Development of unit-level EDI plans (Summer, 2026)

2. Strategic Planning Integration

A key innovation in this phase was the integration of DEAP outputs into formal strategic planning processes.

- Units use DEAP findings to identify top three strategic EDIA goals
- Goals are categorized by urgency and importance:
    - Immediate priorities
    - Confidence-building actions
    - Long-term strategic goals

3. AchieveIT Integration

- Established integration with AchieveIT, Dalhousie's strategy management software system
- Defined workflows where:
    - DEAP Program Office inputs unit goals into AchieveIT
    - Unit leaders are assigned ownership of strategic tasks
    - Progress is tracked, reported, and revisited

This represents a critical shift toward measurable and accountable implementation.

4.4 DEAP Portal for Academic, Administrative and Governance units

Since October 2025, work has commenced on the development of the DEAP Website and Portal, a critical infrastructure component of the DEAP Program. The platform is designed to serve as a centralized, accessible, and scalable digital environment to support the implementation, tracking, and sustainability of DEAP tools, climate surveys, and institutional equity planning processes.

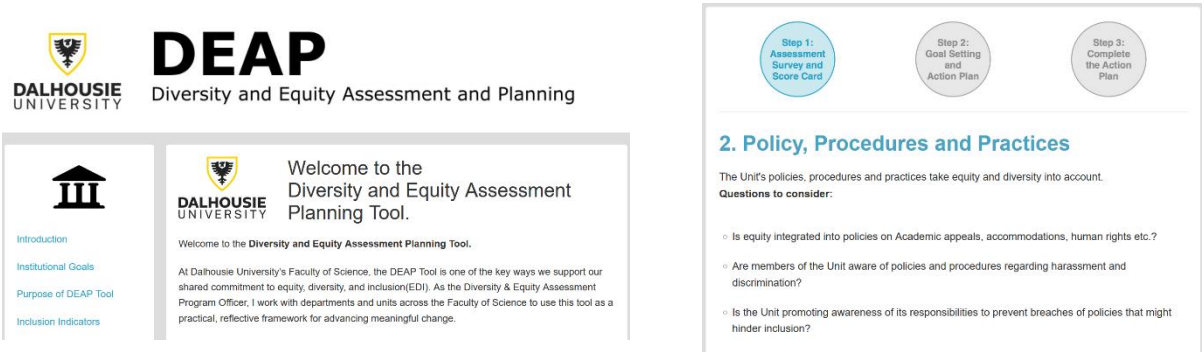


Figure 4 – Examples of the DEAP Portal and Website for Faculty of Science, Dalhousie University.

The DEAP Website and Portal represents a transition from program development to digital integration, enabling the Faculty of Science to operationalize EDI work through data-informed decision-making, coordinated engagement, and transparent reporting.

Initial Setup and Infrastructure Alignment

With the support of both Dalhousie IT Services and Planning & Institutional Effectiveness team, the technical and administrative foundations required to support the DEAP digital ecosystem were formed from the licensed portal purchased at Queen's University in 2017.

Key Activities:

- October 20th, 2025 - Secured and updated administrative access to the DEAP platform environment

- Since November 10th, 2025, Began planning for the development of a centralized Data Hub, intended to house:
    - DEAP assessment outputs
    - Faculty of Science demographic data
    - Unit-level reporting and analytics for their participation

We ensured that the DEAP Portal would be aligned with institutional IT standards, data governance practices, and long-term scalability needs.

Content Integration and System Design

Following initial setup, more efforts focused on structuring the platform to reflect the full Dalhousie DEAP ecosystem with established content integration.

Key Developments: We have successfully completed the following:

1. Integration of DEAP Tools

- Designed pathways within the platform for DEAP for Academic and Governance with edits for flavour text, guiding text and several other documents.
- Ensured that tools can support:
    - Self-assessment input
    - Reflection and documentation
    - Tracking of progress over time

2. Resource Hub Development

- Initiated the integration of resources in a systematic manner with corresponding resources from internally and externally at Dalhousie University were linked to each indicator.
- Structured content is designed to be easily navigable and linked directly to DEAP indicators and user needs

Functional Design and User Experience Development

Additionally, we then considered designing the DEAP Portal as a not only multi-functional, but also a multi-user platform for different units.

Key Features in Development:

1. Multi-User Functionality: Designed access for different user groups:

- Unit leaders with access given to the Department Chairs

- Governance users with access given to the Dean’s Office leaders

2. Data Input and Reporting Systems: Developed frameworks for:

- Inputting DEAP for Academic and Governance self-assessment results
- Uploading and tracking unit-level action plans

3. Integration with Strategic Planning Tools: Established alignment with AchieveIT, enabling:

- Translation of DEAP outcomes into strategic goals and tasks
- Assignment of responsibilities to unit leaders
- Tracking of progress and completion

This integration ensures that the DEAP Portal is not only a repository, but also a driver of institutional accountability and action.Items outstanding before full deployment

4. EDIT-STEM:

From the Dalhousie University DEAP Program’s involvement, we are currently involved in the design framework through knowledge sharing between the questions from our independently developed tool DEAP for Students version with the EDIT-STEM research team. In subsequent, we are highly interested in the application outcomes from the suite of tools developed such as the persuasive games, AI personalized feedback components, and multimedia resources. This suite of tools, from the Equity Planning framework standpoint, has great potential to complement the framework at the individual planning level.

5. Lessons Learned

5.1 Engagement is Critical but Uneven

While the DEAP Program demonstrated strong engagement in early adopter and pilot units, participation levels varied significantly across departments and participating groups. This variability highlighted that engagement cannot be assumed, even within a shared institutional context. Units with existing EDI structures or equity champions were more likely to engage early and deeply. Departments with competing priorities or limited capacity required additional support, tailored communication, and time. Engagement improves when DEAP is framed as practically relevant to local needs, rather than as an abstract institutional requirement. This underscores the importance of developing targeted engagement strategies, including leadership buy-in, localized messaging, and ongoing facilitation support.

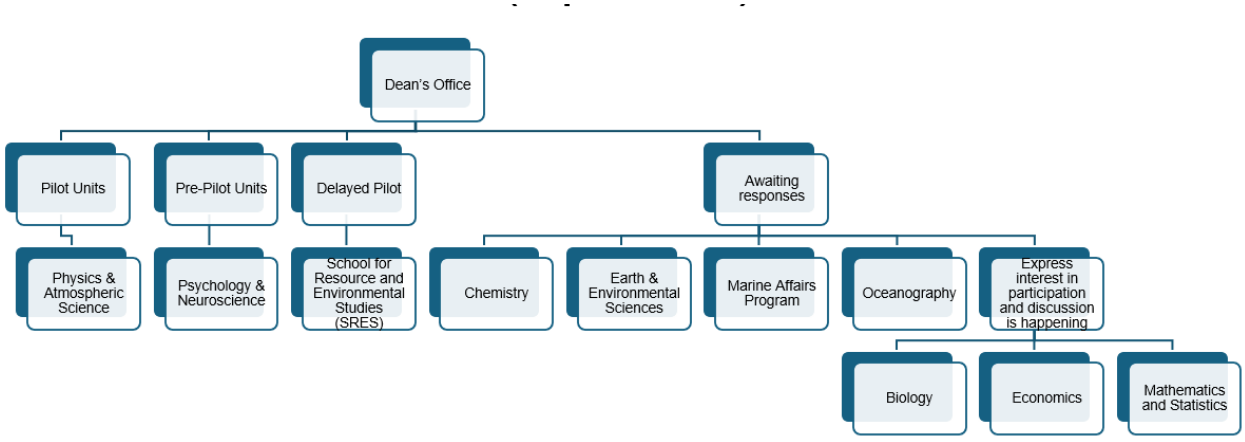


Figure 5 – Current List of Engaged Academic Units and their Expressed Participation Levels

5.2 DEAP Tools Must Be Context-Specific

The implementation process revealed that disciplinary, organizational, and cultural differences across units significantly influence how DEAP tools are received and applied. We recognized that the departments differ in organizational structures, decision-making processes, research and teaching environments would require a highly standardized tool like DEAP Tool with flexible interpretation and adaptation to remain meaningful. As a result, the customization (e.g., the Economics department adaptation) would significantly improve relevance, uptake, and practical applications. This

demonstrates that DEAP must function as a guided framework rather than a rigid instrument, allowing units to contextualize indicators and actions.

5.3 Accessibility Must Be Under Periodic Revision

Post-launch feedback highlighted the need for constant proactive accessibility design across all DEAP tools and materials despite a priority for accessibility-by-design in the Tools. Accessibility considerations (e.g., formatting, clarity of instructions) were initially addressed during the design stage and additional considerations such as alt-texts and font-sizes were addressed rather than at the design stage. Accessibility design has extended beyond technical compliance to include: cognitive accessibility (clarity of language), cultural accessibility (inclusive terminology and framing), and usability across roles and levels of expertise. Moving forward, accessibility must be constantly revised and multiple versions should be made to account for feedback.

5.4 Governance Integration is Essential

One of the most critical lessons is that individual and team-level change is insufficient without governance alignment. Without integration into leadership structures and decision-making processes, DEAP risks remaining voluntary and fragmented. By embedding DEAP into Departmental planning, Faculty governance, and strategic reporting systems, it significantly increases its institutional impact and sustainability. The development of DEAP for Academic and Governance represents a necessary shift toward systems-level change, ensuring that EDI priorities are reflected in how decisions are made and resources are allocated.

5.5 Data and Dialogue Can Maximize Impact

While the development of climate surveys would provide a strong data foundation, it became clear that data alone does not drive change. The collection of the data must be paired with facilitated discussions, contextual interpretation, and collaborative action planning. Units would require support to understand the tools, its findings, translate insights from the processes into actionable steps. This reinforces that DEAP is not solely a measurement tool, but a facilitated process of reflection, learning, and action.

6. Future Work & Recommendations:

6.1 Strategic Recommendations:

Institutionalize DEAP

To ensure long-term sustainability, DEAP should be embedded into core institutional processes, including: annual departmental and faculty reporting cycles, strategic planning frameworks, accreditation and accountability mechanisms within the Faculty of Science. This will transition DEAP from a program-based initiative to an institutional standard practice.

Strengthen Leadership Accountability

We recognized that leadership plays a critical role in driving DEAP implementation. To support a smooth transition for DEAP implementation, we recommended the process to require unit leaders (the Department Chairs and the Dean's Office): to lead DEAP processes within their units, to report on progress and outcomes, and to integrate DEAP into their Unit's strategic priorities. Following the leadership model at Department of Physics and Atmospheric Science (refer to the "Case Study" document), we strongly suggest that establishing clear early accountability structures and expectations with the leadership teams can significantly impact the DEAP program implementation.

Enhance Training and Capacity Building

Sustained implementation requires ongoing skill development for its participants. We recommend that the Faculty of Science can expand EDIA training workshops tailored to different participant groups, to develop DEAP facilitation training for unit leaders and equity champions to facilitate conversations, and to provide practical toolkits and guides to support implementation

Improve Data Systems and Reporting

To strengthen evidence-based decision-making, the decision to integrate DEAP Program outcomes should take into consideration of the Dalhousie institutional analytics systems, the employment equity data reports, and the Canada Research Chair Institutional EDI reporting frameworks. Through the coordination of these data systems, we can then develop standardized metrics and dashboards for tracking progress.

Sustain Community Engagement

In recognition of the crucial role of communities engagement, the DEAP Program continues the sustainable and continuous engagement process. This process should never be phased out throughout the program as it is essential for maintaining momentum. Some recommendations were highlighted in our continuous efforts in

partnering with Indigenous communities, African Nova Scotia communities, several equity deserving groups such as the Queer Faculty & Staff Caucus and the Disability Caucus. In doing so, the DEAP Program can maintain its diversity and reflect the representation within the Equity Champion networks and advisory structures.

6.2 Future Work Areas

Expansion of Pilot Units

As mentioned in our current and future work, we have taken steps to scale DEAP implementation across all Faculty of Science departments through meet & greet, information sessions, workshops, potential to apply to other Faculties through collaborations. To facilitate this expansion, we have provided tailored onboarding and support for units recently expressing more interests to the DEAP Program and its participation expectations.

Full Launch of Governance & Academic DEAP (Target Date: September 2026)

In September 2026, the DEAP Program is projected to launch in complete rollout across the Faculty of Science Dean's Office and the academic units with clear Faculty governance structures. With the launch of Governance and Academic DEAP, we can fully integrate DEAP Program into decision-making and planning processes.

DEAP Portal Completion and Launch (Target Date: September 2026)

Given with the ongoing work needed to finalize the DEAP Portal, we continue working towards finalizing the Data hub and analytics capabilities in collaboration with Dalhousie Planning & Institutional Effectiveness, user interface for different units, and launch portal for faculty-wide use at the same time of the Academic and Governance DEAP launch.

Enhanced Data Integration (Target Date: 1st – 2nd week of January 2027)

The DEAP Program would continue with streamlining the climate survey launch with a target period between 1st and 2nd week of January 2027 the latest to better link DEAP Program participation outputs with these climate survey data and institutional dashboards. This coordination of information can enhance evidence-based decision-making, enable cross-unit comparisons, and longitudinal tracking.

Continued Engagement Strategy (Target Date: last week of August 2026)

As previously stated in the needs for continuous engagement with communities, the DEAP Program maintains its commitment to deliver workshops, training sessions on-demands, Department-specific consultations, ongoing support and feedback cycles for cohort groups in their journey with the last engagement aimed at the last week of August 2026 right before the full launch of DEAP for Governance and Academic.

7. Onboarding Summary and Support

To support effective implementation, a structured onboarding process is required for all participating units, future DEA Program Officer. Below, I have outlined the clear step-by-step for participating units.

7.1 Onboarding Steps for Participating Units

Step 1: Initiation and Registration

Units express interest and identify their capacity and resources for the DEAP Program participation. Units can categorize, based on their assessment, the participation into any of the 3 categories (Pilot, Pre-Pilot, Delayed-Pilot) participants. Unit leaders (Department Chairs, EDI Leads) should be identified. Unit leaders will then engage with participants and provided these documentations with the DEAP Program Office.

Step 2: Orientation and Training

Participants can attend DEAP overview sessions with DEAP Tool-specific workshops. These workshops serve as introduction to DEAP indicators and frameworks, AUCS, and resource repository.

Step 3: Access to DEAP Portal

After the completion of DEAP Portal launch, unit leaders are granted access to DEAP Portal with access to relevant tools and resources for the indicators linking to DEAP for Academic and Governance. There is also the potential for an orientation and implementation model plan to instruct them how to input data according to the indicators questions, understand reporting features, and how to conduct strategic planning integration within their Units.

Step 4: Self-Assessment and Reflection

Subsequently, units will complete DEAP assessment through different DEAP versions such as with the team tools (DEAP for Students, Staff, Researchers & Instructors), the unit specific tool (DEAP for Academic), and decision-making body (DEAP for Governance). With the adequate support from the DEAP Program Office, unit leaders will proceed to facilitating team discussions and reflection sessions.

Step 5: Action Planning

From the outcomes with DEAP Tools engagement, units will identify top 3 strategic EDIA goals in which align with their institutional goals, their capacity, and the impact. Units will

then develop timelines, assigned responsibilities to sub-leaders for each engaged cohort groups, track key milestones and performance indicators within their own standards.

Step 6: Strategic Integration

DEAP Program Office supports translation of goals into strategic tasks which will then be exported to the strategic management software AchieveIT. Unit leaders will be assigned ownership to these strategic tasks, expected to establish timelines, and monitor progress within the Units.

Step 7: Reporting and Monitoring

After successfully registering and transferring these strategic goals into tangible tasks, units are expected to follow-up with these tasks and report their outcomes and deliverables into DEAP Portal. Please note that these tasks are up for units to decide and commit to. Achieve IT will support units with the notifications system to help units track progress regularly. At the end of the process, units will then conduct periodic reviews (e.g., 3, 6, 12 months) to ensure all assigned tasks are on track and inform DEAP Program Office of any assistance, feedback and review their work.

Step 8: Continuous Improvement Cycle

As extensively laid out in the methodology section, given that we are following a cyclical mode of review, we strongly recommend an annual revisit of the Unit's DEAP assessments across all adopted versions and indicators. With this time around, given with the Unit's experience with engaging with DEAP Tool and their cohort groups, Units are further encouraged to adjust goals and strategies, and repeat the cycle to ensure sustained progress.

7.2 Supporting Materials

For future DEA Program Officers and DEAP Tool users, please refer to the following documents in the "Onboarding Documents" folder in the DEAP Program to get a sense of the overview of:

- DEAP Tool Versions and Guides (for each user groups)
- Facilitation Guides/Resources for Cohort Groups and Unit Leaders
- Resource repository (on-demand and personal learning journey)
- DEAP Portal Guides
- Monthly DEAP Updates 2025 – 2026.
- Workshop and training materials

- Case Study – Physics and Atmospheric Science DEAP Engagement