

# Healthy Populations Institute: Towards 2025 and Beyond

Strategic Plan 2020-2025

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DALHOUSIE  
UNIVERSITY

Healthy Populations Institute

## **A History of Excellence -**

The Healthy Populations Institute (HPI) was first established in 1993 as a Senate-approved research institute at Dalhousie University. Through excellence in research, capacity building, and knowledge translation, HPI has been a leader in population health research in Atlantic Canada and beyond for over 25 years. Some of our highlights to date include:

- **Creating new opportunities for transdisciplinary population health research**
  - Membership in HPI grew from 15 to 44 research scholars across Dalhousie’s faculties, primarily Health, Dentistry and Medicine
  - As a multi-faculty research institute (Health, Dentistry and Medicine), HPI creates opportunities to break down silos through integrating different methodological approaches and schools of thought; a neutral space where horizontal collaborations across and within these faculties can be explored
- **Building capacity for future population health research and innovation**
  - HPI supports numerous early career investigators (who are either recent PhD graduates or newly hired faculty) to launch their careers through mentorship, identifying grant opportunities and providing support for grant capture
  - A student research scholar membership category, with a current membership of 26 student scholars, builds capacity for the next generation of health researchers
- **Developing knowledge and mobilizing evidence to aid in the identification, initiation, and evaluation of impactful population health interventions**
  - HPI research scholars bring a range of disciplinary backgrounds and methodologies to addressing priority populations and issues. In the absence of a school/faculty of public health at Dalhousie, HPI addresses a critical gap
  - HPI research scholars continue to receive praise for research excellence in addressing key areas including Starting Healthy, Staying Healthy, Health of Marginalized Populations, Indigenous Health and Wellbeing, Health of People of African Descent, Healthy Cities, Healthy Communities, and Implementation Science
- **Empowering and supporting partners engaged in population health initiatives in their own health and social care settings**
  - [The Uplift Partnership](#) is a flagship initiative of HPI, supported by an Advisory Committee of key stakeholders, currently co-chaired by representatives from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Nova Scotia Health Authority. Uplift empowers children and youth to take the lead in creating school communities that are health, vibrant, caring, and connected

It is within this context of exceptional research and interdisciplinary, collaborative, policy and program-focused population health research, that HPI has undergone a renewal process: reflecting on our past, visioning our future, and developing a plan for continued success.

### Towards 2025 and Beyond —

Beginning in the fall of 2018, our strategic planning exercise enabled us to reflect on what we've been doing well and help determine the future direction of the organization. The HPI 2020-2025 strategic plan – Towards 2025 and Beyond- is a roadmap for how HPI can continue to enhance its leadership in population health research, policy and practice. It marks the first strategic plan that is aligned with *Impact Together, Dalhousie's Research and Innovation Strategic Direction, 2018-2023*, as well as the strategic priorities of the founding faculties of Health, Dentistry and Medicine to ensure that we are collectively mobilizing our efforts for the greatest impact. It is a look forward to how HPI can leverage its strengths and capitalize opportunities to enhance its world-class population health research and service to the community on a local and global scale over next five years and beyond.

To ensure that our work continues to align to an evolving population health landscape in Atlantic Canada and beyond, this strategic plan will be reviewed on a yearly basis by HPI's Governing Council. In parallel with the execution of the work set out in this strategic plan, HPI has developed a 'scorecard' as a performance management framework, establishing a data development strategy to support this work, and benchmarking and monitoring our key indicators of performance.

#### Vision

HPI is a leading multi-faculty research institute that creates knowledge and mobilizes evidence to improve population health in Atlantic Canada and beyond.

#### Mission

- Collaborate across research disciplines and sectors to create new knowledge and mobilize evidence for healthy populations
- Connect researchers with system stakeholders to ensure that transdisciplinary population health research is solutions-based and addresses regional, national and international priorities
- Change population health of individuals, communities, and under-served populations by translating research into action

#### Values

Research excellence

Collaboration (interdisciplinary and intersectoral)

Social justice

## Our Approach --

To realize our vision, our approach will be two-fold.

### Flagship Projects

The crux of our strategy is to focus our attention on a couple of niche topic areas where HPI can add net new contributions. To do this, HPI has selected five ‘flagship’ population health projects to concentrate efforts on over the next five years. By dedicating resources and funding to specific priority topics, we will be able to foster greater impact. The five HPI flagship projects are:

1. Creating Sustainable Health Systems in a Climate Crisis
2. Putting “Oral Health is Health” into Action
3. Improving the Mental Health of People of African Descent
4. Addressing Inequities for Health and Resilience in an Aging Population
5. Designing Supportive Environments for Chronic Disease Prevention

Each flagship project will have two HPI Scholar Co– Leads to act as the strategic and operational leads. The Co-Leads will represent different Faculties to ensure multidisciplinary collaboration. Each flagship project will also have a Community Lead to ensure connection with knowledge users. The HPI Secretariat will support each flagship project team to respond to major grant applications.

### Knowledge Translation

The second pillar of our approach is to capitalize on our knowledge translation (KT) strength and provide KT support to all of our HPI Scholars and to the HPI flagship projects. We will focus on integrated KT (iKT) and enhance and strengthen our connections with knowledge user communities through HPI hosted roundtables. These roundtable discussions will bring together researchers and the community to work collaboratively to address needs and issues through research and to be the hub for our collective expertise on population health. We will also focus on end of grant KT (EoGKT) and more effectively translate population health research into change. We will be transferring knowledge to different audiences about our population health research and flagship projects through communication and media outputs. We will also build capacity and skill sets among system stakeholders through an HPI Masterclass series, with the goal of creating a pathway for research to quickly be adopted.

Our full strategic plan is outlined below.

# Strategic Plan 2020-2015

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY # 1: COLLABORATE

HPI collaborates across research disciplines and sectors to create knowledge and mobilize evidence for healthy populations

### 1.0 Create Opportunities for New Research

#### Objective

1.2 Increase the number of HPI-led collaborative teams responding to and achieving success through transdisciplinary population health research opportunities

#### Actions:

- 1.1.1 Select two HPI Scholars to act as Co-Leads for each of the five HPI Flagship Projects. The Co-Leads will act as the strategic and operational leads and should represent different Faculties to ensure multidisciplinary collaboration
- 1.1.2 Strategically and proactively identify, convene and support HPI led collaborative (a) grant opportunities and (b) research products that bring interdisciplinary researchers together based on our five Flagship Projects

#### Objective

1.2 Build capacity for collaborative transdisciplinary population health research at Dalhousie

#### Action:

- 1.2.2 Lead the development and maintenance of the HPI Post-Doctoral Fellows initiative in partnership with the Dalhousie Medical Research Foundation (DMRF)
- 1.2.2 Become the home organization for the Crossroads student-run inter-professional health research conference
- 1.2.3 Launch a Healthy Populations Journal, a student-run peer-reviewed biannual publication with mentorship and contribution from HPI Emerging Leaders, HPI Scholars and connection with the Crossroads Conference
- 1.2.4 Host HPI Membership Networking Events for Flagship Project Leads, Scholars and Emerging Leaders to connect, share and learn from each other

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY # 2: CONNECT

HPI connects researchers with system stakeholders to ensure that transdisciplinary population health research is solutions-based and addresses regional, national and international priorities

### 2.0 Enhance Engagement with System Stakeholders to Co-Create Solutions-Focused Research

#### Objective

2.1 Connect with stakeholders to identify knowledge gaps in population health planning and evaluation, and to co-create solutions focused research with knowledge users

#### Actions:

- 2.1.1 Identify and commit a "Community Lead" for each HPI Flagship Project. The Community Lead will be outside of academia and represents a key target audience for the Flagship Project's work. The goal is to ensure that initiatives are co-designed with community partners and based on multiple perspectives
- 2.1.2 Host virtual and face to face community-based roundtable exchanges based on our five Flagship Projects to co-create solutions focused research with users and affected communities (e.g., Zone Medical Officers of Health, NSHA Public Health Directors, Community Health Boards, NSHA Zone Research Facilitators, NGOs, BRIC NS, Research NS, MSSU, etc.)
- 2.1.3 Connect HPI Scholars, HPI Flagship Project Co-Leads and HPI Emerging Leaders with relevant system stakeholders to catalyze new population health initiatives
- 2.1.4 Support the Indigenous community through the NEIHR and responding to the Rights of Indigenous People's Calls to Action
- 2.1.5 Support the development of an integrated population health research plan for Nova Scotia in partnership with NSHA, DHW and other key stakeholders

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY # 3: CHANGE

HPI changes population health of individuals, communities, and under-served populations by translating research into action

### 3.0 Translate Research to Improve Population Health and Health Equity

#### Objective

3.1 Integrate research into existing educational programs and develop continuing educational offerings on population health for students, new researchers, clinicians and those who guide and inform population health systems

#### Actions:

- 3.1.1 Lead the instructional design and hosting of HPI continuing education training programs including Masterclasses, certificates, webinars, conferences, etc. for each of our five Flagship Projects for system stakeholders and knowledge users
- 3.1.2 Lead the instructional design and hosting of HPI Interprofessional Education Mini-Courses for Dalhousie trainees (health, dentistry and medicine) to learn about population health topics

#### Objective

3.2 Build knowledge translation (KT) capacity in the population health research community at Dalhousie

#### Actions:

- 3.2.1 Catalyze and lead new and innovative KT approaches for population health research and evidence
- 3.2.2 Support HPI Flagship Project Co-Leads, Scholars and Emerging Leaders with KT plans for individual research grants

#### Objective

3.3 Communicate and promote HPI-generated research evidence to influence decisions by policy, program, and service delivery decision-makers

- 3.3.1 Share HPI initiatives with stakeholders through various channels, including through Dalhousie Faculty Communication Leads, engaging traditional media and social media, policy briefs, newsletters, etc.
- 3.3.2 Create new platforms to disseminate research evidence, including revamping the HPI Youtube Channel and a weekly HPI e-newsletter