



2024 - 2027

STRATEGIC PLAN

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EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STATEMENT

Alberta's Rural Health Professions Action Plan (RhPAP) highly values and respects diversity among the public, practitioners, employees, volunteers, learners and those who govern the organization. We are committed to providing equal opportunity to all, without regard to race, religious beliefs, colour, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, ancestry, age, place of origin, marital status, family status, sexual orientation and any other protected ground. Equal opportunity is provided in employment and volunteer positions within RhPAP, as well as within the opportunities we offer to stakeholders.

RhPAP is committed to creating a space free of discrimination across all operating practices. We foster a culture of equity by embracing, respecting, accepting and valuing differences.

VISION & MISSION

VISION

Rural Albertan communities have the appropriate health workforce to effectively deliver the health services they need to thrive.

MISSION

To serve as a trusted voice, building solutions-focused partnerships and delivering initiatives that support rural communities in their efforts to keep health care close to home.

MANDATE

RhPAP's mandate is to do as follows:

- Develop, foster, and implement a comprehensive action plan for the education, recruitment, and retention of physicians and other health professionals in rural Alberta.
- To enhance collaborative relationships with organizations or entities that share similar interests.
- To promote the practice of rural medicine through sharing of knowledge, success stories, best practices and research, and to sponsor events and initiatives that support stakeholders to improve their rural medical systems.
- To collaborate with universities, other educational institutions, and stakeholders to promote training, education to promote rural training and education, including inter-professional, distributed and continuing education programs.
- To enter into relationships and alliances, and engage in such activities as will further all of the above.

STRATEGIC PLAN

2024-2027

From our early days as the Rural Physicians Action Plan, the Rural **Health** Professions Action Plan (RhPAP) has grown and evolved to become an essential partner in helping keep health care close to home for rural Albertans.

Developing this new Strategic Plan was a collaborative and valuable process. RhPAP began the process in June 2022 with the aim of building out a focused plan for 2024-2027. The RhPAP Board gathered in-person to spend a full-day brainstorming, evaluating, and discussing key opportunities and issues. Following this session, 27 of RhPAP's key stakeholders, along with the organization's leadership team, were engaged in one-on-one phone interviews to discuss perceptions on strengths, weaknesses, and key opportunities for the future of the organization. During in-person sessions, RhPAP staff were also invited to share their insights to ensure together we can make a greater collective impact on rural health care.

Building on a solid foundation established over the past 32 years, RhPAP is looking to become more agile and proactive in its efforts to support the education, attraction and retention of the rural health workforce. We have renewed our Vision and Mission and developed four strategic priorities that will propel us forward with concentration and purpose. This strategic plan is aligned to the five pillars of Alberta's Health Workforce Strategy and the Rural Sustainability Task Force Recommendation Report and embraces new ways of thinking while strengthening our position as a leader and voice for rural Alberta health care.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The following framework was leveraged to guide discussion and decision-making and ensure alignment and understanding across all stakeholders

CURRENT STATE

Outlines where the organization is today.

VISION & MISSION

Define what it looks like if our purpose was fully realized and how we will go about working towards achieving our vision.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Confirm specific areas of focus.

ACTION STEPS

Outline the key action items.

CURRENT STATE

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

As part of the strategic planning process, RhPAP's stakeholders identified strengths and weaknesses through interviews conducted in August and September 2022. The following is a summary of the key themes of each category.

STRENGTHS

Continuing Professional Development

- Localized training
- Go-to organization for rural physician education
- Relevant and up-to-date programs

Connections with Rural Communities

- Relationships with municipal administrations, councils, and health professionals
- Ability to embed deeply in rural areas
- Community volunteers who are dedicated to the work of the organization

Promotion of Rural Health

- Telling the story of rural health in Alberta
- Engaging others around rural healthcare through marketing efforts

Accommodations

- Go-to organization for universities to house learners
- Positive impact on learners' experience in rural communities
- Well-organized and highly reputable program

WEAKNESSES

RESIDE Program

- Perceived low impact to date
- Doesn't truly address the core needs of stakeholders
- Focused purely on attracting rather than retaining and not effective at keeping health professionals in the community

Physician-Centric

- Lack of programs and services dedicated towards other types of health professionals
- Generally lower awareness of RhPAP outside of the physician community

Impact Measurement

- Process-focused rather than outcome-focused
- Lack of communication regarding impact and outcomes

OPPORTUNITIES

RhPAP's stakeholders identified opportunities for the organization moving forward. The following is a summary of the key themes of each opportunity category.

Early Learner Recruitment

- Engage high school students in rural communities
- Promote careers in rural health care
- Build the health-care pipeline

Advocacy to Universities

- Conduit between rural health-care needs and university programs
- Promote the addition of rural seats in health-care programs

Retention Support

- Retention-specific activities to complement attraction efforts
- Community integration for rural health professionals
- Capacity building in community leaders

MAKING PROGRESS

In three-and-a-half years since the start of fiscal 2020-21, RhPAP has successfully achieved the following:



RESILIENCY FOSTERING AMID PANDEMIC

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, rural Alberta's communities and health professionals remained RhPAP's priority. Our adaptable approach leveraged remote opportunities while successfully resuming in-person events, education and grant programs, and professional development initiatives.



STRENGTHENED COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Our efforts increased the capacity of rural communities to support physicians and other health professionals, with active Attraction and Retention Committees growing to 56 representing 161 rural communities. We also supported 1,475 health-care learners with accommodations in over 45 rural communities.



INCREASED COLLABORATION AND INNOVATION

Through robust partnerships with a diverse range of organizations, committees, and networks, we explored innovative ways to advance rural health care. A notable success was the April 2023 launch of the Bursary for Internationally Educated Nurses (BIEN) Program in partnership with Advanced Education, which quickly allocated all \$1.75 million of its first-year funds. Discussions are underway to potentially secure a second year of funding.



ENHANCED EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Our commitment to supporting the education of rural health professionals remains steadfast. After pausing our Team-Based Learning Initiative (TBLI) intake due to COVID-19, we accepted 33 TBLI applications this fiscal year, facilitating more in-demand, in-house training for rural health-care teams. A landmark achievement was our partnership in launching two cohorts of the *Building Competency in Rural Perinatal Registered Nurses* project, the first in-house specialized rural perinatal education program of its kind in Alberta.



RECORD-BREAKING ENGAGEMENT

We experienced unprecedented engagement across our social media platforms and website, with video profiles of rural communities and health-care workers driving traffic. The growing interest in rural Alberta's lifestyles and opportunities was recognized when our Rural Health Beat e-newsletter received the 2021 Award of Excellence from the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) Edmonton.



TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT

Significant strides were made in developing a customized database to track RhPAP's granting activity, stakeholder relationships, and events. The build and data migration stages are set for the first half of 2023-2024, with subsequent staff training and implementation planned, building the potential for a significant enhancement in our operational efficiency.



ACTION STEPS

The following action steps to bring the strategic priorities to life were identified. These high-level actions will serve as a guide for the RhPAP team as they work to strengthen the organization's position as a voice for rural health care, to think more broadly about our role and to transform how we see the future of rural health care in Alberta.

1. FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO HEALTH-CARE

Target rural high school learners to cultivate the rural health-care pipeline.

ACTION STEPS:

- 1.1 Develop initiatives that will inspire high school students to pursue rural health-care careers.
- 1.2 Promote rural health-care careers as a viable path for high school students.

WE WILL KNOW WE ARE SUCCESSFUL IF:

- High school learners who take part in RhPAP initiatives indicate being encouraged to consider a career in rural health care.

2. FROM POST-SECONDARY TO PRACTICE

Engage post-secondary learners to help develop future rural health professionals.

ACTION STEPS:

- 2.1 Ensure post-secondary learners have access to tailored programs and supports to explore rural learning opportunities and careers.
- 2.2 Amplify RhPAP's role as a connector between learners and rural communities.
- 2.3 Expand financial support for post-secondary learners.

WE WILL KNOW WE ARE SUCCESSFUL IF:

- Post-secondary learners who take part in RhPAP initiatives indicate being encouraged to consider a career in rural health care.
- Growth in RhPAP's network of rural preceptors.
- A broader scope of health-related post-secondary learners have access to RhPAP accommodations to support rural learning experiences.
- Rural communities identify RhPAP as the main conduit between themselves and student learners.
- Financial awards and bursaries provided to post-secondary learners pursuing careers in rural health care incentivize future rural practice.

3. INVEST IN HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Invest in continuing professional development, quality improvement, mentorship, research, and return-of-service programs for rural health professionals.

ACTION STEPS:

- 3.1 Facilitate robust educational offerings focused on continuing medical education, professional development and mentorship to allow health-care providers to enhance their skills and scope of practice.
- 3.2 Utilize benefits tied to return-of-service commitments and other incentive programs to optimize rural health care.
- 3.3 Ensure rural physicians have reasonable access to weekend and seniors' locum coverage.
- 3.4 Invest in rural health-care practitioners to undertake relevant research and quality improvement projects that address gaps in rural health-care relevant to RhPAP's mandate to inform policy and improve rural practice.

WE WILL KNOW WE ARE SUCCESSFUL IF:

- Expanded CME/CPD opportunities provided to rural care providers through RhPAP-funded programs that enhance skills and competencies and help retain providers in communities
- Rural providers incentivized through return-of-service programs remain working in a rural community beyond their contracted service terms.
- Weekend and seniors' weekend locum program coverage requests support rural physicians.
- Both RhPAP-led and RhPAP-funded research contributes to policy and program design, quality improvement initiatives and enhanced care for rural Albertans.

4. CREATE COMMUNITY CAPACITY

Champion and deliver initiatives to attract, integrate and retain rural health professionals by fostering strong relationships.

ACTION STEPS:

- 4.1 Build purposeful relationships with new and existing stakeholders, and foster these relationship so they are consistent.
- 4.2 Maintain and grow a strong and diverse provincial A&R network to positively influence the attraction, integration and retention of rural physicians and health-care providers.
- 4.3 Act in a leadership role so RhPAP and its many partners might be aware of current and future needs to be prepared to respond to them.

WE WILL KNOW WE ARE SUCCESSFUL IF:

- RhPAP's key stakeholder group expands annually to include a robust mix of health professions and organizations committed to rural health.
- A stakeholder journey strategy map ensures meaningful touch points.
- Attraction and retention committees report their efforts are positively influenced by RhPAP's leadership.
- Partners report RhPAP is a leader in collaboration and a trusted, non-partisan voice.

5. DEMONSTRATE IMPACT

Clarify and leverage a compelling brand to extend reach and demonstrate impact.

ACTION STEPS:

- Define RhPAP's distinctive value proposition and leverage it to help keep health care close to home, including RhPAP's position as the voice for rural health care.
- Tell the story of RhPAP's impact so audiences recognize and associate it with leadership in rural health care.

WE WILL KNOW WE ARE SUCCESSFUL IF:

- Awareness of RhPAP's impact on rural health can be shown via metrics and reports.
- RhPAP develops a unique identity.



OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

To achieve our strategic goals and help keep health care close to home, we need the expertise, commitment, and facilitation of the RhPAP team. RhPAP recognizes our staff, who span the province, as the backbone of this commitment. It is only by harnessing our collective passion, energy and expertise that we can drive our mission forward. As a team, we continually embody our Culture Code and hold one another accountable for **Fostering Collaborative Relationships, Embracing an Inventive Mindset, Going the Extra Mile, and Loving the Work We Do.** In line with our Culture Code and mission, the following areas are key human resource deliverables for 2024-2027.

KEY AREAS OF FOCUS:

ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN:

As organizational design work progresses, we will continue to identify and manage attraction and retention opportunities. Our first focus will be on leadership team members who in turn will be responsible for managing and growing talent within their business units.

1. BUILD CAPACITY:

We will continue to improve retention, especially among high performers and employees in critical roles by supporting targeted professional development and skill enrichment, culture building, and employee wellness. This capacity building includes identifying and enabling career growth opportunities internally when they respond to the best interests of RhPAP.

2. COMPENSATION:

Our compensation framework impacts our ability to attract, retain and motivate the workforce enabling our success. Our compensation framework includes such things as competitive salary, vacation, personal leave, a comprehensive benefits package, retirement contributions, formal and informal professional development, staff retreats, and nominal tokens of appreciation.





RHPAP
Alberta's Rural Health
Professions Action Plan

RHPAP.CA

Supporting the efforts of rural Albertans to maintain
an accessible health workforce close to home.