

# **Novo Nordisk Network for Healthy Populations**

## **2024-2026**

## **Strategic Plan**

In partnership with:





## Network Overview

Established in 2021, the Novo Nordisk Network for Healthy Populations (NHP) is a cross-disciplinary research network at the University of Toronto (UofT) that aims to reduce the risk and burden of type 2 diabetes and related cardiometabolic conditions. The NHP brings together experts from the Dalla Lana School of Public Health, Temerty Faculty of Medicine, and the University of Toronto Mississauga—where the Network is based—to find new ways to support healthier urban living. In collaboration with community partners in Peel Region, these UofT researchers are creating locally relevant solutions that can help improve health outcomes for not just individuals but whole communities. This interdisciplinary collaborative effort fosters innovation, builds capacity in the region, and catalyzes connections across fields to integrate diverse mindsets and approaches in the fight against cardiometabolic conditions like diabetes.

Peel Region is an ideal location for discovering and incubating this kind of transformational research and developing innovative outreach initiatives that can make cities healthier places to live. This growing region, including the highly dedicated community organizations, allows researchers to understand the impact of social and built environments on behaviours, health outcomes, and access to services in a highly diverse setting.

Ultimately, the NHP aims to discover, implement, and validate feasible, equitable, and sustainable solutions that can make cities around the world healthier places to live—for all of their residents. In doing so, NHP's scalable solutions will have an impact globally as more cities adopt and adapt these for their own unique contexts.

# Vision, Mission, and Objectives

The **vision** of the NHP is to be a **world-renowned resource on innovative, scalable solutions** that support populations to be healthier in an **effective, feasible, sustainable, and equitable** way.

The **mission** of the NHP is to **reduce inequities in risk and burden of diabetes and related cardiometabolic conditions across the lifespan**, through **better care, lower risk factors and healthier living environments** in Peel Region and beyond.

The NHP's **guiding principles** are cross-disciplinary collaboration; applied action-oriented research; co-design with knowledge users, partners, and collaborators in Peel Region; focus on health equity; cultural competence; evidence-informed decision-making; measurement of impact; knowledge translation; and broad applicability to other contexts.

To realize its mission, the NHP will aspire to achieve the following **objectives**:

1. **Identify** key priorities and areas of need to reduce cardiometabolic disease burden;
2. **Co-design** and **implement** culturally appropriate interventions to treat and prevent cardiometabolic diseases;
3. **Enable** earlier detection and better care of cardiometabolic diseases;
4. **Improve** sociodemographic and behavioural risk factors;
5. **Close the gap** in cardiometabolic disease health outcomes for equity-deserving populations;
6. **Transfer knowledge** beyond Peel; and
7. **Impact** on health policies

To deliver our vision and mission, an essential priority of the Network is to ensure the work we do is shared broadly with our local, national, and international partners and that it is scalable to other settings. We believe that our role as a Network is to **“learn locally, share globally”**.



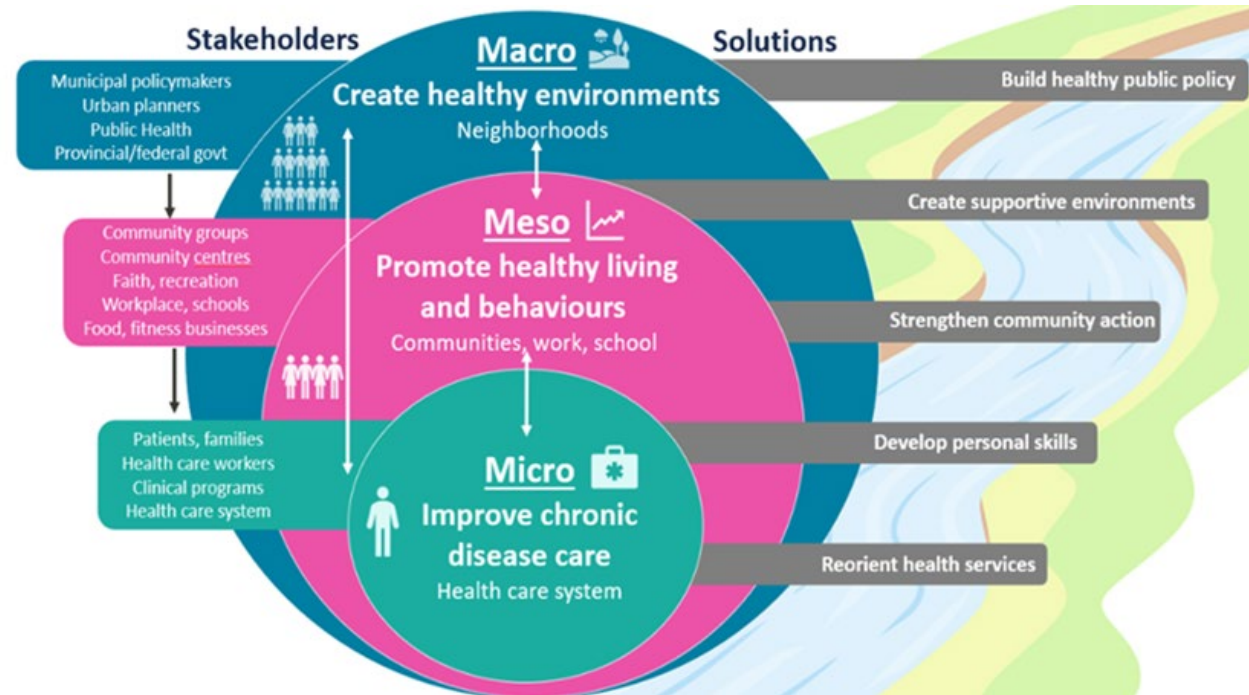
# Our Guiding Framework

To orient our foci and ensure our research, programs and resources address the Network’s mission, the Network developed a comprehensive, multisectoral framework which aims to identify factors impacting diabetes and identify potential challenges and opportunities for interventions at three levels.

**Level 1- Macro:** This level targets factors that affect the entire population and examines the role of environmental determinants of cardiometabolic diseases related to how we design and build our neighbourhoods. Interventions targeting the macro level may include municipal and regional policies and urban planning to optimize the built environment and improve access to nutritious foods, physical activity, and housing to **create healthy environments**.

**Level 2- Meso:** This level focuses on groups disproportionately affected by diabetes and addresses how to promote healthy living and behaviours through specific sociocultural co-designed interventions. These interventions may involve strengthening and enhancing community action and mobilization by designing and implementing prevention programs across various settings and contexts to raise awareness and **promote healthy living and behaviours**.

**Level 3- Micro:** This level addresses individuals with or at risk of developing diabetes and related cardiometabolic diseases within the healthcare system and examines how access and quality of cardiometabolic disease healthcare can impact potential health outcomes and quality of life. Interventions may focus on patients and families, healthcare providers and administrators to **improve cardiometabolic disease care** by making health services more coordinated, effective, accessible, and equitable.



## Overview of Our Key Initiatives

**Catalyst Grants:** The Network supports multi-disciplinary teams to co-design evidence-based interventions. NHP's Catalyst Grants foster collaborations among researchers, clinicians, and the community to develop, expand, or adapt programs that reduce health inequities. Grants are awarded based on a rigorous peer review process by experts in the field.

**Education and Training Programs:** NHP has launched, and continues to grow, its formal education and training program. This includes activities such as the NHP's monthly virtual Educational Seminar Series. It also includes several student programs, including the Summer Research and Training Program, as well as Graduate Awards for full time graduate students.

**Network Faculty:** The Network's faculty play an integral role in helping to shape the Network's overall research priorities and play a leading role on the Network's Scientific Steering Committee. In addition, they help to establish and foster key cross-disciplinary partnerships within the University, the larger Peel Region Community and across the health system. They also inspire new areas of research inquiry, contribute new knowledge to the field and build capacity within the Network and beyond.

**Foundational Research Program:** The Network's foundational research program aims to understand diabetes risk and burden in the region. Future work will aim to identify priorities and unmet needs for diabetes prevention and care, prioritizing the development of co-designed research projects. We will also aim to explore additional data sources to measure and examine the risk factors of diabetes risk through health, administrative, survey, and environmental data sources at the local and regional level.

**Community Engagement:** NHP has a long-term vision to co-create a genuinely community-driven portfolio of research, education, and advocacy. This vision includes a variety of engagement activities to foster strong community partnerships, build capacity, and ensure that the Network's initiatives are aligned with community needs and priorities.



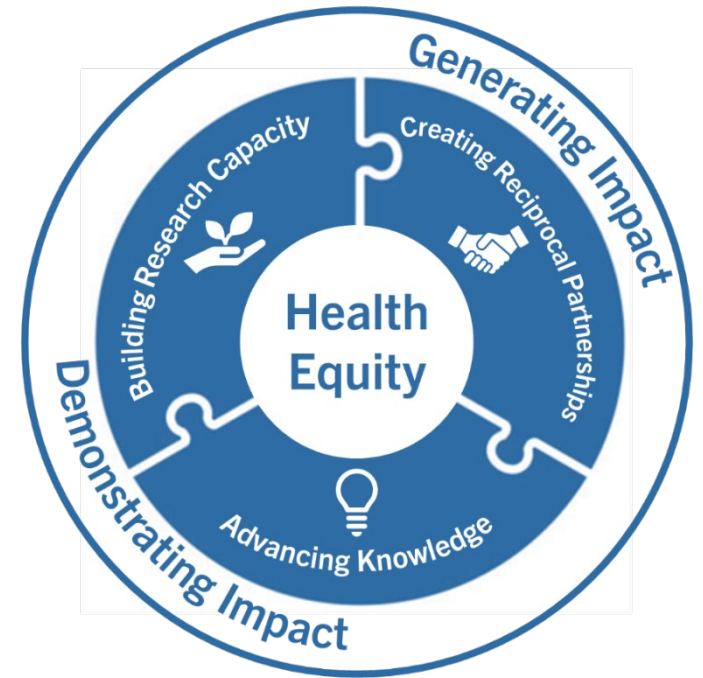
# Goals and Strategic Priorities

Based on our vision and mission, along with insights from community consultations, we have identified three primary goals: building research capacity, fostering reciprocal partnerships, and advancing knowledge.

- **Building research capacity**—Supporting faculty, trainees, community organizations, and students as they carry out research aligned to collaboratively identified priorities.
- **Creating reciprocal partnerships**—Collaborating with researchers, community partners, and decision makers to co-design and evaluate interventions that are feasible, relevant, sustainable, equitable, and scalable.
- **Advancing knowledge**—Promoting cross-disciplinary and intersectoral collaboration to create and share innovative ideas and novel research findings.

**Generating and demonstrating impact** serve as our overarching goals to ensure that NHP is measuring and evaluating outcomes to show impact from our programs, interventions, and initiatives. This ensures accountability, validates the effectiveness of interventions, and informs future strategies for spread, scale, and policy impact. Sharing our work with local, national, and international networks amplifies our impact on the burden of cardiometabolic diseases at the individual, community, system, and policy levels.

These goals collectively support our core aim of **promoting health equity and narrowing health disparities across populations**. The placement of health equity at the centre of the framework signifies its connection to all aspects of the network’s work and commitment. It represents the central priority of the NHP, emphasizing that every effort, whether in research capacity building, forming partnerships, or advancing knowledge, is directed towards achieving health equity.



**Build capacity** among researchers, community organizations, and trainees to conduct applied research that advances our mission.

Foster **reciprocal partnerships** with local and national knowledge users, researchers, and funders to co-create and sustain impactful and scalable interventions drive progress toward our mission.

**Advance and generate new knowledge** about cardiometabolic disease risk and prevention through cross-disciplinary and intersectoral collaboration, resources and support.

**Generate and demonstrate impact** on cardiometabolic disease burden through rigorous evaluation and strategic dissemination of research.



## GOAL 1

### Building Research Capacity

By supporting and growing our network of faculty, trainees, and community members to engage in new research aligned with our identified priorities, we build research capacity. Through tailored education, access to new research opportunities, centralized resources, and funding, we enable and empower these individuals and teams to contribute meaningfully to reducing cardiometabolic disease prevalence. This collaborative approach ensures that our efforts are focused and impactful, leading to tangible advancements in addressing the risk and burden of cardiometabolic disease locally and globally.

Achieving our goal of **Building Research Capacity** will result in a robust research environment that enables faculty, trainees, and community members to drive significant advancements in cardiometabolic disease prevention and management. Our initiatives will foster interdisciplinary collaboration, enhance professional growth, and build community leadership, leading to innovative solutions and improved health outcomes.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1.1

### OBJECTIVE

To create and cultivate a nurturing interdisciplinary environment that **empowers students and trainees** to excel in their academic and professional pursuits, thereby contributing to the advancement of research priorities aimed at reducing the burden of cardiometabolic diseases.

### INITIATIVES

- I. Provide undergraduate students with novel research opportunities and hands-on experience during the summer to enhance learning and foster academic growth.
- II. Establish a mentorship program connecting students, trainees, and early career researchers with experienced professionals.
- III. Create opportunities to support emerging researchers to facilitate their research endeavors and professional development.
- IV. Implement a Graduate Student Award to support graduate students pursuing thesis-based projects that are aligned with NHP's core mission and goals.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1.2

### OBJECTIVE

To strengthen **community capacity and leadership** by empowering local organizations to spearhead research projects and initiatives aimed at addressing cardiometabolic disease burden within their communities and beyond.

### INITIATIVES

- I. Develop an educational resource hub for community, students, trainees, and faculty which will contain educational materials such as workshops, seminars, and online resources. The NHP will continuously expand and further enhance the hub's offerings based on community feedback, availability of new resources, and emerging needs.
- II. Organize seminars aimed at enhancing the research skills and knowledge of catalyst grant awardees and the NHP community partners.
- III. Establish research knowledge sharing opportunities to facilitate relationship-building and knowledge dissemination among community organizations, share lessons learned from implementing research projects in community settings, and provide guidance on conducting research, all planned in collaboration with the community.
- IV. Supporting community organizations through providing resources to optimize, evaluate, scale and identify promising local interventions.



## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1.3

### OBJECTIVE

To foster the **professional growth and expertise of faculty members** while expanding the research network to include interdisciplinary perspectives and provide access to funding opportunities, thereby enhancing the collective capacity to address cardiometabolic disease challenges.

### INITIATIVES

- I. Support faculty awareness of grant opportunities to facilitate researchers in securing funding, leveraging and centralizing existing tool and resources across various systems
- II. Access to Catalyst grant funding to support faculty in developing novel community-based projects and interventions that align with the NHP's vision and mission.
- III. Expand the mentorship program to include faculty mentors, fostering professional development and career advancement of early career researchers through guided support and knowledge sharing.
- IV. Provide NHP Faculty with support and access to streamlined resources to increase research output through protected time and greater process efficiencies.



## GOAL 2

### Creating Reciprocal Partnerships

By collaborating with community partners, key actors, and decision-makers, we aim to co-design and evaluate research and interventions that are equitable, feasible, relevant, scalable, and sustainable. We will achieve this by strengthening and expanding our current partnerships and networks across multiple levels (tri-campus, local, regional, national, and global), while actively seeking new collaborations and partnerships to co-create solutions to common challenges facing our communities. Through nurturing reciprocity in these relationships, we ensure that our partners benefit from the Network's initiatives, programs, and funding opportunities, while we also gain valuable insights and resources from them. This reciprocal exchange fosters a cycle of continuous improvement and mutual support, enhancing the overall impact and sustainability of our collective efforts.

Achieving our goal of **Creating Reciprocal Partnerships** will result in a robust network of partners from community organizations, academic institutions, government, NGOs, private partners, and decision-makers working together to design and evaluate equitable and sustainable interventions. Strengthening and expanding our cross sectoral partnerships at multiple levels will foster impactful solutions to shared community challenges. By the end of three years, these efforts will enhance organizational effectiveness, drive collective progress in cardiometabolic disease management, and build an interconnected research and intervention ecosystem.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2.1

### OBJECTIVE

To **formalize partnership structures and practices**, optimizing administrative processes to bolster organizational effectiveness in cultivating partnerships that significantly contribute to the network's mission and enhance community engagement.

### INITIATIVES

- I. Develop tailored partnership agreements with community organizations, academic institutions, government, NGOs, private partners, and decision-makers to formalize collaboration processes, ensuring clarity and mutual understanding of roles, responsibilities, and expectations.
- II. Identify and expand formal partnership opportunities emphasizing diversity, equity, and inclusion, seeking collaborations that represent our community's breadth and address common challenges.
- III. Establish a network membership strategy to provide access to opportunities for engagement, feedback, and collaborative decision-making, thereby fostering a sense of commitment to shared goals.

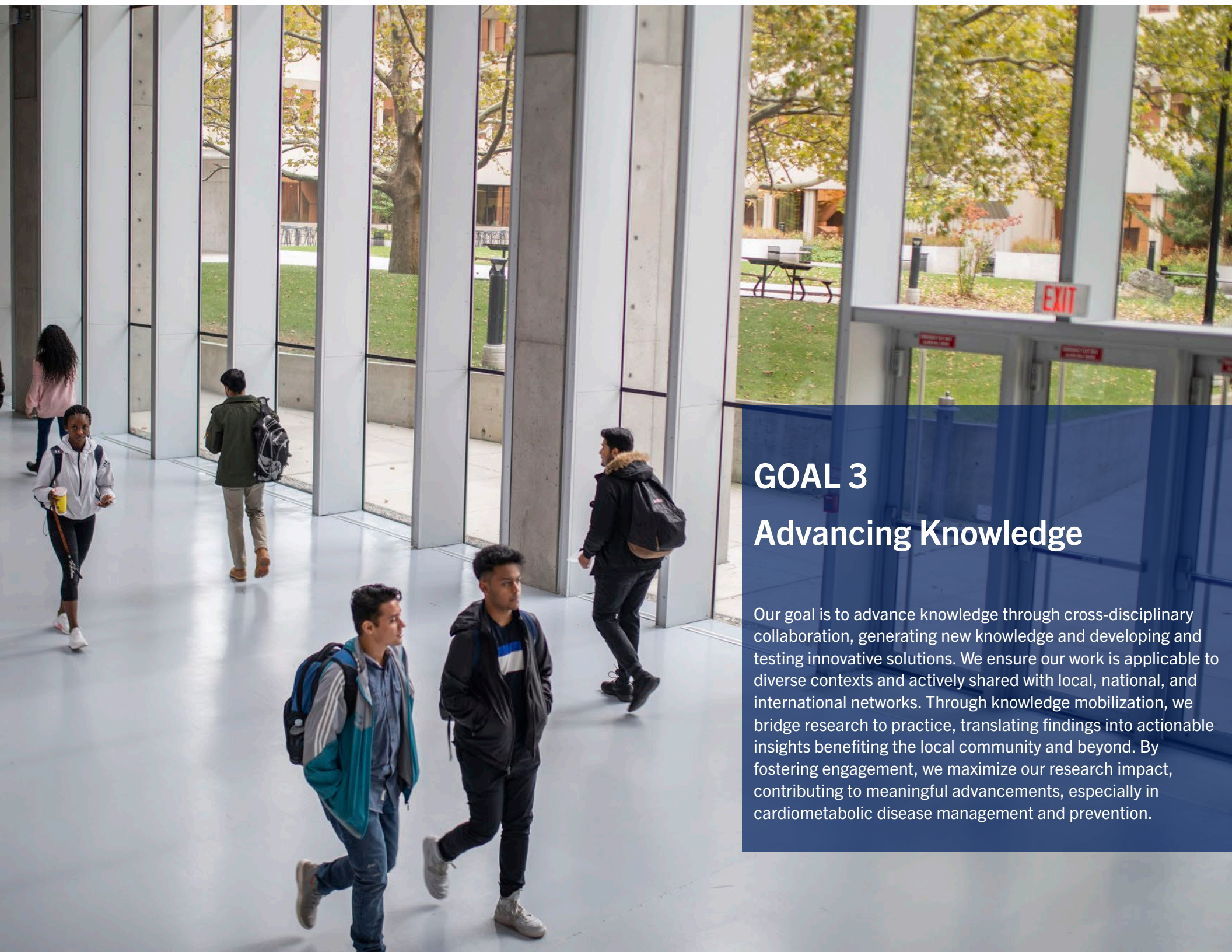
## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2.2

### OBJECTIVE

To **cultivate and strengthen our connections across local, provincial, national, and international landscapes**, forging impactful collaborations with partners spanning multiple sectors, thereby enriching our organizational ecosystem and advancing collective objectives.

### INITIATIVES

- I. Identify and map potential partners across geographical locations and various sectors, including clinical care, academia, government agencies, NGOs, and industry, to identify opportunities for potential collaboration.
- II. Develop and implement an outreach plan to engage potential partners, showcasing our shared values and objectives and fostering mutual interest in collaboration.
- III. Establish a comprehensive network communication plan to facilitate ongoing engagement with partners and collaborators, ensuring that our interactions are meaningful, productive, and aligned with strategic objectives.



## GOAL 3

### Advancing Knowledge

Our goal is to advance knowledge through cross-disciplinary collaboration, generating new knowledge and developing and testing innovative solutions. We ensure our work is applicable to diverse contexts and actively shared with local, national, and international networks. Through knowledge mobilization, we bridge research to practice, translating findings into actionable insights benefiting the local community and beyond. By fostering engagement, we maximize our research impact, contributing to meaningful advancements, especially in cardiometabolic disease management and prevention.

Achieving our goal of **Advancing Knowledge** will lead to significant improvements in cardiometabolic disease care and prevention by leveraging a robust network of faculty, trainees, and community members. Our initiatives will foster innovative research, generate novel insights, and ensure the effective and broad dissemination of findings to influence policy and practice. This collaborative effort will produce tangible health improvements and contribute to a deeper understanding of diabetes and cardiometabolic disease prevention.

### STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3.1

#### OBJECTIVE

**Strengthen and expand the NHP research initiatives** to foster cross-disciplinary and inter-sectoral research to spark new and innovative ways of thinking that address the key challenges associated with diabetes and related cardiometabolic diseases. By advancing these initiatives, we aim to uncover new insights, develop effective strategies for prevention and management, and improve health outcomes of individuals, communities, and populations.

#### INITIATIVES

- I. Continue to engage with the community to understand priorities and unmet needs regarding cardiometabolic disease prevention and management to develop novel and innovative programs and interventions.
- II. Identify, gather, and analyze comprehensive data from existing and novel sources to further our understanding of key risk factors and areas of need, to optimize diabetes-related healthcare, health behaviours, and the built environment.
- III. Provide funding and administrative support for pilot projects aligned with NHP's mission and vision.
- IV. Continue to develop the Catalyst Grants Program to ensure funded projects establish a foundation for attracting external funding and scaling successful initiatives, ensuring their impact on health outcomes and long-term sustainability.

### STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3.2

#### OBJECTIVE

Facilitate the **translation of findings** into tangible solutions through the creation of robust knowledge mobilization strategies. This ensures that the insights generated have a significant and lasting impact on research, policy, and practice in the field of diabetes management and prevention.

#### INITIATIVES

- I. Engage academics, community organizations, network partners, private industry, and the public in a comprehensive knowledge-sharing events.
- II. Organize opportunities to build connections, facilitate knowledge sharing, and enable network researchers to connect with relevant partners locally, nationally, and internationally.
- III. Produce and share broadly with local, national, international partners showcasing the outcomes and impacts of Network projects.
- IV. Develop and disseminate various communication materials tailored for community, academic, and policy audiences to showcase project findings in local, national, and international settings to amplify the research associated with the Network.



## GOAL 4

### Demonstrating Impact

We are dedicated to thoroughly assessing the impact of our initiatives and communicating their outcomes. This commitment helps us make informed strategic decisions, share our learnings, and understand the significant ripple effects of our projects.

Achieving our goal of **Demonstrating Impact** will enable us to thoroughly evaluate, measure, and communicate the short-term and long-term outcomes of our initiatives. By capturing and analyzing these effects, we can advance our mission of creating healthier environments, promoting equitable access to care, and fostering lasting healthy behaviours. Our approach identifies early successes for scaling, while long-term monitoring ensures sustained impact, particularly in reducing diabetes and cardiometabolic disease inequities.

#### STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4.1

##### OBJECTIVE

To systematically evaluate the **short-term impact of our initiatives**. By identifying and analyzing early outcomes that are linked to our mission, we aim to inform the sustainability and scaling of successful interventions, laying the foundation for long-term impact.

##### INITIATIVES

- I. Establish a data collection and analysis framework to capture early evidence-informed indicators of success in addressing health disparities that are linked to longer-term health outcomes.
- II. Provide interim reports to partners and knowledge users on short-term evaluation outcomes and their potential for longer-term impact.
- III. Monitor and assess the immediate effects of interventions on health behaviours, access to care, and health experiences in equity-deserving communities.
- IV. Share short-term findings with the potential for impact to inform advocacy efforts and support resource allocation and policy decisions that will sustain and expand successful initiatives.
- V. Develop a knowledge-sharing strategy to communicate early-stage results, encouraging replication and adaptation in other regions or contexts.

#### STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4.2

##### OBJECTIVE

To systematically evaluate and demonstrate the **long-term impact of our initiatives** in reducing inequities in diabetes and related cardiometabolic diseases through comprehensive monitoring, data analysis, and assessment of policy influence. By leveraging these insights, we aim to drive sustainable health equity outcomes, influence systemic policy changes, and disseminate best practices globally to amplify and scale our impact.

##### INITIATIVES

- I. Develop and maintain a long-term monitoring and evaluation framework that tracks standard indicators of cardiometabolic disease prevention and care over multiple years, ensuring the sustainability of health equity outcomes.
- II. Establish and manage comprehensive systems for continuous long-term data collection and analysis, allowing for deep insights into the enduring effects of our interventions.
- III. Use long-term evaluation findings to advocate for systemic policy changes and resource allocation that scale and sustain impactful initiatives which support our mission of reducing health inequities.
- IV. Create mechanisms and strategies to monitor, document, and predict the potential and actual long-term influence of our work on policy shifts at local, regional, and national levels, documenting the progress and outcomes of our advocacy efforts.
- V. Expand knowledge-sharing strategies to distribute comprehensive evaluation reports, best practices, and lessons learned.