

VALLEY HOSPICE FOUNDATION

Strategic Plan 2026 - 2029

OUR VISION

A community where people facing a life-limiting illness, and their loved ones experiencing loss, have access to compassionate, dignified care.

OUR MISSION

We bring people together to support person-centred and compassionate palliative, hospice and bereavement care in the Annapolis Valley. We help ensure every individual and their chosen family in our community has access to the care they need at the time and place of their choosing.



A Message from Our Leadership

The Annapolis Valley is a place where community runs deep. It is a region where neighbours look after one another, where volunteers give generously of their time, and where the bonds between people are a source of genuine strength. These values are the foundation on which palliative care in this Valley must be built.

This Strategic Plan charts our course for the next three years. It reflects both the needs of our community, the growing professional capacity and our confidence that, working together, we help ensure every individual and their chosen family in our community has access to the care they need at the time and place of their choosing. We are grateful to the patients, families, clinicians, volunteers, and community partners who helped us shape this plan. Their insights remind us that palliative care is about living fully, with dignity.

Who We Are

The Valley Hospice Foundation is a registered not-for-profit organization dedicated to supporting and enabling the delivery of exceptional palliative care, in many settings, across Kings and Annapolis counties, Nova Scotia. We do not deliver care directly; instead, we serve as a catalyst — convening partners, identifying needs, building capacity, and advocating for, and in some cases, funding the resources and systems that make excellent care possible.

Note that hospice is a subset of palliative care and this plan uses the term palliative care to include hospice care.

The Case for Change

Our Community Context

We operate in a region that is largely rural, with a significant and growing proportion of older residents. Kings and Annapolis counties are home to approximately 90,000 residents. The population is aging: more than 25% of residents are 65 or older, a proportion projected to grow significantly over the next decade. This means that demand for quality palliative and end-of-life care will increase substantially and quickly.

Yet access to such care is uneven. Many residents die in hospital, even when they would have preferred to be at home or in a community setting. Caregiver burnout is common. Our geography creates both challenges — such as distance from specialist services, limited public transit, workforce shortages — and opportunities, including tight-knit communities with remarkable volunteer capacity and a strong sense of shared responsibility.

Awareness of palliative care, and the services available, remains low among the general public.

What the Evidence Tells Us

- Early integration of palliative care improves quality of life and reduces unnecessary hospitalizations.
- Canadians overwhelmingly prefer to die at home or in a home-like setting, yet most still die in hospital.
- Informal caregivers provide the majority of end-of-life care and require dedicated support to sustain their role.

- A coordinated, whole-person approach encompassing physical, emotional, social and spiritual dimensions produces the best outcomes for patients and families.
- Investment in community-based palliative care is cost-effective relative to acute care.

Our Strategic Areas of Focus

Four interconnected Areas of Focus guide our work over the 2026–2029 period. Together, they describe how we intend to fulfil our mission and move toward our vision.

Advocacy & Awareness

Evidence shows that people in Annapolis and Kings counties do not know who we are or what we do. In addition, our research suggests that much more can be done to increase awareness of what options are available to support Valley residents with a life limiting diagnosis and their chosen families.

- Broaden the awareness of the role of the VHF and significantly increase the level of community engagement with the Foundation including new members and volunteers.
- Increase the level of awareness and understanding within the community regarding locally available palliative care options and support for grief and bereavement.
- Champion palliative care, and grief and bereavement support needs, particularly at local levels, and provincially as needed.
- Build and sustain relationships with Nova Scotia Health, other primary care networks, hospices, volunteer networks, and community members and organizations to encourage a coordinated approach to end-of-life care.

Palliative Care

Many community providers deliver or contribute to palliative care in the Annapolis Valley. Our role is to complement available services to further contribute to quality of life, comfort and dignity.

- Foster a community of skilled, compassionate caregivers able to deliver palliative care in various settings. For example:
 - Encourage and support training and education for healthcare workers and volunteers
 - Explore feasibility of a hospice at home program
 - Explore potential for palliative care navigation
- Fund the delivery of palliative care supports within the community. For example:
 - Community palliative care grants
 - Care and comfort funding for the Hospice
 - One-off Hospice capital initiatives
- Support the development of volunteers to support palliative care delivery within the community.

Grief and Bereavement	Many community providers deliver or contribute to grief and bereavement support in the Annapolis Valley. We deliver grief and bereavement services around managing loss related to end-of-life and support other providers. • Fund the delivery of grief and bereavement support initiatives within the community, such as the Grief Library and local bereavement support groups • Foster a community of skilled and compassionate healthcare workers and volunteers to deliver grief and bereavement supports. • Increase awareness of, and access to, the various grief and bereavement support available to the community.
Governance and Operations	The ability to deliver on all Foundation strategic goals and initiatives depends on effective and efficient governance and operations. • Broaden membership where possible to ensure inclusivity, cultural and geographic representation, and access to relevant skills and knowledge. • Optimize Board committee and Foundation organizational structure to ensure we have the ability to deliver on strategic objectives. • Operate with transparency, sustainability, sound governance and financial accountability. • Invest in the people, systems and processes that enable us to deliver on our mission.

Our Values

Everything we do is anchored in a set of core values that reflect who we are and how we work.

Compassion

We lead with empathy, kindness and heart in every interaction.

Person-centred

We honour the full context of a person's life to recognize physical, mental, social and spiritual needs. We support each individual's dignity and right to choose.

Equity

We recognize that people start from different positions and may require tailored support to achieve similar health outcomes.

Sustainability

We build partnerships, programs and community capacity that are viable for the long term.

Accountability

We operate transparently in alignment with our mission. We use resources responsibly so programs deliver results, ensuring that the organization remains relevant, trustworthy and effective.

Integrity

We act with honesty, keep our promises and make ethical choices that support and respect others.

Key Enablers for Success

Achieving our strategic ambitions will require focused investment in foundational enablers.

People

Our Board members, staff and volunteers are our greatest asset. To deliver on our strategic goals we must expand this capacity by investing in recruitment, training and retention of passionate people who share our mission.

Relationships

Meaningful, trust-based relationships with health care and community partners, stakeholders, donors and other funders support everything we do. We will invest time, care and funding to build and maintain them.

Data and Evidence

We will track our progress using data to improve our programs, demonstrate impact to funders and make the case for change to policy makers.

Community Engagement

Engage with the community to tell our story with honesty, warmth and evidence. Awareness of what is available is key to facilitating access to palliative care, and grief and bereavement supports available in Kings and Annapolis counties.

Measuring Our Success

We will report publicly on our progress against this Strategic Plan on an annual basis. Our performance framework will capture data related to aspects such as:

- Program and community impact
- Organizational health
- People and culture

The Board of Directors will review this plan annually and adjust as needed.

A Commitment to Kings and Annapolis Counties

Palliative care is one of the most profound expressions of a community's values. How we care for one another at life's end speaks to who we are as neighbours, as citizens and as human beings.

The Valley Hospice Foundation is proud to stand with the residents of Kings and Annapolis counties as a steadfast advocate for compassionate, high-quality and equitable end-of-life care. This Strategic Plan is our commitment to you — and to the family members, caregivers and loved ones who walk this path alongside you.