



# What Is Social Accountability?

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The World Health Organization defined the social accountability of medical schools as “*the obligation to direct their education, research and service activities towards addressing the priority health concerns of the community, region, and/or nation they have a mandate to serve. The priority health concerns are to be identified jointly by governments, health care organizations, health professionals and the public.*” (WHO, 1995)

RDoC recognizes the social contract that exists between its members and Canadian society. As members of the medical profession, we strive to meet the health needs of the communities we serve – locally, nationally, and globally.

## RD0C'S COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

RDoC understands that social accountability is intrinsic to medicine and seeks to promote social accountability within medical education and the broader healthcare system. As an organization, RDoC endeavours to incorporate the principles of social accountability across all of its activities.

## RD0C'S 4 METRICS OF SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Being socially accountable in medical education and in healthcare can mean different things to different people or groups. RDoC has identified four metrics that, when considered together, build the foundation for a socially accountable initiative, position, or direction.

**Equity** ensures that every individual and/or group is provided with what they need, which may differ from the needs of others or the whole. In health, “*equity* is the absence of avoidable or remediable differences among groups of people, whether those groups are defined socially, economically, demographically, or geographically”<sup>1</sup>. When the social determinants of health are addressed, equity can be achieved.

**Transparency** allows all partners and stakeholders to participate in dialogue and decision-making in a fair, open manner. Individuals and/or groups should have access to information regarding regulation, cost, and quality within the healthcare system.

**Sustainability** guarantees that any project undertaken will be both valuable and productive into the future. Disease prevention and health promotion are essential elements of sustainable healthcare, as is the judicious allocation of resources and utilization of healthcare funding.

**Relevance** is the idea that an issue or project is appropriate and of importance to the organization. In health, the applicability to broader groups within society should be considered.

## USE THE TOOL: IS MY PROJECT SOCIALLY ACCOUNTABLE?

RDoC has created an evaluative tool that asks practical questions, allowing you to assess whether your project is upholding the principle of social accountability.

<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization: Health Systems Topics – Equity. <http://www.who.int/healthsystems/topics/equity/en/>

# social accountability tool

## Consider the 4 Metrics:

### EQUITY

- Have the needs of the most vulnerable been considered?
- Have I protected against discrimination based on sex, race, religion, disability, geography, etc?



### TRANSPARENCY

- Were all concerned groups able to participate in the decision-making process?
- Are there any conflicts of interest that could be influencing my project or group?



### SUSTAINABILITY

- Does my project meet both current and future health needs?
- Will I create change that lasts beyond my initial intervention?



### RELEVANCE

- Does this respond to a priority societal health need?
- Are there other unmet needs that could provide more benefit?



## Consider the Component Parts of a Civil Society:

- Is your project accountable to all levels of society?
- Is it accountable to some, but not all?
- If accountable only to certain groups, what are the risks/benefits?



## INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY?

### Further Resources:

1. [Social Accountability - A Vision for Canadian Medical Schools \(Health Canada/AFMC\)](#)
2. [Global Consensus for Social Accountability of Medical Schools](#)
3. [CFPC Social Justice Lens](#)
4. [Social accountability of medical schools and its indicators \(France/UK/UBC\)](#)
5. [Conference Board of Canada Principles of Sustainable Health Care](#)
6. [Transforming health professional education through social accountability: Canada's NOSM](#)
7. [Defining and measuring the social accountability of medical schools \(WHO 1995\)](#)