



Frequently Asked Questions – Pan-Canadian Health Workforce Data Strategy

The Pan-Canadian Health Workforce Data Strategy, led by Health Workforce Canada and developed in collaboration with partners across jurisdictions, takes a practical step toward addressing health workforce data challenges and outlines a shared and coordinated approach to strengthen how health workforce data are collected, governed, shared, and used across Canada. It has been co-developed to support the development of a comprehensive, inclusive, and coordinated health workforce data ecosystem that enables evidence-informed decision making, responsive planning, and improved health outcomes for people across Canada.

What's the purpose of the data strategy?

The Pan-Canadian Health Workforce Data Strategy is one of the ways Health Workforce Canada aims to transform evidence-based planning for the health workforce now and into the future to support health workers and ensure sustainable access to care.

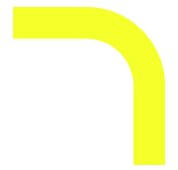
It aims to improve the overall health workforce data foundation by leveraging in a standardized way the rich local, provincial/territorial, and employer-level health workforce data that drive health service delivery for people across Canada.

Most importantly, the data strategy works towards a future state where comprehensive, timely, and interoperable health workforce data support evidence-informed decision-making across jurisdictions. This includes improving data consistency, comparability, accessibility, and connectedness, while advancing collaborative data governance, including with Indigenous partners. Together, these efforts aim to support more effective and responsive health workforce planning across Canada.

Why is a pan-Canadian strategy needed?

Health workers in Canada work hard to care for people in every corner of the country, every day. But across jurisdictions, the data we capture and use to support the health workforce remains fragmented and incomplete, constraining the ability of health system partners to plan effectively and respond to evolving population health needs.

To answer critical current and future health workforce planning questions, enhanced data are needed across the country to monitor trends in workforce supply, distribution, mobility, and well-being. The work in the Pan-Canadian Health Workforce Data Strategy builds on earlier



pan-Canadian health data initiatives that establish shared expectations for data governance, privacy, stewardship, and responsible data use. Recommendations within the data strategy align, connect, and elevate what already exists, and clarify where pan-Canadian coordination adds value, while respecting custodianship and governance across the health system.

Are there problems with health data and how people are using it?

There is a significant volume of health workforce data that exists across the country. However, the current data ecosystem that supports the health workforce is fragmented and incomplete. Inconsistent data standards and definitions, fragmented infrastructure and systems, untimely or outdated data limit the ability to monitor trends in workforce supply, distribution, mobility, and well-being. This makes it challenging to answer critical current and future health workforce planning questions. Additionally, long data lag times and infrequent updates limit the ability to monitor health workforce supply, distribution, inflows/outflows, well-being, and can constrain modeling.

Starting in May 2024, Health Workforce Canada undertook extensive engagement with partners across the health workforce ecosystem to address these longstanding challenges. Consultations generated several insights that highlighted an urgent need for a coordinated, pan-Canadian approach to improve timeliness, comprehensiveness, and interoperability of health workforce data.

How will this help solve our health workforce problems?

We know there is not one stand alone answer that will solve all health workforce issues. We view the Pan-Canadian Health Workforce Data Strategy as a first step toward supporting longer-term pan-Canadian health workforce planning effort, strengthening the data foundation to support a resilient and sustainable health workforce for the future.

The data strategy highlights shared standards and definitions to strengthen usability across jurisdictions and spans all regulated and unregulated professions in public, private, Indigenous and community-based settings, while respecting jurisdictional authority and Indigenous data sovereignty. It builds towards a future state where comprehensive, timely, and interoperable health workforce data support evidence-informed decision-making across jurisdictions.

Health Workforce Canada is committed to ‘progress over perfection’. The data strategy starts with practical steps that can be initiated and/or continued across Canada, recognizing the strategy will continue to grow and change over time as needs and technologies evolve. Shared accountability is central to implementation, recognizing that progress depends on collective responsibility across jurisdictions, sectors, and partners.



How is Indigenous Data Sovereignty being respected?

A co-design approach was intentionally used in the development of the data strategy, with a focus and commitment to respecting and upholding Indigenous rights to data sovereignty and self-determination. This includes aligning with priorities, needs and Indigenous-led frameworks as defined by First Nations, Inuit and Métis organizations, guided by a distinctions-based, rights-affirming approach that emphasizes cultural safety, trust, and strong relationships.

How do you see people using the Pan-Canadian Health Workforce Data Strategy?

Health workforce data becomes most powerful when it is connected to how care is delivered and the outcomes experienced by patients and communities. The data strategy is designed to serve the health system and other partners who rely on, contribute to, or are affected by health workforce data.

Included in the data strategy are practical, incremental actions to advance towards the desired future state. These actions are designed to respect jurisdictional differences, existing governance structures, and varied capacities for implementation. While some actions may require new investment, many build on existing work, pan-Canadian frameworks, and established data standards.

The Pan-Canadian Health Workforce Data Strategy is not intended to serve as a detailed roadmap or workplan for any given organization. Rather, it is designed as a guide that supports incremental progress, offering practical steps for partners, organizations, and jurisdictions to collectively strengthen the health workforce data ecosystem in Canada. It is intended to be a living resource, supported by a monitoring framework that emphasizes learning, adaptation, and shared leadership. Ongoing collaboration with partners across the country will help ensure the strategy to remain responsive to emerging needs, technological change, and opportunities for collaboration over time.