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RESEARCH AND CLINICAL CARE PAVILION



IWK Health



IWK Health

Sustainability Strategic Framework

2025-2027

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Land acknowledgement

IWK Health is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. We serve women, children, youth, families, and gender-diverse people in the Maritime Provinces, including the traditional territories of the Wəlastəkwiyik, Mi'kmaq, and Passamaquoddy Peoples. These lands are covered by the Treaties of Peace and Friendship, recognizing Indigenous titles and establishing ongoing relationships.

As a health authority, we pledge to work with Indigenous communities to promote reflection, understanding, reconciliation, and action, honoring Indigenous knowledge and addressing historical and present-day harms. We also recognize that the connection to land is integral to sustainability and impacts the well-being and cultural identity of Indigenous nations.

A message from the executive lead, Health System Sustainability

The Canadian healthcare industry is a substantial contributor to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, accounting for nearly 5% of the nation's total emissions, surpassing those of the aviation sector. Climate change significantly affects health outcomes, with the 2022 Children First report identifying it as one of the top 10 risks for Canadian children. This underscores the urgent need for sustainable practices in healthcare to safeguard their health and future.

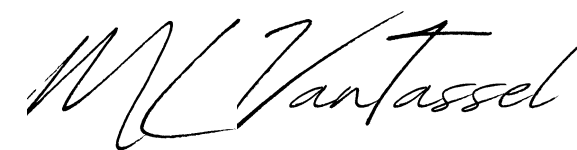
Since 2022, environmental sustainability has been a strategic priority for IWK Health. In September 2024, IWK Health introduced the Health System Sustainability portfolio, marking a significant milestone in its ongoing commitment to environmental sustainability. The formalization of the Health System Sustainability portfolio underscores our dedication to integrating sustainability into IWK Health's core operations and will drive efforts to embed sustainability principles across governance, infrastructure, people, and practices. This move not only highlights IWK Health's commitment to a healthier planet but also reinforces its role as a leader in sustainable healthcare.

One of the key priorities for the newly established Health System Sustainability portfolio was the development of a strategic framework to guide our sustainability journey. This framework underwent several iterations, each reviewed and refined with input from the Going Green Steering Committee. The collaborative effort ensured that the framework was comprehensive and aligned with the organization's sustainability goals. The final version of the framework was officially endorsed in early 2025, marking a significant step forward in IWK Health's commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainable practices.

The Sustainability Strategic Framework is a comprehensive document designed to guide IWK Health towards a more sustainable future as an organization, healthcare provider, and community leader. This framework empowers staff to proactively address climate change challenges and promote sustainability pillars throughout the organization and the communities it serves.

We have developed twenty-seven actions and initiatives within the four focus areas – governance, infrastructure, people and practice – and based on our four principles that will guide our sustainability efforts over the next two fiscal years. These actions and initiatives aim to establish a robust governance foundation, ensuring that we effectively engage and educate our staff and external partners, with the ultimate goal of embedding sustainable practices in every aspect of our operations.

IWK Health is dedicated to leading the way in creating a healthy and resilient healthcare system that equitably enhances the well-being of our populations, staff, and communities, while ensuring the sustainability of our planet. This framework is crucial for proactively preparing for and mitigating the health impacts of a changing climate.



Mary Lynn VanTassel
Executive Lead, Health
System Sustainability
IWK Health



Sustainability Strategic Framework

The Sustainability Strategic Framework is built on the fundamental purpose of integrating sustainability into all facets of IWK Health. This framework is supported by four key areas of focus, or 'pillars'—governance, infrastructure, people, and practice—which guide our actions and initiatives. Additionally, four core principles underpin the purpose and pillars, serving as the essential values that direct decision-making in the framework's design and implementation.

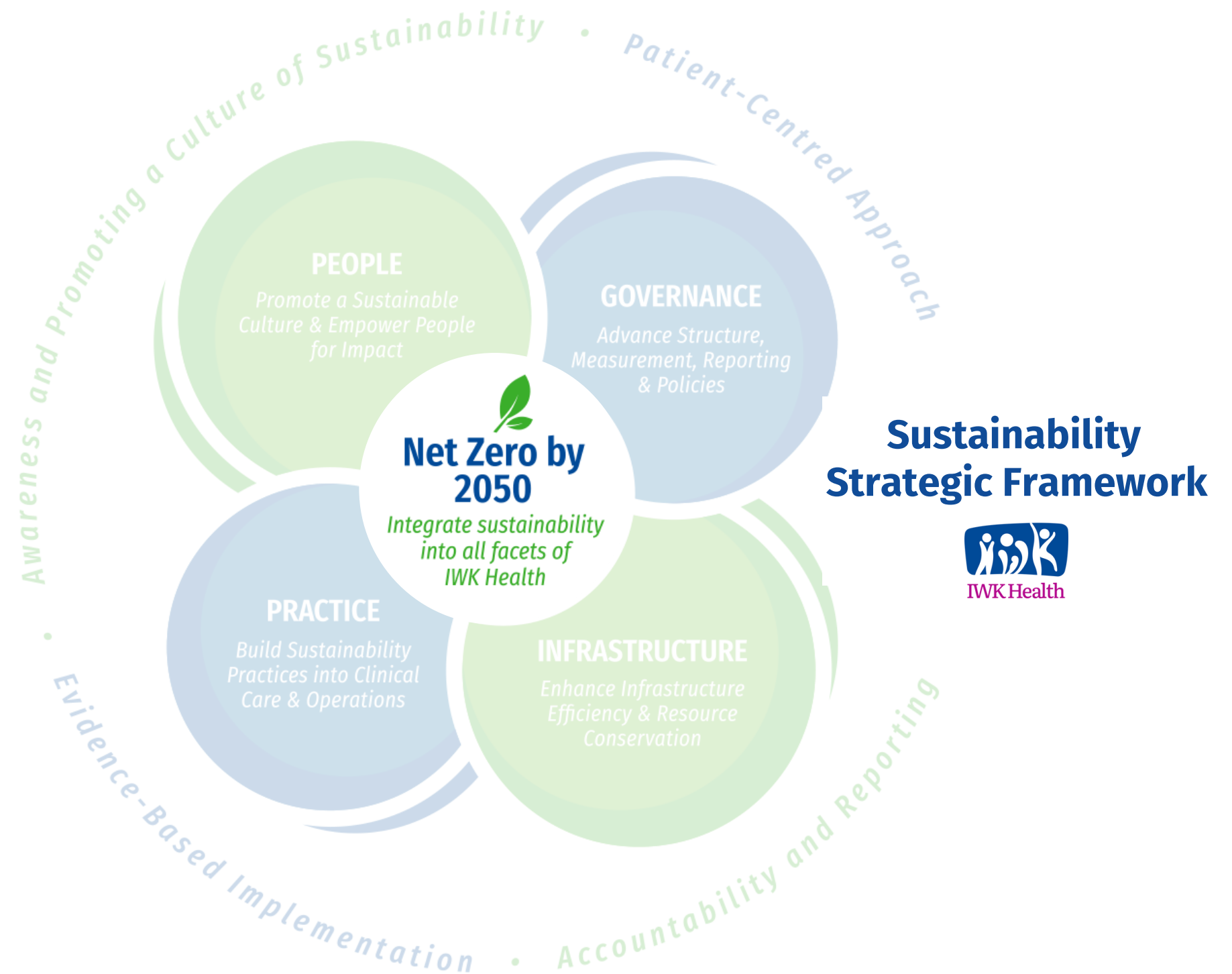


Our purpose

Integrate sustainability into all facets of IWK Health

Integrating sustainability into all aspects of IWK Health reflects a commitment to fostering a healthier future not only for patients and staff but also for the surrounding community and environment. As a hospital, IWK Health recognizes its unique role in shaping long-term well-being by reducing its environmental footprint, optimizing resource use, and promoting eco-friendly practices in healthcare delivery. This approach ensures that while providing exceptional care for children, women, and families, the hospital also prioritizes energy efficiency, waste reduction, and the incorporation of sustainable technologies.

By embedding sustainability into its operations, policies, and partnerships, IWK Health aims to create a resilient healthcare system that supports a thriving, sustainable world for present and future generations. This integration also aligns with broader societal goals, demonstrating leadership in environmental stewardship and social responsibility within the healthcare sector.



Our pillars: key areas of focus

Our commitment to integrating sustainability into every aspect of IWK Health is supported by our 'Pillars' or key areas of focus. Over the next two years, we will concentrate on four main areas: governance, infrastructure, people, and practice.

Focusing on these four pillars allows us to address sustainability comprehensively and systematically. Governance ensures effective oversight and policy alignment. Infrastructure optimizes resources and reduces environmental impact. People engages and empowers our staff and physicians. Practice integrates sustainability into clinical care and operations, enhancing patient care and environmental stewardship. By concentrating on these areas, we can create a balanced and effective sustainability strategy that supports our overall mission and goals.



People

Promote a Sustainable Culture & Empower People for Impact

The people pillar emphasizes fostering a culture of sustainability and empowering individuals to make a positive impact. Our team members are deeply interested in sustainability, recognizing its importance for the future. To keep them engaged, effective communication and ongoing education are crucial. By providing regular updates, training sessions, and opportunities for involvement, we ensure that everyone is informed and motivated to contribute to our sustainability goals. This collective effort not only enhances our environmental initiatives but also strengthens our organizational commitment to a sustainable future.

Governance

Advance Structure, Measurement, Reporting & Policies

At the heart of all successful programs is good governance. The governance pillar focuses on establishing a formal structure to oversee and guide sustainability efforts. This includes setting up mechanisms to measure emissions and track progress over time, ensuring transparency and accountability through regular sustainability reporting. Additionally, it involves aligning organizational policies with sustainability goals to foster a culture of environmental responsibility and continuous improvement. By embedding these practices into the governance framework, organizations can effectively manage their sustainability initiatives and drive meaningful change.

Practice

Build Sustainability Practices into Clinical Care and Operations

The practice pillar of a sustainability strategy in clinical care and operations recognizes the intrinsic link between sustainability and patient care. By integrating sustainable practices into our clinical operations, we can enhance patient care while simultaneously promoting environmental stewardship. This approach involves optimizing resource use, reducing waste, and implementing energy-efficient systems within healthcare facilities. By doing so, we not only improve the quality of care and operational efficiency but also contribute to a healthier environment. This holistic strategy ensures that our commitment to sustainability directly supports our mission to provide high-quality patient care.

Infrastructure

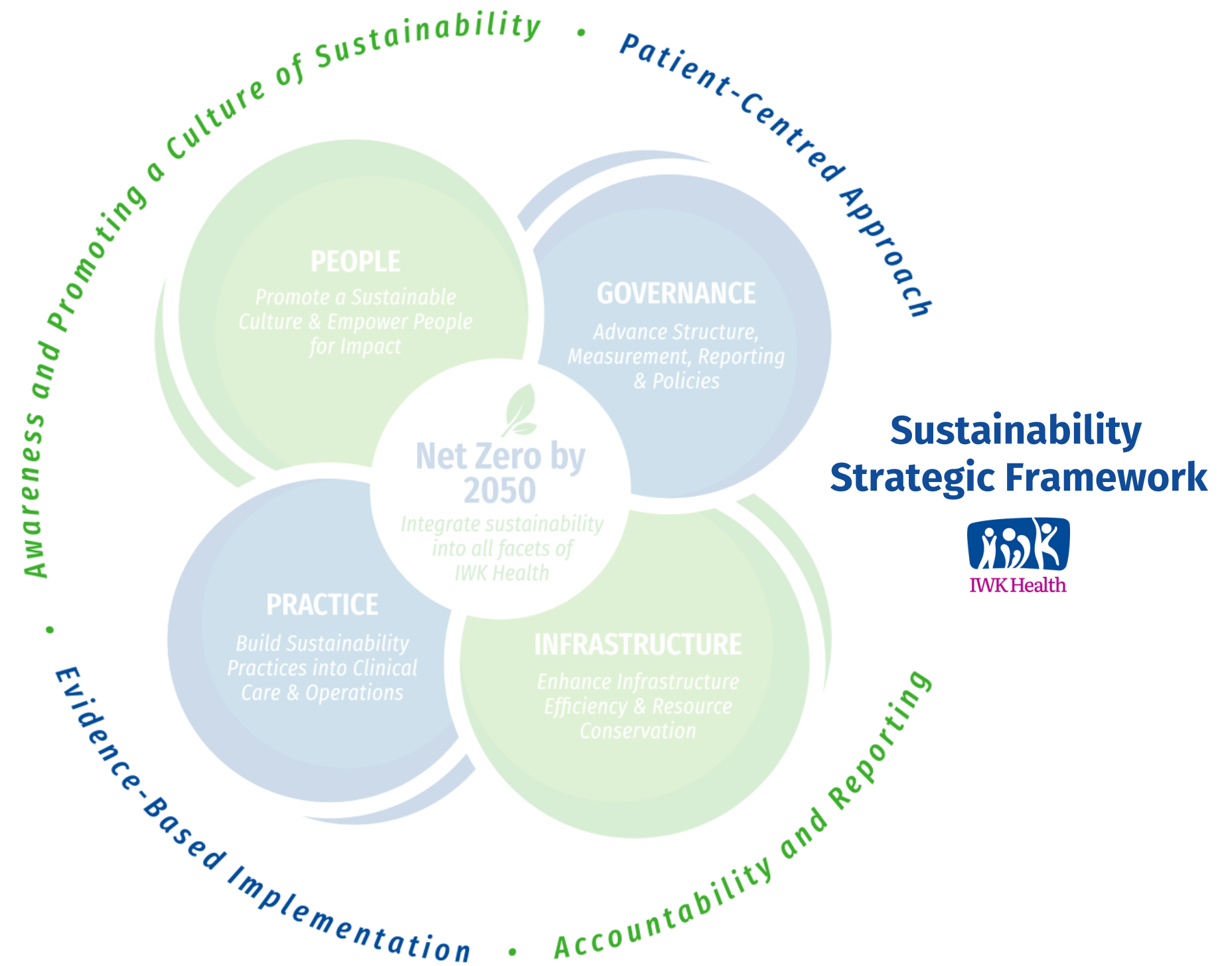
Enhance Infrastructure Efficiency & Resource Conservation

The infrastructure pillar of a sustainability strategy is centered on enhancing the efficiency of our infrastructure and conserving resources. This involves optimizing our facilities and systems to reduce waste and improve energy use. Additionally, it includes implementing essential tools such as a climate data system, developing an energy management plan, and conducting climate risk assessments. These measures enable us to monitor and manage our environmental impact effectively, ensuring that our infrastructure supports our sustainability goals and resilience against climate-related risks. By prioritizing these initiatives, we can create a more sustainable and resource-efficient organization.

Our guiding principles

Guiding principles are the core values that steer decision-making in the design and implementation of the Framework. They serve as a framework for behavior and decision-making, ensuring consistency and alignment with overarching goals and pillar. The principles in the strategic framework are crafted to align with a health learning system framework.

The Sustainability Strategic Framework is founded on the following guiding principles: awareness and promoting a culture of sustainability; accountability and reporting; employing a patient-centred approach; and evidenced-based implementation.



Awareness and Promoting a Culture of Sustainability

Awareness and promoting a culture of sustainability in a healthcare facility involves fostering an environment where staff, patients, and stakeholders are informed, engaged, and motivated to integrate eco-friendly practices into daily operations. This principle emphasizes the importance of education and communication to highlight the environmental impact of healthcare activities, such as energy consumption, waste generation, and resource use. By encouraging proactive measures—like waste segregation, energy efficiency, and sustainable procurement—the facility can reduce its ecological footprint. Additionally, cultivating a culture of sustainability means embedding these values into organizational policies and inspiring collective responsibility, ensuring that environmental stewardship becomes an integral part of delivering quality healthcare.

Patient Centred Approach

A patient-centered approach in a healthcare facility, aligned with sustainability, places the needs, preferences, and overall well-being of patients at the forefront while considering environmental responsibility. This principle ensures that care delivery is tailored to individual patients, fostering trust and collaboration, and simultaneously incorporates sustainable practices to support long-term health and ecological balance. By integrating patient-centered care with eco-conscious strategies, healthcare facilities can enhance patient experiences while contributing to a healthier planet.

Evidence-Based Implementation

Evidence-based implementation in a healthcare facility, particularly in relation to sustainability, focuses on integrating proven strategies and practices that balance effective care delivery with environmental responsibility. This principle involves leveraging reliable data, research findings, and best practices to guide decision-making and operational improvements. By grounding sustainability initiatives in evidence, the healthcare facility ensures that its efforts are scientifically sound, measurable, and capable of driving long-term success in both patient care and ecological stewardship.

Accountability and Reporting

Accountability and reporting within a healthcare facility, in the context of sustainability, involve establishing clear standards, monitoring practices, and transparent communication regarding environmental impacts and progress toward sustainability goals. This principle ensures that the facility takes responsibility for its ecological footprint by tracking key performance indicators, such as energy consumption, waste management, and carbon emissions. Regular reporting not only demonstrates commitment to sustainable practices but also fosters trust and collaboration among staff, patients, and stakeholders. By holding itself accountable and sharing outcomes openly, the healthcare facility can drive continuous improvement, inspire collective action, and contribute meaningfully to environmental stewardship.

Key actions and initiatives: 2025-2027

We have developed twenty-seven actions and initiatives within the four focus areas – governance, infrastructure, people and practice – and based on our four principles that will guide our sustainability efforts over the next two fiscal years. Most actions and initiatives span multiple years and require multi-disciplinary teams and detailed workplans to ensure successful implementation.

These actions and initiatives are designed to build a strong governance foundation, ensuring effective engagement and education of our staff and external partners. Additionally, they initiate the formation of sustainability teams that will spearhead changes in clinical and operational practices, with the ultimate goal of integrating sustainable practices into every facet of our operations.



Governance	Infrastructure	People	Practice
GO.1 Evaluate current sustainability governance model	IN.1 Develop strategies to improve the success of financial investment	PE.1 Continue promoting sustainability awareness	PR.1 Improve active and sustainable transportation opportunities
GO.2 Create a centre-wide sustainability policy	IN.2 Initiate and execute energy management plan and strategy	PE.2 Initiate an external communication strategy	PR.2 Perform a sustainability review of the Emergency Department
GO.3 Undertake materiality risk assessment	IN.3 Undertake a climate risk assessment	PE.3 Collaborate with government, Indigenous and other communities	PR.3 Rollout of rigid sterilization container pilot
GO.4 Participate in IPSASB’S Sustainability Implementation Forum for the climate related disclosures exposure draft	IN.4 Deliver safer and sustainable chemicals, toxins, medications and waste management	PE.4 Build sustainability considerations in staff recruitment, evaluation and development	PR.4 Integrate environmental sustainability into the quality improvement (QI) model
GO.5 Undertake scope 1, 2 and 3 assessment	IN.5 Increase waste diversion rate to 30%		PR.5 Establish a sustainability staff & physician engagement program
GO.6 Formalize indicator and metrics performance tracking	IN.6 Reduce water consumption and enhance water efficiency		PR.6 Formalize sustainability working group structure
GO.7 Prepare and publish sustainability and/or climate report	IN.7 Implement a centralized sustainability and climate data management system		PR.7 Continue collaboration with IWK Choosing Wisely Committee
GO.8 Incorporate sustainable standards and practices into the supply chain			
GO.9 Define a sustainability audit framework			

F25-26 & F26-27 initiative

F25-26 initiative

F26-27 initiative



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