

STRATEGIC PLAN

Update



April 2024

Land Acknowledgement

We are grateful to live, work, and be in relationship with First Nations and Indigenous people from across many traditional First Nations Territories, covering all regions of what is colonially known as British Columbia.

We recognize we are uninvited settlers and are honoured to be on this land, acknowledging with respect the diverse histories and cultures of First Nations. BCEHS is committed to reconciliation, decolonization, providing culturally safe services, and building stronger relationships with these communities.

How We Got Here

The BCEHS **Strategic Plan** was finalized in June 2022 following months of consultation. It is grounded in four strategic priorities, each with specific goals and actions.

The plan has helped build a foundation to set us up for success in the years to come, with an emphasis on constantly improving patient care and employee supports, addressing health care inequities for First Nations and Indigenous Peoples, and developing long-term strategic and infrastructure plans. The plan is guiding our work to become a world leader in providing and supporting the provision of excellent patient care in communities across the province.

The goals and objectives outlined in the plan are targeted for completion within a three-year period, and as we are now halfway through that timeframe, it is time to take stock of everything we have accomplished as an organization since the implementation of the plan.

This update provides a summary of work both completed and underway and is a snapshot of our progress to date. There has been much growth and positive change at our provincial service since the strategic plan was developed, and we will continue to evolve, improve, and transform both the services we provide and the support for our employees in the coming months.

Our Priorities

Improve Access and Quality

Patients and families in need of BCEHS services should expect timely high-quality care, wherever they are across the province. We will continually make improvements in the quality of care we provide while aggressively expanding our capacity to deliver care. Patients and families will be active participants in decision making and planning at BCEHS.

Improve Recruitment, Retention, Employee Wellbeing and Engagement to Enable Success

Exceptional emergency and community patient care is our responsibility, and we know that our employees are at the core of delivering on that promise to patients. As part of the three-year plan, BCEHS will focus on improving staffing levels and supports. Supports include a focus on mental and physical wellbeing, streamlined business systems and processes, and building a culture that fosters anti-racism, diversity, inclusion, and equity. We will take actions that are tangible and measurable to ensure we are an employer of choice, and that employees at BCEHS are healthy and well supported.

Develop an Indigenous Health Strategy

Building upon the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action and the In Plain Sight report, and in alignment with the Rural, Remote, First Nations, and Indigenous COVID-19 Response Framework, BCEHS recognizes inequities in care provided to First Nations and Indigenous Peoples in British Columbia and is committed to take action to address them.

Create a 10-Year Plan for BCEHS

This plan is focused on creating a stable foundation. There are some actions that can be taken in the next three years to improve our foundation with respect to key infrastructure; however, there are more significant systems and infrastructure changes will need to be made over the next 10 years to realize our vision of becoming a world leader in emergency services.

Improve Access and Quality

Goal 1: Implement a Quintuple Aim Quality Strategy with Staff, Patients, Families, and System Partners

The 'Quintuple Aim' approach guides BCEHS' framework for moving forward, as the organization seeks improvements in health outcomes, provider satisfaction, financial efficiency, experience of care, and health equity for all. Since launching the Strategic Plan, BCEHS has:

- ➔ completed a data governance review and advanced its **Data Strategy**
- ➔ began implementation of increased paramedic **Scope of Practice**
- ➔ expanded our staffing in **Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience**
- ➔ improved **patient safety and quality of care** by integrating the PHSA Quality and Safety Plan to BCEHS and developing patient safety fundamentals and patient safety learning system education for Clinical Operations leadership

Goal 2: Improve Response Times in Urban B.C.

BCEHS has taken action to boost its response times in urban areas by:

- ➔ implementing a **priority 911 queue** - by the end of 2023, calls going through the priority 911 queue were answered 3.5 times faster
- ➔ updating the **Clinical Response Model** for "Red" or urgent events
- ➔ increasing coordination of the **248 Bike Squad** with Clinical Hub and Link and Referral Unit (LARU) resources
- ➔ awarding **new helicopter and fixed wing air ambulance contracts to modernize the fleet**
- ➔ updating our **Dispatch library** to better utilize available resources

Goal 3: Improve Service Levels in Rural and Remote B.C.

BCEHS has made significant changes to improve our service in rural and remote areas of the province. This work has involved:

- ➔ **adding advanced care paramedics (ACPs) to rural communities** for the first time
- ➔ converting **60 Scheduled On-Call (SOC) stations** to new staffing models that better meet the needs of our employees and the communities they serve
- ➔ transitioning the **Community Paramedic Program** into a standalone staffing model within Clinical Operations and strengthening the program
- ➔ piloting **first responder projects** for lower acuity calls and escalation of response

As part of the Rural, Remote and Indigenous Framework (RRIF), BCEHS added five aircraft, more than 450 new full-time positions, 18 rural ACPs across nine rural communities, and 30 new dispatch positions.



Goal 4: Develop Innovative Models for Non-Urgent Patients

Not all patients are best served in an emergency room, and BCEHS has focused on tailoring its response to low acuity patients to provide timely, appropriate, and effective care by:

- ➔ expanding the **Clinical Hub** and the Link and Referral Unit (LARU) program
- ➔ adding **LARU units** in Victoria, Nanaimo, and Prince George in late spring 2024, after the program was made permanent following a pilot phase in the Lower Mainland, Kamloops, and Kelowna
- ➔ partnering with more **urgent and primary care centres (UPCCs)** around the province, with 25 of 32 UPCCs now accepting BCEHS patients
- ➔ adding six new **Assess, See, Treat, and Refer (ASTaR) pathways** for low acuity patients with specific concerns
 - Gastroenteritis
 - Frailty
 - Substance use referral
 - Heat emergencies
 - Cold emergencies
 - Generic UPCC
- ➔ implementing the use of **GoodSAM**, a technology tool that supports real-time virtual care

During the first 18 months of the Strategic Plan's implementation, the Clinical Hub diverted 10,198 patients away from emergency departments.

Goal 5: Make Improvements to Our Ability to Provide Interfacility Transports

BCEHS serves an enormous geographical area and recognizes the need to excel in providing high functioning interfacility transportation for our patients. To that end, we have:

- ➡ awarded **new aircraft contracts** specifically for handling interfacility transports
- ➡ added **dedicated transfer ambulances** and paramedic positions
- ➡ expanded **Patient Transfer Services**

Since this plan's implementation, there have been 23 transfer cars and 190 permanent full-time positions added, as well as 46 new Patient Transfer Network (PTN) staff hired.

Improve Recruitment, Retention, Employee Wellbeing and Engagement to Enable Success

Goal 1: Improve Mental Health Supports

BCEHS has taken measures to better support the mental wellbeing of staff, such as:

- ➔ improving access and availability to **trained clinicians and psychologists**
- ➔ developing a **Psychological Health and Safety course** for leaders
- ➔ having an independent evaluation of our **Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)** program done and working towards implementing recommendations to improve the program

The overall BCEHS WorkSafeBC injury claims are trending downward with 2023 anticipated to be the lowest in seven years. The number of trained clinicians and psychologists available to support staff increased from 163 to 338, and 12 excluded peers were added to support the mental wellbeing of excluded staff. This has enabled BCEHS to better provide the right resource to clients and to meet the demand of paramedics.

Goal 2: Improve and Expand Programs for Employees at BCEHS to Keep Them Physically Well, Support Recovery, and Return to Work

In addition to improving mental wellbeing, BCEHS has also taken aim at keeping employees physically healthy and expediting the return to work for injured staff, including by:

- ➔ expanding the **Connect and Recover** program to better support employees with physical injuries
- ➔ implementing the **Summer Uniform Initiative**
- ➔ working with **WorkSafeBC** to remove obstacles in claims processes

The Connect and Recover program tripled its enrolment of employees in 2023 and captured 98 per cent of eligible cases, up from 35 per cent of cases in 2022.



Goal 3: Identify and Eliminate Systemic Causes of Racism, Sexism, and Discrimination

BCEHS is committed to rooting out discrimination of all kinds, and has taken action by:

- ➔ developing a three-year **People Plan** that is involving substantial engagement and collaboration across the organization and with our partners
- ➔ launching a **Culture Champions** program
- ➔ conducting a **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion** survey
- ➔ implementing a **dedicated phone line** for employees seeking information on how to **report bullying or harassment** with trauma-informed employees staffing the line
- ➔ hiring a **new Chief, People Diversity and Culture Officer** to lead a dedicated team that includes additional coordination of HR services, an Executive Director, Employee Experience, an Executive Director, Indigenous Health as well as a Director, Diversity Equity and Inclusion and a Director, Culture and Leadership
- ➔ making **anti-Indigenous Racism training required** for all employees across the organization

The completion rate among staff for the San'yas Indigenous Cultural Safety Core Health course was 44 per cent by the end of March 2024, while the Anti-Indigenous Racism Response Training had a completion rate of 57 per cent.

Goal 4: BCEHS Employees Play a Role in Shaping the Future of BCEHS and are Recognized for Their Expertise and Valuable Contributions

Since the launch of the Strategic Plan, employees have contributed to:

- ➔ the **Pay Process Improvement** project
- ➔ the **Scope of Practice Expansion**
- ➔ the **SOC Phase Out**
- ➔ the **new BCEHS Intranet project**
- ➔ the **People Plan**

Staff are recognized through a variety of avenues:

- ➔ **Long Service Awards** (155 staff with 25 or more years of service were recognized in 2023)
- ➔ **Emergency Medical Services Exemplary Service Medal Awards**
- ➔ the **Chief Ambulance Officer Excellence in Adversity awards** (108 employees have been recognized with this award since its inception in 2023)

- ➔ the **Tom St. Laurent and Tony Sunderland award nomination program** (43 employees were nominated for the awards in 2023, with two recipients named for each award in early 2024)
- ➔ **Vital Link and Good Samaritan events** (81 ceremonies held since June 2022)
- ➔ a **strengthened recognition program** for 5-, 10, 15-, and 20-year employees



Goal 5: Improve Business Systems and Processes

BCEHS seeks to improve its business systems and processes as a means of supporting employee satisfaction and increased transparency. To date, this work has included:

- ➔ the implementation of **FirstWatch** software, which allows leaders to access real-time system and operational data to optimize resources to maximize our ability to provide patient care
- ➔ preparations to replace the analog communications network with an IP communications network as part of the **NextGen 911** project
- ➔ an independent **assessment was done of our pay processes**, with 92 recommendations for improvement made
- ➔ development of a new **Intranet**, scheduled to launch in spring 2024

As of January 2024, there were 203 FirstWatch users within BCEHS, and 16 of the pay process improvement recommendations had been implemented.

Goal 6: Hire Staff to Meet Service Demands

The organization has implemented the largest recruitment campaign in its history and has made substantial additions in Metro/Urban staff across various frontline positions and in leadership. BCEHS has added:

- ➔ 269 regular **full-time paramedic** positions (as of April 2023)
- ➔ 89 new **emergency medical responder (EMR) transfer fleet** positions (as of April 2023)
- ➔ 335 new **casual paramedic** employees (as of December 2023)
- ➔ five new **Patient Transfer Coordination Centre** employees
- ➔ 141 new **irregular emergency medical call taker (EMCT)** employees (as of December 2023)
- ➔ 62 new **dispatch** employees
- ➔ 94 new **excluded leaders**

BCEHS attended 499 proactive recruitment events in 2023, hiring 764 new paramedics last year. This is nearly 500 more new hires than in 2021.

Goal 7: Invest in Development of B.C.'s Paramedics, Emergency Dispatch Staff and Leaders

BCEHS is working to expand opportunities for career growth within the organization for better employee success and satisfaction. To date, this work has included:

- ➔ updating the **New Employee Orientation** program to accommodate greater recruitment and system needs
- ➔ increasing paramedics' **scope of practice** across all levels
 - 552 EMR and 89 critical care paramedic (CCP) employees have completed their respective scope of practice expansion training (as of March 2024)
- ➔ creating a **Leadership Development Plan**
- ➔ streamlining access to **Class 4 Driver's License** road tests

In 2023, more than three times as many new staff were onboarded compared to the pre-pandemic average (790 versus 250 per year). As part of the scope of practice expansion, 205 driver-only employees were trained and licensed as EMRs by December 2023, and 153 EMRs were identified as candidates for primary care paramedic (PCP) training.

Develop an Indigenous Health Strategy

Goal 1: Improve Equitable Access to Appropriate Services in First Nation and Indigenous Communities

BCEHS is committed to taking tangible action to support care in Indigenous communities. Since June 2022, BCEHS has:

- ➔ visited approximately 40 First Nation communities to **meaningfully engage with community members**
- ➔ supported additional **first responder program work** in 32 communities
- ➔ piloted a new approach to offer EMR training in remote, rural, and northern communities to **allow prospective hires to learn in their home communities**

Goal 2: Develop and Implement BCEHS's First Indigenous Health Strategy

Following the implementation of the Strategic Plan, BCEHS has:

- ➔ introduced the **Indigenous Ceremonial, Cultural, Spiritual, and Compassionate Leave Policy**
- ➔ required all excluded leaders to complete **Indigenous-specific anti-racism education** and made the education available to all employees
- ➔ developed BCEHS' **Indigenous Specific Anti-Racism Action Plan**
- ➔ hired an executive director for Indigenous Health and expanded the **BCEHS Indigenous Health Team**

More than 320 dispatch staff also received Culture, History, and Appropriate Language education as part of their orientations.



Goal 3: Increase Meaningful Engagement with Indigenous Communities

BCEHS is committed to working with Indigenous communities to improve partnerships and build relationships to ensure that the voices from those communities are heard. To further this goal, the organization has:

- ➡ attended regional **Indigenous Health Caucuses**
- ➡ worked to establish further **first responder agreements**
- ➡ expanded efforts internally with other BCEHS teams to **promote engagement** with Indigenous communities

Goal 4: Ensure Every Person and Family Who Asks for Care or Services is Treated with Respect, Dignity, and Compassion

BCEHS strives to offer equitable, respectful care and continues work to enhance the process for Indigenous patient file reviews and complaints. These efforts have included:

- ➡ establishing **Sharing and Healing Circles**
- ➡ forming the **Indigenous Health Action Plan**
- ➡ reviewing Indigenous-related cases in the Patient Safety and Learning System
- ➡ implementing an **Indigenous patient identifier**
- ➡ updating the BCEHS Standards of Competency and Professional Practice to add a new **Indigenous Cultural Safety** section

Create a 10-Year Plan for BCEHS

Goal 1: Develop a 10-Year Strategic Plan

Looking to the future, BCEHS will build on the foundation set in this plan by delivering a long-term strategic plan to ensure the organization is a world leader in emergency care, interfacility transfer, and community health services. An important part of this work is a detailed five-year draft integrated business case being developed in partnership with PHSA and government.

Goal 2: Plan and Execute a 10-Year Infrastructure Plan

BCEHS' plan for the future includes building a comprehensive and long-term organization and facilities strategy that enables it to review the current state of operations and determine a strategic framework to transform operations. So far, this has involved:

- ➔ work is in progress on a 10-year capital plan, to be explored in partnership with PHSA and government, as part of long-term health systems planning
- ➔ initiating the creation of a **Strategic Facilities Plan** with a 30-year vision on facility provision and improvements

Goal 3: Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions through the Introduction of New Vehicles and Technologies

BCEHS is committed to decarbonizing operations and signed on to the West Coast Fleet Electric Pledge in early 2022. Additionally, the organization has:



- ➔ expanded the use of **electric vehicles** for emergency response
- ➔ initiated development of ambulances based on Ford Transit chassis for **fuel efficiency**

The BCEHS fleet includes six Ford Mach-E Electric cars and one electric ambulance.

Goal 4: Routine Facilities and Asset Refreshment

Many BCEHS sites around the province would benefit from capital upgrades to better support care provision and make the workplace more comfortable for employees. BCEHS has taken stock of its facilities, and:

- ➔ **renovations and replacement projects** are underway, including upgrades for two dispatch operation centres
- ➔ routine **deep cleaning and restocking services** have been implemented in Victoria, Burnaby, Chilliwack, Kelowna, Parksville, and Nanaimo, and deep cleaning services have been expanded in Kamloops
- ➔ **ready to respond trials** were held in three stations in the Lower Mainland
- ➔ the non-conveying fleet received **44 new units** that were upfitted to enable them to support emergency response in 2023/2024

