

WCHRI Strategic Plan (2020-2025)

Last updated September 2020

Vision

To harness the power of research innovation for a healthy future for children and women.

Mission

WCHRI will foster the brightest minds to discover, innovate and ultimately transform the health of children and women through supporting research excellence.

Our FACTTS (Operating principles)

- **Facilitate** research activities, build capacity, catalyze research innovation and excellence.
- **Advocate** for women and children's health research platforms, programs and policy, in Alberta, across Canada and beyond.
- **Communicate** research outcomes to stakeholders, patients, community and government.
- **Train** the next generation of researchers.
- **Translate** knowledge to support evidence informed practice and policy.
- **Sustain** operations through effective accountability reporting and stakeholder engagement.

Themes

- Pregnancy and developmental trajectories
- Children's health and well-being
- Lifelong women's health

Goal 1: Our academic members

Support our members as they strive for research excellence and advance health research for **greater impact**

Objective 1.1: Promote research leadership and collaborations in theme areas

1-2yr (plan)	3yr (picture)	5yr (vision)
<p>Engage membership within each theme to develop priorities and identify gaps; position members to be more prepared for larger national opportunities.</p> <p>Identify opportunities for WCHRI to provide targeted support to member-driven research working groups and teams within the theme areas.</p> <p>Identify individuals who have the interest, aptitude, and skills to succeed with large team grants - provide targeted development, create opportunity and incentive for mentorship.</p>	<p>Support and encourage WCHRI members to take on local, national and international leadership roles including as the lead of team grants.</p> <p>Establish meaningful points of integration with Department and Faculty leadership structures; negotiating research time protection for members who are willing/able to lead large team grant applications.</p>	<p>A theme leadership and collaboration model has been established with clear terms of reference and support from departments/faculties. Theme areas have identified priorities for further research development.</p> <p>Members within theme areas have led applications for one or more large team grant opportunities.</p>

Objective 1.2: Support our members to advance their research in our changing environment

1-2yr (plan)	3yr (picture)	5yr (vision)
<p>Update membership module and processes in order to capture current and accurate information about members.</p> <p>Work with Faculties and RSO to obtain data on Institute member applications to external funders, including success rates.</p>	<p>Use data to identify gaps and opportunities, to inform program development, to further support collaborations among researchers within our changing environment.</p> <p>Support our members to most effectively access and use AbSPORU and SCN resources.</p>	<p>WCHRI members are consistently successful at national and international funding opportunities (e.g. CIHR, HSF, NSERC, etc.)</p> <p>WCHRI supported research has the potential for implementation and/or application in practice or policy.</p>

Objective 1.3: Recruit and retain research excellence

1-2yr (plan)	3yr (picture)	5yr (vision)
<p>Partner with academic unit(s) and health system operations to recruit and retain research intensive faculty (>40%) in priority areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) child and adolescent mental health 2) ovarian cancer research 3) mature women's health 4) precision health (women and/or children's focus) 5) perinatal research (including indigenous maternal-child focus) <p>Further develop the Distinguished Researchers program within a mentorship context (providing and/or receiving mentorship) in order to build capacity and foster large grant / team grant applications.</p>	<p>Create targeted research programs (e.g. mentoring) and suitable support structures to build capacity in areas of recruitment priority and/or established strength.</p>	<p>WCHRI increases research excellence and expertise in areas of strategic priority.</p> <p>Established researchers at WCHRI have unique opportunities to innovate and build capacity, with access to resources that have been tailored to their needs.</p>

Existing WCHRI strategies/programs that support this Goal:

- Operating Grants – innovation, CRISP, bridge funding, leveraged partnership/match
- Catalysts – recruitment supports, including start-up funding
- Catalysts - Distinguished Researchers within the Stollery Science Lab program; RAHF-supported Endowed Chairs
- Research platforms
- Communications (bulletin, newsletter, website, social), events/seminars

Goal 2: Our in-training members

Build capacity in women and children's health research by inspiring and supporting the **next generation of researchers**

Objective 2.1: Attract the best trainees and support their research training

1-2yr (plan)	3yr (picture)	5yr (vision)
<p>Offer sessions and activities that provide education, information, and skill development in topics relevant to the WCHRI mandate and strategy.</p> <p>Support the Trainee Advisory Committee in establishing clear goals/purpose for trainee engagement and mentorship.</p> <p>Foster the WCHRI postdoctoral fellowship (PDF) cohort by offering academic skill building opportunities through the Institute; explore new/additional opportunities with our partners.</p>	<p>Work with national program site leads (e.g. CCHCSP) in coordination with relevant faculties and departments to customize local support and mentorship for clinician scientist trainees.</p> <p>Explore partnership with Alberta Children's Hospital Research Institute (ACHRI) in order to expand research learning and mentoring opportunities in maternal-child health.</p> <p>Explore partnership with WHRI and WCRI in order to expand research learning and mentoring opportunities in women's health.</p> <p>Conduct an assessment of the PDF program to ensure it is meeting goals/purpose; explore options to further support trainee recruitment.</p>	<p>WCHRI attracts excellent trainees and supports their research training.</p> <p>WCHRI offers a trainee driven mentorship program.</p> <p>WCHRI offers a more comprehensive research training program / pathway in women and children's health that complements institutional learning.</p>

Existing WCHRI strategies/programs and partnerships that support this Goal:

- Trainee grants – summer studentships, graduate studentships, postdoctoral fellowship, patient and community engagement training (PaCET), trainee travel
- Catalysts – strategic alliance – Maternal and Child Health (MatCH) scholarship program
- Catalysts – strategic alliance – Canadian Child Health Clinician Scientist Program (CCHCSP)
- Catalysts – lunch and learn series
- Catalysts – research day
- Communication (bulletin, newsletter, website, social) as a means of dissemination

Goal 3: Our environment

Create a research environment where we challenge the status quo and **address the unique health needs of women and children**, a place where investigators want to come to in order to conduct **world class research** in women and children's health.

Note: this goal is closely tied to Goal 1 (themes/teams and recruitment/retention)

Objective 3.1: Position WCHRI as a national / international leader in women and children's health research; an institute that supports fundamental / preclinical research through clinical to population health focused on the unique health needs of women and children.

1-2yr (plan)	3yr (picture)	5yr (vision)
<p>Develop parameters to identify existing areas of research strength as well as areas that are under supported/under researched in women and children's health.</p> <p>Develop strategies to increase capacity and encourage relevant cross cutting priorities (e.g. sex, gender, intersectionality, indigeneity) in women and children's health research</p> <p>Explore opportunities to expand platforms and/or develop new partnerships in order to support relevant healthy population research (e.g. pregnancy, pre-conception, healthy children); create opportunities for virtual research.</p> <p>Expand the WCHRI support platforms model to LHHW by establishing a new staff position that will develop targeted support for women's health research and site-based clinical trials.</p>	<p>Refine programs to ensure they are focused on supporting our identified research priority areas in women and children's health.</p> <p>Implement strategies within programs and platforms in order to support cross cutting priorities, virtual research, and research focused on early intervention and prevention strategies in a healthy population (i.e. DOHaD, pregnancy outcomes, early childhood).</p> <p>Establish LHHW as a women's health research hub; tailored to support clinical research at LHHW, and as a central point for women's health community research.</p>	<p>WCHRI is a research institute that offers a unique infrastructure, tailored to supporting world class research in each of our three theme areas: children's health, women's health, and pregnancy and developmental trajectories.</p> <p>WCHRI is a national voice for women and children's health research.</p>

Objective 3.2: Position WCHRI as a national leader in interventional research in order to ensure safe and effective treatments for children and women; and to provide patients at our partner hospitals access to novel therapies.

1-2yr (plan)	3yr (picture)	5yr (vision)
<p>Identify senior clinical trainees and early career clinical investigators who have an aptitude and interest in clinical research and trials; work with our primary clinical departments (pediatrics, obstetrics & gynecology) to develop a methods training plan.</p> <p>Develop and deliver sessions targeted at closing knowledge gaps in clinical research operations (feasibility assessment, budget planning, etc.).</p> <p>Develop HR matrix to standardize training requirements and competencies for clinical research and data coordinating staff; initiate site based quality improvement initiatives.</p>	<p>Support researchers to effectively access and use resources/tools through WCHRI and our partners (e.g. MICYRN, AbSPORU) in order to innovate in clinical research and trials.</p> <p>Expand and promote our data coordinating centre as: 1) a national platform to support maternal-child interventional studies 2) a provincial platform to support patient oriented research through AbSPORU.</p> <p>Implement systems (e.g. CTMS, Connect Care) for more efficient study and trial management; remove administrative tasks from research coordinator responsibilities; increase capacity to support industry sponsored clinical trials.</p>	<p>WCHRI researchers lead innovative clinical research studies and trials.</p> <p>Patients at STO and LHHW have access to novel therapies.</p> <p>WCHRI is a research institute known for providing exceptional operational support for clinical trials and interventional research.</p>

Existing WCHRI strategies/programs and partnerships that support this Goal:

- Catalysts – strategic alliance – CHILD Birth Cohort
- Catalysts – strategic alliance – Maternal Infant Child Youth Research Network (MICYRN)
- Catalysts – strategic alliance – resident research (Peds, ObGyn, Psychiatry)
- Catalysts – strategic alliance – Canadian National Perinatal Research Meeting
- Catalysts – leveraged partnership – CHILD-BRIGHT Network
- Catalysts – leveraged partnership – SPOR Innovation in Pediatric Clinical Trials
- Catalysts – leveraged partnership - iHELT
- Research platforms
- Communication (bulletin, newsletter, website, social) as a means of dissemination

Goal 4: Our ecosystem

Innovate with our stakeholders and organizational partners to increase the **impact and reach of women and children's health research** locally, provincially, nationally and internationally

Objective 4.1: Improve health outcomes for children and women and increase dissemination and implementation of high quality health research evidence by supporting stakeholder* engaged research and research that is embedded at the point of care.

1-2yr (plan)	3yr (picture)	5yr (vision)
<p>Establish WCHRI community membership model that engages stakeholders (individual and organizational); be specific about the role the members could play (i.e., serve on committees and panels; participate in seminars and events such as Research Day).</p> <p>Provide support in building researchers' capacity for stakeholder engagement in research (e.g. resources, education, consultation).</p> <p>Follow up on WCHRI funded research outcomes (across multiple programs) and identify opportunities to assist awardees with knowledge translation (KT) activities.</p> <p>Develop partnership with SPOR SUPPORT Units in order to align and leverage resources.</p>	<p>Establish ongoing, multi-modal communication with community members; encourage stakeholder engagement in grant review processes and/or priority setting; provide personal or organizational incentives for stakeholders engaged in research.</p> <p>Require stakeholder engagement in WCHRI grant programs that fund applied health research.</p> <p>Support iKT activities that are focused on implementation and/or evaluation of interventions at the point of care.</p>	<p>WCHRI recognizes researchers' and stakeholders' efforts in engaged research (i.e, special awards or other forms of recognition) among its members.</p> <p>WCHRI is an active KT stakeholder in applied health research projects that we fund; we facilitate and foster meaningful connections between researchers and community stakeholders.</p> <p>WCHRI is well integrated with SPOR efforts (provincially and nationally) to support stakeholder engaged research and build capacity within the province and beyond.</p>

**by stakeholder, we mean non-academic partners (e.g. patients, public, health system operations, strategic clinical networks, community)*

Objective 4.2: Ensure research strategies are aligned with and adaptive to our ecosystem

1-2yr (plan)	3yr (picture)	5yr (vision)
Work with the contracted project manager to create structure and process towards the development of a national women's health research network.	Engage nationally with other women's health research centres to create a Pan-Canadian Women's Health Research Network with clear purpose and direction.	WCHRI builds capacity in research areas that are aligned with RAHF-LHHW and SCHF strategic priorities.
Identify areas of research strength and opportunity in precision health that are focused on women and/or children's health.	Explore opportunities to engage with precision health strategy at multiple levels (e.g. UAlberta / VPRI, FoMD, Foundations).	Precision health is seen as a strength within WCHRI.

Existing WCHRI strategies/programs and partnerships that support this Goal:

- Grants – clinical/community research integration support program (CRISP)
- Grants – scientific knowledge exchange program (SKEP)
- Research platforms
- Communication (bulletin, newsletter, website, social) as a means of dissemination and as a mechanism to highlight/promote successful member-produced research evidence and practical outcomes/implementation of interventions.
- Organizational partners that help us with this objective:
 - Community University Partnership for the Study of Children, Youth and Families (UAlberta)
 - Strategic Clinical Networks (AHS); in particular Maternal Newborn Child and Youth SCN
 - Stollery Children's Hospital
 - Lois Hole Hospital for Women

Goal 5: Sustainability and growth

Commit to professional and efficient, internal operational processes that ensure the highest levels of business accountability and sustainability leading to **enhanced capacity and growth**.

Objective 5.1: Prioritize operational and leadership succession planning; optimize internal business processes in order to continuously the quality and accessibility of programs/platforms.

1-2yr (plan)	3yr (picture)	5yr (vision)
<p>Develop a succession plan for all mission critical WCHRI positions to ensure there are no gaps in operational service during times of change and turnover.</p> <p>Develop a Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) plan for WCHRI that aligns with institutional strategic EDI planning, but is directly relevant and applicable to our Institute.</p> <p>Identify critical operational procedures and implement a plan to streamline processes, automate where possible, and update documentation.</p> <p>Re-invest in the use of REDCap not only as a research tool, but as a tool to support internal business processes (grants, membership, events, etc.) in order to develop consistency and best practice.</p>	<p>Develop a performance assessment process and criteria to ensure all staff fully understand roles and expectations; update on an annual basis.</p> <p>Routinely evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of our research programs and platforms, including EDI strategies; adjust and modify as needed.</p> <p>Promote the use of REDCap to other units at UofA as a research system that can support projects and administrative functions.</p>	<p>WCHRI's operational model is able to withstand times of uncertainty and change (e.g leadership, staffing, environmental).</p> <p>WCHRI's operational model can adjust and grow based on drivers in our environment and ecosystem.</p> <p>WCHRI's incorporates EDI in a meaningful and practical way across all areas of operations, leading to a more diverse organization.</p>

Objective 5.2: Be accountable and responsive to our funding partners needs

1-2yr (plan)	3yr (picture)	5yr (vision)
<p>“Equip” our partners with the information they require so that they can easily communicate the value of research to those who fund our work.</p> <p>Create interactive experiences that connect donors and Foundation staff to research in an experiential way.</p> <p>Involve WCHRI staff and researchers in signature Foundation fundraising efforts.</p>	<p>Work with University/Faculty advancement (and in coordination with Foundations) to create cases for support that are built around areas of emerging and existing WCHRI research strength.</p> <p>Create a more “unified” voice with our advancement colleagues across the University, to ensure we work collaboratively on fundraising proposals involving our Foundations.</p>	<p>Increased philanthropic contributions to women and children’s health research.</p> <p>Continue to reinforce to our Foundations that funds provided are invested with the highest standard of care; maintain our stakeholder relationships and secure future funding.</p>

This Goal is supported through existing WCHRI administrative team structures (e.g. HR, finance, communications, programs and platforms).