



BACKGROUND

The Government of Canada's commitment to renew and strengthen public health includes the establishment of six National Collaborating Centres for Public Health.

The overarching mission for these Centres is to:

"...build on existing strengths and create and foster linkages among researchers, the public health community and other stakeholders to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of Canada's public health system. The National Collaborating Centres will facilitate the sharing of knowledge and help put it into practice at all levels of the public health system across Canada".

Six NCCs are established in regions across the country; each one specializing in a different priority area of public health as follows: environmental health (British Columbia); infectious disease (Winnipeg); public health methodologies and tools (Ontario); healthy public policy (Quebec); health determinants (Atlantic) and Aboriginal health (British Columbia). Although located regionally, these Centres will provide national focal points for knowledge translation in key priority areas of public health and contribute to the development of a pan-Canadian public health strategy.

Each National Collaborating Centre will draw on regional, national and international expertise and complement/collaborate with the contributions of other organizations in the pan-Canadian public health system, including the Public Health Agency of Canada, the provinces and territories, academia and non-government organizations. Focussed on the practice of public health, the NCCs will facilitate the sharing of knowledge and help translate knowledge into practice at all levels of the public health system across Canada.

RATIONALE

Like many countries, Canada is taking steps to strengthen its public health capacity. Recent outbreaks of infectious diseases highlight the urgent need to strengthen public health expertise and capacity, and to develop and rapidly transfer public health knowledge among all levels of governments, academia and relevant non-governmental organizations. According to the Naylor Report and other key documents, there have been insufficient investments in public health infrastructure. As a result, Canada does not have an adequate knowledge base to inform the development of public health programs and policies. Evidence is not always available in a form that can be easily accessed by users. Practitioners working at a community level have limited opportunities to enhance their skills and capacity.

The National Collaborative Centres will play an important role in promoting the use of evidence in public health practice. They will establish collaborative processes to analyse priority key health issues and provide evidence and expertise for the development of mechanisms and tools to improve public health.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following principles will guide the development of the Collaborating Centres:

- The work of Centres will align with public health goals, the National Public Health Strategy and the work of the Public Health Network
- NCCs will engage and facilitate linkages between experts at regional, national and international levels.
- All six Centres will function as members of a Network and coordinate their work plans to address national priorities.



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- NCCs will complement the initiatives of PHAC, the provincial governments, academic institutions and other key stakeholders.
 - NCCs will encourage and support the contribution of the variety of disciplines who work at all levels in public health, including municipal, provincial and national.
 - NCCs will support a participatory approach in planning initiatives and engage the users/consumers in designing and implementing their initiatives.

KEY FUNCTIONS

Several key concepts in knowledge management have been identified as initial focal points for the work of the Collaborating Centres. Definitions have been provided within the appendices to provide clarity around these references.

- Knowledge Synthesis
- Identify Knowledge Gaps
- Knowledge Translation
- Network Development

GOALS

1. Existing knowledge is translated into useful evidence for public health.
2. Gaps in knowledge and promote applied research inform the development of programs, policies and practice.
3. Networks of regional, national and international expertise and practice across the domains of public health address and facilitate the management of public health priorities.
4. Evidence is used to support the development of mechanisms and interventions which improves the quality of public health programs, policies and practices.

OUTCOMES

Within the five-year mandate defined for the Centres, it is expected that the public health community will see the NCCs as a resource. NCC's will have achieved the following outcomes:

1. Public health programs, policies and practices are aware of and use knowledge products generated by Collaborating Centres
2. Increased use of evidence in public health policy and practice.
3. National and international networks and collaboration have resulted in improvements in public health policies and practices.
4. Mechanisms are in place to support and sustain ongoing collaborative networks to inform public health policies and practice.