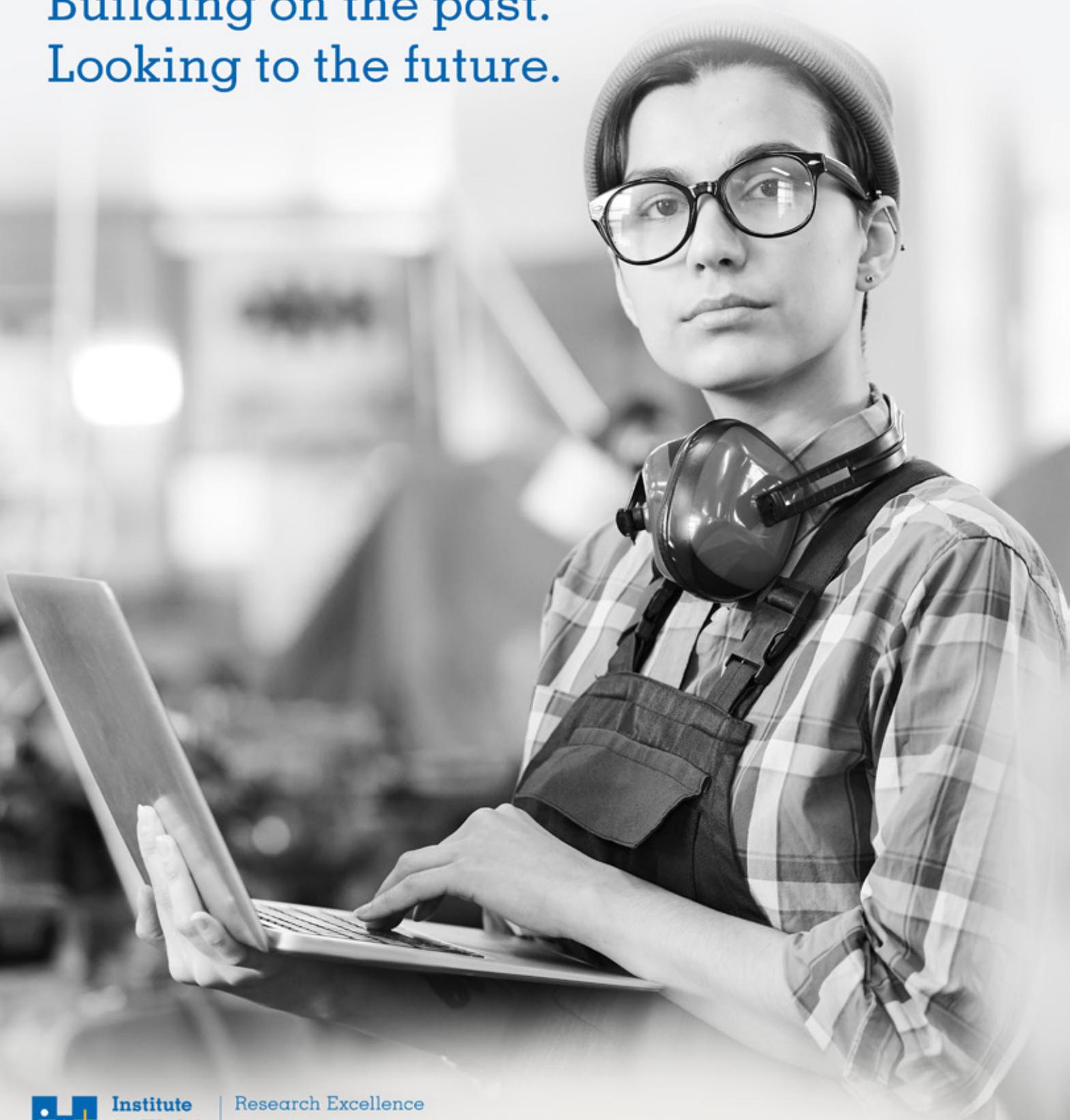


Institute for Work & Health **Strategic Plan, 2023-2027**

Building on the past.
Looking to the future.



Institute
for Work &
Health

Research Excellence
Safe Work
Healthy Workers

The Institute for Work & Health is an independent, not-for-profit research organization. Its mission is to conduct and mobilize research that supports policy-makers, employers and workers in creating healthy, safe and inclusive work environments.

The Institute operates with the support of the Province of Ontario. The views expressed in this publication are those of the Institute and do not necessarily reflect those of the Province of Ontario.

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IWH operates on the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca and the Mississaugas of the Credit River.



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Message from the CHAIR, IWH BOARD OF DIRECTORS



On behalf of the Institute for Work & Health (IWH)'s Board of Directors, I am honoured to present the IWH Strategic Plan, 2023-2027. Put together by the Institute's management team—with meaningful input from stakeholders, IWH staff and members of the Board—I am confident this plan will ensure IWH delivers on its mission to help policy-makers, employers and workers create healthier, safer and more inclusive work.

The development of this strategic plan comes at a time of renewal for IWH. I became the new chair of the Board in September 2021. In January 2022, after a rigorous hiring process, the Board named Dr. Peter Smith the Institute's new president—the first new president at the Institute in 20 years.

It's also a time of renewal because, as we are all too well aware, the last few years have been marked by the profound disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic changed not only the way IWH operates as an organization, but also the nature of the very things it studies: work and health. And it resulted in an unprecedented level of appreciation among the public of the important relationship between work and health.

These changes presented a natural moment for reflection on the Institute's strengths, as well as the opportunities, challenges and risks it faces in the coming years. While the directions outlined in the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan continue IWH's 30-year legacy of excellence in research and knowledge transfer and exchange, they also prepare the organization to be nimble and responsive to the complex and ever-changing work and health challenges of today and tomorrow.

I and the other Board members are looking forward to working with the Institute over the next five years as it implements the four strategic directions in this plan. We are excited to see the findings IWH's research generates, how these findings are shared and, most importantly, the impact they have on improving the health, safety and inclusion of workers.



Kate Lamb
Chair, IWH Board of Directors

Message from the PRESIDENT, IWH



Building on the past. Looking to the future. As the title of the IWH Strategic Plan, 2023-2027, makes clear, the Institute for Work & Health is entering the next five years from a position of strength.

Over the last five years, we regularly led between 20 to 30 projects a year exploring different facets of the relationship between work and health. We expanded the size of our audiences regularly receiving our research findings. We remained highly respected by our stakeholder community and recognized for the rigour, independence and usefulness of our research. And, as co-hosts of the XXII World Congress on Safety and Health at Work, we gained attention worldwide for our ability to bring together academic and non-academic audiences.

This strong foundation allows us to move into the future with confidence as we implement the four strategic directions outlined in this plan: advancing the science of work and health; expanding the reach and impact of our research; strengthening the work and health research ecosystem; and ensuring we remain a healthy, inclusive and engaging place to work.

Within these directions are bold, new objectives. We are expanding our evaluation of worker, workplace and system-level interventions. We are using population-level data in novel ways to address longstanding work and health challenges. And we are taking advantage of our reputation as a neutral convenor and bringing together work and health stakeholders to find common ground, based on evidence, about how best to tackle challenging issues.

This strategic plan is a product of much consultation, and I want to give a heartfelt thanks to all who contributed. That includes the 30-plus collaborators who took part in one-on-one interviews; the more than 1,000 subscribers who answered our strategic planning survey; the IWH staff who participated in one or more of the workshops on each of the four strategic directions; and, of course, the members of our tripartite Board of Directors who provided input ahead of their final approval of the plan.

Taken together, these people—whether research supporters, users or producers—brought extensive expertise and thoughtful ideas to the strategic plan presented here. One thing is clear. We all share the same vision: healthy, safe and inclusive work for all.



Peter Smith
President, IWH



WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE STAND FOR

OUR VISION

Healthy, safe and inclusive work through excellent research

OUR MISSION

To conduct and mobilize research that supports policy-makers, employers and workers in creating healthy, safe and inclusive work environments

WHAT WE DO

The Institute for Work & Health (IWH) is an independent, not-for-profit research organization based in Toronto, Canada. Since 1990, the Institute has been conducting research and developing evidence-based products to inform those involved in protecting and improving the health, safety and wellbeing of workers and in promoting their full and inclusive work participation. Our multidisciplinary research examines the inter-relationships between work and health from worker, workplace and system perspectives. We also train and mentor the next generation of work and health researchers.

OUR GOAL

The Institute's goal is to protect and improve the health, safety and wellbeing of working people, and to promote their full and inclusive work participation, by providing high-quality, relevant research in two broad areas:

1. understanding how the conditions and organization of work impact the health, safety and wellbeing of workers, and identifying and evaluating programs and practices that prevent work-related injury and disease; and
2. identifying ways to improve the management, support and work participation of people who are injured, facing health challenges, living with a disability or otherwise experiencing exclusion from work.

HOW WE SHARE OUR KNOWLEDGE

The Institute works closely with workers, employers and policy-makers to ensure our research is relevant and applicable to them and to the communities they serve. Our knowledge transfer and exchange program supports the continuous exchange of information and ongoing dialogue with key audiences in order to integrate stakeholder perspectives throughout the research process.

HOW WE ARE FUNDED

The majority of funding received by the Institute is from the Province of Ontario through the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. IWH also receives substantial funding for specific research projects through external peer-reviewed grant competitions.

OUR ACADEMIC TIES

The Institute is affiliated with several Canadian universities. IWH scientists teach and supervise students at the University of Toronto, McMaster University and Toronto Metropolitan University. Because of our association with the university community and our access to key data sources, IWH is respected as an advanced training centre. Graduate students and early-career researchers from Canada and abroad receive guidance and mentorship from IWH scientific staff and participate in projects, giving them first-hand experience and vital connections to the work and health research community.



OUR VALUES

EXCELLENCE

We aim for excellence in all that we do. We are committed to being international leaders in research and knowledge transfer and exchange to understand the inter-relationships between work and health.

INTEGRITY

We are transparent and ethical in our work, partnership development and decision-making. Our research meets the highest standards of scientific rigour and independence, and we are impartial in our interactions with study participants and project stakeholders, including workers, employers, health, safety and disability professionals, clinicians and policy-makers.

INNOVATION

We believe that creativity and risk-taking are necessary for innovation and are committed to building an environment that supports curiosity and continuous learning.

RESPECT

We respect each other, our partners and collaborators, our research participants, and the dignity of workers everywhere. Together, we build and foster inclusive spaces and recognize the importance of diverse perspectives and lived experiences.



COLLABORATION

Our work is strengthened by collaboration with colleagues, researchers, workers, employers, policy-makers and others. We listen to our partners and believe that diverse sources of knowledge and multidisciplinary perspectives are necessary to achieve our mission.

EQUITY

We are committed to advancing diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility within our workplace and through the work we do. We seek to understand and eliminate the structures within our organization and in society more broadly that can be sources of discrimination and inequity.

ACCOUNTABILITY

We are honest and responsible stewards of our resources. We conduct research and knowledge transfer and exchange that is relevant and valued by our partners and funders.



OUR CONTEXT TODAY AS WE PLAN FOR TOMORROW

The directions outlined in our 2023-2027 Strategic Plan continue the Institute's 30-year legacy of excellence in research and knowledge transfer and exchange. Building on this strong foundation, the directions also prepare us to be nimble and responsive to the complex work and health challenges of today and tomorrow.

Those challenges have never been so complex, and they are constantly evolving. Social, technological, environmental, economic and political forces are reshaping workplaces, changing work exposures and impacting workers and their ability to sustain healthy and productive work. The availability and nature of work is shifting, a shift that was augmented in recent years with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic also renewed public interest in the role and importance of safe and fulfilling work for individuals and for society as a whole.

Changes in technology — especially in the growing use of artificial intelligence, autonomous robots, and automated information and communication tools — and the expansion of the green economy and low-carbon technologies are also changing how, when and where people engage in work. Current forces, including historically low unemployment with labour shortages in many sectors, rising inflation, the threat of a recession and increasing rates of immigration in Canada, will also likely shape the health and wellbeing of businesses and workers in the coming years.



While much is changing, the need persists for rigorous analytical approaches and methods to guide the design of evidence-informed responses to worker health and safety challenges. Hundreds of thousands of workers are injured at work in Canada each year. In Ontario, Canada's largest province, rates of workers' compensation claims for injuries requiring time off work and for traumatic fatalities have remained too high and stagnant for the past decade.

Enduring concerns, including traumatic and musculoskeletal injuries, remain. Increasing awareness of issues such as workplace mental health and the health and safety of newcomers to Canada have gained importance and demand collaboration across the occupational health and safety (OHS) system. Efforts continue to better understand and ensure that workplaces are equipped to adequately support and accommodate the one in six Canadians over the age of 15 who live with conditions that cause disability and the more than 250,000 Canadians who experience a work-related injury that requires time off work each year.

“ While much is changing, the need persists for rigorous analytical approaches and methods to guide the design of evidence-informed responses to worker health and safety challenges.



How the strategic plan was created

This strategic plan is the result of a year-long process that engaged stakeholders, members of the IWH Board of Directors and staff to take stock of IWH's strengths and identify opportunities and priorities for the coming five years. The plan benefited from:

- 3** meetings with the tripartite IWH Board of Directors
- 4** consultation sessions open to all IWH staff
- 31** one-on-one interviews with senior representatives of IWH's key partners and collaborators
- 1,000** survey responses from IWH subscribers

Over the next five years, IWH's multidisciplinary team of researchers will work with partners to build an evidence base of information that responds to these evolving challenges and that addresses priorities identified in Prevention Works, Ontario's OHS system strategy. We will strengthen our data capacity and research expertise to ensure the Institute is best positioned to respond to the dynamic world of work and health.

Within an environment of increasingly quick news cycles, social media activity and the proliferation of mis- and disinformation, the need for excellent, reliable and impartial research and clear communication has never been greater. Research organizations like IWH are challenged to maintain excellence and rigour in their research while keeping pace with the global demand for rapid information and evidence. Over the coming years, navigating this balance will be central to IWH demonstrating its value to the occupational health and safety community—provincially, nationally and internationally.



Increasingly, audiences for IWH research are looking for opportunities to engage with IWH researchers and with each other to discuss, navigate and share information regarding new and emerging challenges and solutions within the work and health landscape. As a respected neutral convenor, IWH is committed to helping facilitate these exchanges, as well as to broadening our reach to enable more diverse groups to participate in these activities.

IWH's 2023-2027 Strategic Plan sets out four strategic directions that will enable us to deliver on our mission and remain true to our values. In the next five years, we will advance the science of work and health; expand the reach and impact of IWH research; strengthen the work and health research ecosystem; and ensure IWH remains a healthy, inclusive and engaging place to work. Pursuing this ambitious agenda will require continued attention to the financial stability and stewardship of the organization, and careful documentation and dissemination of the impacts of IWH research.

“ Within an environment of increasingly quick news cycles, social media activity and the proliferation of mis- and disinformation, the need for excellent, reliable and impartial research and clear communication has never been greater.



Strategic Direction 1

Advance the science of work and health

For more than 30 years, IWH has been internationally recognized as a producer of excellent, relevant research that focuses on improving the health, safety and participation of working people. Our talented multidisciplinary research teams work closely with stakeholders to identify and address impact-focused research questions related to persistent, emerging and future challenges in work and health. IWH researchers are sought-after experts respected for their commitment to innovative, pragmatic, rigorous and collaborative work.

IWH will build on three decades of research excellence and continue to lead research on the reciprocal relationship between work and health that is responsive to complex contemporary challenges and has the potential for meaningful impact.

The last five years have resulted in wide-reaching changes to worker and workplace values, the labour market, and the health and wellbeing of people everywhere. In the coming five years, Institute research will continue to examine the inter-relationships between work and health.

More specifically, our work will focus on six priority areas: the changing nature of work and the future of work; longstanding work and health issues; mental health and work; organizational context, including small business; worker diversity and inclusion; and work and health within the broader societal context. We will use a range of research methods and approaches to address these complex and evolving relationships across individual, workplace and systems levels. Our work will be solutions-focused and attentive to how social and structural factors shape the workplace and worker context.

1 Conduct excellent research

We will conduct excellent research that deepens our understanding of how to improve the health, safety and wellbeing of working people and promote full and inclusive work participation. What this looks like:

- IWH researchers work with partners to undertake research examining diverse facets of work and health in Ontario, in Canada and around the world
- IWH researchers are successful in peer-reviewed grant applications
- IWH research is recognized by peers as high-quality and is used by researchers and the public

2 Provide expert advice

We will provide expert advice to improve program and policy design and implementation in the work and health arena. What this looks like:

- IWH scientists frequently present at national and international academic and practice conferences and events
- IWH responds to invitations by stakeholders to provide expert advice on a range of work and health policy and practice questions
- IWH advice and research findings are integrated into reports, recommendations, standards and decision-making

3 Expand intervention evaluation

We will strengthen the evaluation of worker, workplace and systems-level interventions to improve worker health and promote work participation. What this looks like:

- IWH scientists work with partners to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of programs, policies and the OHS system overall on worker health, wellbeing and work participation
- IWH researchers identify opportunities to use population-level data to examine the impacts of changes in legislation and regulation

Key ways we'll measure success

- Grant application success rate
- Number of research citations in peer-review publications
- Number of occasions on which IWH experts provide advice to partners and collaborators
- Percentage of IWH research dedicated to evaluation



Strategic Direction 2

Expand the reach and impact of IWH research

The Institute is a leader in the development and use of new and engaging ways of sharing research results to achieve impact. IWH's integrated knowledge transfer and exchange (KTE) approach ensures stakeholders' meaningful involvement throughout the research process — from study design to result dissemination — and recognizes that this engagement is critical for research to be used. Successfully mobilizing research findings requires tailored and creative dissemination strategies and close collaboration with workers, employers, policy-makers and other groups.

Over the next five years, IWH will build on established programs to develop new partnerships that extend our KTE and communications activities and ensure that IWH research remains responsive and accessible to those who need it most.

We will regularly present IWH research findings to growing provincial and national audiences and identify opportunities where IWH research can inform the development of evidence-informed policy and practice. The Institute will leverage its strong relationships and reputation for independence and impartiality to convene diverse groups of stakeholders around key work and health topics. We will continue to identify novel ways to disseminate and support the mobilization of Institute research in Ontario and Canada.

1 Strengthen our networks

We will strengthen our networks through continued and expanded engagement with stakeholders and partners. What this looks like:

- IWH regularly convenes a range of stakeholders to discuss work and health issues and IWH research projects
- IWH builds provincial, national and international partnerships to advance its mission and expand its reach
- Stakeholders are meaningfully integrated throughout IWH research projects and are actively involved in identifying research priorities, designing research, and interpreting and disseminating results

2 Deliver accessible evidence

We will deliver accessible evidence-based products and learning opportunities to catalyze the use of research among workers, workplaces and policy-makers. What this looks like:

- IWH regularly shares research evidence in user-friendly summaries, tools and materials that are accessible to, and used by, stakeholders
- IWH offers stakeholders and partners in-person and virtual opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and capacity to find, understand and use research

3 Expand our reach

We will expand our reach through strategic and creative dissemination of research findings. What this looks like:

- Diverse workers, workplaces and policy-makers from Ontario and beyond receive routine updates and research findings from IWH
- IWH researchers share their research with a growing national and international audience through IWH Speaker Series webinars
- IWH researchers are sought after by the media to share their research and comment on key work and health issues

Key ways we'll measure success

- Number of events that bring stakeholders together to discuss high-priority work and health issues
- Percentage of our subscribers who indicate in surveys that they use our resources in the course of their work
- Number of subscribers, event attendees, social media followers and media requests



Strategic Direction 3

Strengthen the work and health research ecosystem

Addressing the most pressing questions on work and health and evaluating the performance of health and safety programs and policies require comprehensive and high-quality data, appropriate study designs and methods, and skilled researchers to bring data and methods together. Together, data, methods and expertise comprise the work and health ecosystem. IWH's multidisciplinary research staff has long been at the vanguard of using different sources of data and a variety of methods and approaches to answer complex questions. IWH also supports training opportunities and awards at the master's, PhD and post-doctoral levels that focus on mentoring the next generation of work and health researchers.

From 2023 to 2027, IWH will help build a stronger work and health research ecosystem and solidify the Institute's position as an attractive destination for innovative research talent.

Capitalizing on a depth of experience in collecting, managing and analyzing qualitative and quantitative data, IWH will galvanize partnerships to improve and link different sources of health and work data in Ontario and across Canada, as well as invest in primary data collection (for example, longitudinal studies) to address persistent knowledge gaps.

Alongside developing more and better sources of data, the Institute will continue to prioritize methodological innovation and explore how new types of data can help address enduring challenges. We will invest in attracting and training a cadre of researchers equipped with the breadth of skills necessary to understand and address complex work and health issues.

1 Support the next generation

We will develop and mentor the next generation of work and health researchers. What this looks like:

- IWH financially supports master's, doctoral and post-doctoral trainees in the field of work and health
- IWH scientists train the next generation of work and health master's, doctoral and post-doctoral students

2 Improve data capacity

We will improve data capacity within Ontario and across Canada to answer work and health questions. What this looks like:

- IWH researchers work with partners to link population-level data sources in order to better examine key work and health issues
- IWH collaborates with partners to expand the breadth of data that is held at the Institute
- IWH researchers collect and examine diverse qualitative and quantitative data on a range of key work and health topics

3 Develop novel methods

We will develop novel research methods and approaches, and accelerate their use and application in work and health studies. What this looks like:

- IWH researchers lead the development and application of new work and health research frameworks, methods and measures
- Frameworks, measures and methods developed by IWH researchers are adopted by research and stakeholder partners

Key ways we'll measure success

- Number of students and trainees we support
- Number of population-level data sources held at IWH or accessed by IWH scientists
- Number of peer-reviewed contributions to developing and advancing work and health frameworks, methods and measures



Strategic Direction 4

Ensure IWH is a healthy, inclusive and engaging place to work

The success of IWH as an organization is the result of a dedicated and passionate staff and an active and engaged Board of Directors with diverse lived experiences. The last three years have brought about new, hybrid ways of working and elevated conversations about how organizations can create and sustain an equitable workplace culture. During this period of change, IWH's Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) Committee have helped the Institute strive to be a model of a safe, healthy and inclusive place to work.

IWH will continue to build a safe and equitable work environment where research innovation can flourish, and all workers feel valued and supported in their professional growth.

The Institute will continue organizational efforts to routinely measure and address physical and psychosocial exposures and to ensure diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility are fundamental considerations in decision-making. In the spirit of continuous learning and improvement, we will undertake a review and modernization of organizational policies and governance practices.

Where appropriate, we will commit to meeting external certification standards as they relate to demonstrated excellence of our organizational practices. Together with our Board of Directors, we will monitor and manage risks faced by IWH, to ensure our viability and sustainability into the future.

1 Demonstrate best practices

We will implement workplace health and safety best practices to ensure the health and wellbeing of all IWH staff. What this looks like:

- The Institute's JHSC is empowered and supported in addressing health, safety and wellbeing concerns
- IWH staff feel safe at work, and flexible hybrid work arrangements allow staff to balance work and life

2 Integrate DEIA principles

We will integrate DEIA principles throughout IWH's organization and research work by establishing and consistently applying policies and procedures. What this looks like:

- IWH DEIA Committee is empowered and supported in integrating the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility throughout the Institute's work
- All IWH senior management incorporate DEIA into their job descriptions and performance goals
- IWH implements expanded recruitment and professional development opportunities to improve the diversity of IWH senior leadership (i.e. Board of Directors, Scientific Advisory Committee and Executive)

3 Cultivate professional growth

We will cultivate an environment of continuous growth where workers at IWH are supported in their professional development. What this looks like:

- All IWH staff are supported in setting and achieving professional goals
- IWH identifies and provides training and development opportunities for all staff

Key ways we'll measure success

- Percentage of staff who indicate in anonymous surveys that they feel safe and satisfied at work
- Percentage of staff who indicate in anonymous surveys that they believe IWH is an equitable and inclusive place to work
- Degree to which Board of Directors, Scientific Advisory Committee and Executive reflect the diversity of the communities we serve
- Percentage of staff who indicate in anonymous surveys that they feel supported in their professional development
- Number of staff hours per year spent on training and development activities



AT A GLANCE: IWH STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS, 2023-2027

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

OBJECTIVES

Advance the science of work and health

- Conduct excellent research that deepens our understanding of how to improve the health, safety and wellbeing of working people and promote full and inclusive work participation
- Provide expert advice to improve program and policy design and implementation in the work and health arena
- Strengthen the evaluation of worker, workplace and systems-level interventions to improve worker health and promote work participation

Expand the reach and impact of IWH research

- Strengthen our networks through continued and expanded engagement with stakeholders and partners
- Deliver accessible evidence-based products and learning opportunities to catalyze the use of research among workers, workplaces and policy-makers
- Expand our reach through strategic and creative dissemination of research findings



STRATEGIC DIRECTION

OBJECTIVES

Strengthen the work and health research ecosystem

Mentor the next generation of work and health researchers

Improve data capacity within Ontario and across Canada to answer work and health questions

Develop novel research methods and approaches and accelerate their use and application in work and health studies

Ensure IWH is a healthy, inclusive and engaging place to work

Implement workplace health and safety best practices to ensure the health and wellbeing of all IWH staff

Integrate diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility principles throughout IWH's organization and research work by establishing and consistently applying policies and procedures

Cultivate an environment of continuous growth where workers at IWH are supported in their professional development



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