



**WRHN**

Waterloo Regional  
Health Network

# Care Reimagined

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Strategic Plan 2026-2029



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WRHN acknowledges that we gather, work, and heal on the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, and Chonnonton Peoples. Our healthcare team and community provide health services within the Haldimand Tract Treaty of 1784 that granted six miles on either side of the Grand River to the Haudenosaunee confederacy.





## Message From Leadership

### Care reimagined.

For over 90 years, Grand River Hospital and St. Mary's General Hospital partnered to care for patients. Through engagement with thousands of patients, families, team members, physicians, partners, and community members on how we can better care for our growing community, it became clear that the question was no longer "if" we would merge, but "how."

On April 1, 2025, Waterloo Regional Health Network (WRHN) was formed. The shift from "Hospital" to "Health Network" reflects a broader understanding of healthcare as a team-based effort that extends beyond hospital walls, into homes and communities.

Just as our merger was informed through extensive engagement, so was WRHN's inaugural three-year Strategic Plan—and our shared vision for the next ten years through our Future, Purpose, and Values: one team, one values-based culture, and one approach to seamless, integrated care. Shaped by the diverse voices of those we care for and work alongside, our three directions focus on building thriving teams, advancing personalized care, and building our network for better health. Our plans reflect who we are today, where we are going tomorrow, and how we'll get there, together.

Waterloo Region is projected to reach one million residents by 2050. Meeting future demand will require more than expanding hospital capacity. It calls for new models of care, innovation and technology, strong partnerships, and diverse voices to improve access, outcomes, and sustainability. It requires us to lead boldly and seek better ways to care and heal, built on a culture of putting people first.

We are deeply grateful to the communities we serve and work with for supporting our merger and helping define our shared priorities. As we move forward, our commitment remains to listen, learn, and work together, honouring our proud legacies and creating a future of outstanding care that's personal, seamless, and reimagined.



*Janet Davidson*

**Janet Davidson**  
Board Chair



**Ron Gagnon**  
President and CEO



## Our Future

Outstanding care that's personal, seamless, and reimagined.

## Our Purpose

Lead boldly, serve with compassion, consistently deliver high-quality care, and partner to advance health for all.

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## Our Values

### Put People First

We are honoured to care deeply for every patient, family, team member, and our communities. We are trusted to serve with compassion, respect, and empathy.

### Find a Way

We turn challenges into growth. We embrace innovation and seek better ways to care and to heal. With courage, we champion creative thinking and follow through on bold visions to meet our communities' evolving needs.

### Be Our Best

We are committed to excellence, every day. We educate, inspire, and grow through curiosity and continuous learning.

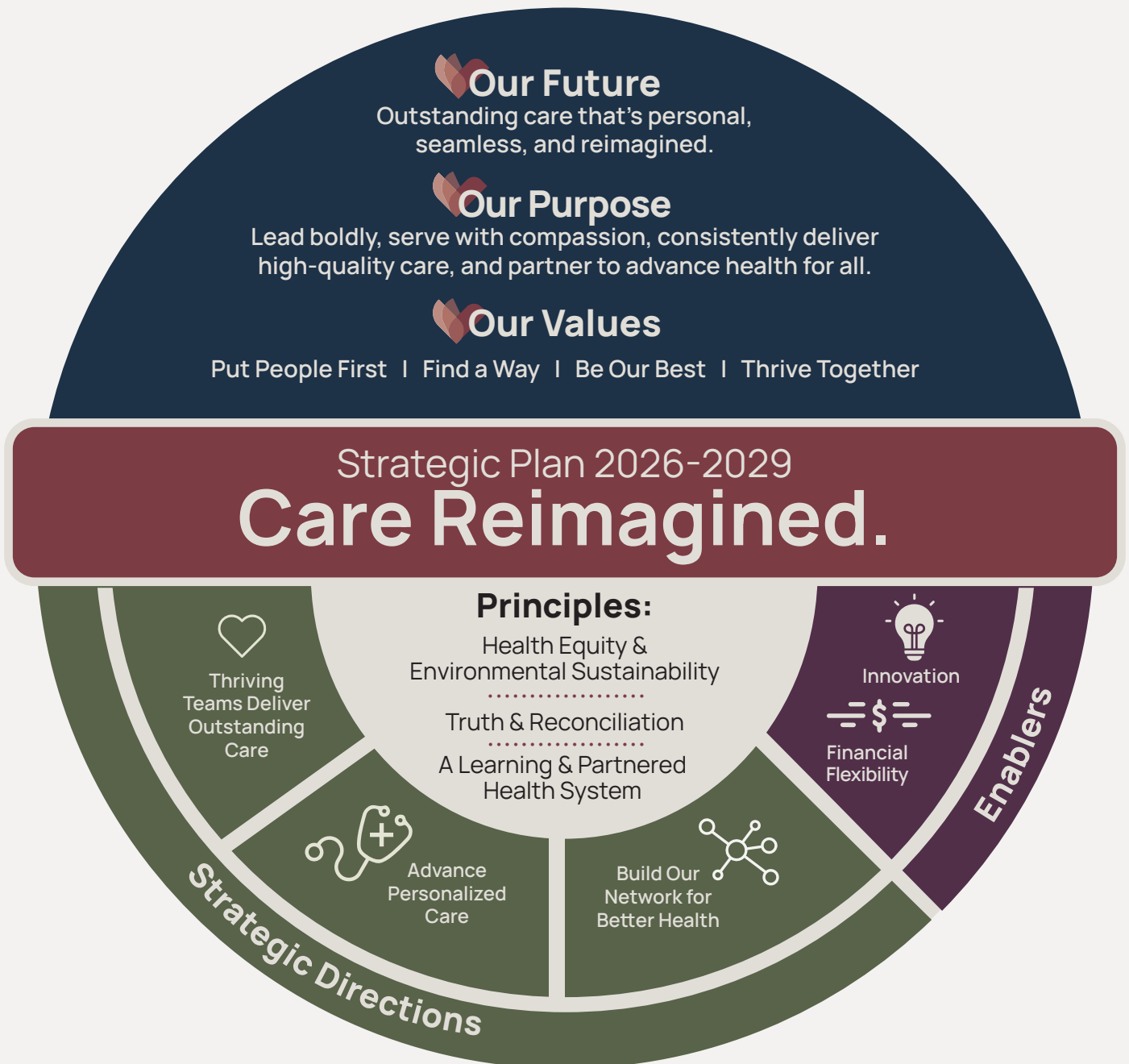
### Thrive Together

We partner with patients, and collaborate across roles, teams, and beyond our hospital walls. We communicate openly and truthfully, share knowledge, and strengthen relationships.

# WRHN 2026–2029 Strategic Plan:

## A Unified Vision for Outstanding, Personalized, Seamless Care

Over the next three years, WRHN will build the strong foundations required to operate as one network—advancing quality, equity, and access for a rapidly growing region.





## Strategic Directions (2026–2029)

WRHN's three-year Strategic Plan steps us towards achieving our future state, and focuses our work.

- **Thriving Teams Deliver Outstanding Care:** We will build one WRHN culture, improve team member experience, and strengthen learning and inclusion across our teams.
- **Advance Personalized Care:** Patients will experience care that is consistent, equitable, culturally appropriate, and co-created, providing the right care in the right place, within our hospital and beyond.
- **Build Our Network for Better Health:** We will become a digitally connected, integrated hospital system and advance our redevelopment projects, including the new hospital at the University of Waterloo.

## Catalysts for Success

- Success depends on two key enablers, Innovation and Financial Flexibility, guided by our core principles: Truth & Reconciliation, Health Equity & Environmental Sustainability, and A Learning & Partnered Health System.
- **Innovation:** WRHN will apply technology, data, and AI in smart, practical ways to improve access, coordination, and performance. Innovation at WRHN is a mindset, built into how we work, how we will reimagine care, and the partnerships we will grow that will allow us to test and scale new ideas and tools.
- **Financial Flexibility:** WRHN has a strong track record of responsible management. We will continue to build upon this so we can continue to invest in our teams and services to protect what matters most: safe, high-quality care for our patients and a supportive, sustainable workplace for our people that supports their well-being.

## Why This Matters Now

The Region of Waterloo is experiencing rapid growth and an aging population. By 2040, one in four adults over 30 will be living with a major illness requiring hospital care. This means more patients, more complexity, and more pressure on our teams and resources, requiring smart, coordinated, and sustainable planning to ensure equitable access to care. This plan positions WRHN to meet community needs through modernization, integration, and expanded capacity.

## Looking Forward

By 2029, WRHN will function as one integrated network with safer, more reliable, connected care for patients and families. Looking ahead to 2034–35, the opening of the new hospital will expand services, increase capacity, and strengthen quality across the region. Ultimately, WRHN's success will be defined by trust, inclusion, measurable outcomes, and its ability to remain responsive to evolving community needs—reimagining care so that it is outstanding, personal, and seamless for all.

## Opportunity to Meet Current and Future Needs

Waterloo Region is one of Canada's fastest-growing areas, with increasing healthcare needs and uneven access to care. Meeting the current and future needs of patients requires more than additional beds—it calls for an integrated, innovative approach to care delivery. By aligning hospital teams and services around one way to care for patients, we can improve collaboration, consistency, and the overall patient and team member experience.

Looking ahead, with the right tools, training, support, and infrastructure, our teams will enhance the delivery of equitable, high-quality care when and where it's needed. Partnerships—such as those with the University of Waterloo, the KW4 Ontario Health team, and others—will help drive innovation, strengthen research and talent, and modernize our facilities, enabling us to close care gaps and build better health for all.



**WRHN serves 10% of Ontarians through our Regional Programs.**



**Waterloo Region is projected to reach one million residents by 2050.**



**By 2041, it is expected that about 1 in 4 residents will be 65 years of age or older.**



**At WRHN, 145 more beds are needed today to match the provincial average (beds/1,000).**



**At WRHN, 254 more beds are needed to meet the Canadian average.**



**When primary care is limited, patients either go without care or turn to hospitals for their healthcare needs in our community. Approximately 65,000 residents in Waterloo Region do not have access to a primary care provider creating inequities and barriers to care locally. Of these, over 8,000 live in rural communities.**



# Community Before Brand

## WRHN's Journey to Outstanding Care That's Personal, Seamless, and Reimagined

### 1890s-1920s: Healthcare Takes Shape

Three hospitals—KW Hospital, Freeport Hospital, and St. Mary's Hospital—opened and operated independently. In the 1920s, KW and St. Mary's begin collaborating by sharing a physician and ambulance.

### 1980s-2010s: Health Services Restructuring

In the 1980s, each hospital begins to specialize in services working together to support care for patients. Ontario's Health Services Restructuring Commission makes changes so that the two hospitals focus on different services but share medical staff and leadership roles. Freeport Hospital merges with KW Hospital in 1995 to form Grand River Hospital.

### 2000s-2020s: Partnering to Care

The hospitals deepen their partnership by integrating many medical services to remove barriers and share people, equipment, expertise, and processes. This includes a Joint Chief of Staff, and integrated leadership across Lab, Pharmacy, Diagnostic Imaging, and IT services. The hospitals continue to partner together to plan for the future and launch a shared health information system, and a coordinated COVID response.

### 2020s: Building for the Future Together

Planning begins together to create the infrastructure needed to meet the growing needs of our community, including a new hospital that would be shared, and the redevelopment of GRH's existing sites. In 2024, after engaging with the communities they serve and work with, the hospitals announce their intention to voluntarily merge.

### April 1, 2025: WRHN Takes Flight

GRH and SMGH officially merge to form Waterloo Regional Health Network (WRHN). The name reflects that care is a team effort that reaches beyond hospital buildings and into the community. The merger brings many much-needed benefits:

- **Stronger Together:** Uniting our strengths and expertise allowed us to set new standards in compassionate, empowered, community-driven healthcare.
- **Fewer Barriers:** Access to care was not the same for every patient and could be challenging. Coming together allowed us to explore new opportunities and eliminate obstacles.
- **Better Care:** Advancing how we could deliver care to support the growing needs across our community and beyond created new ways to meet the needs of patients.
- **Better Outcomes:** Working collaboratively across our teams and with our partners allowed us to create new innovative solutions to improve the overall patient experience.

# Our Care Team - Part of Our Community



**WRHN cares for more than 259,000 unique patients each year.** Across our three hospital sites, community locations, and partnered hubs, and with a new hospital site planned at the University of Waterloo, we continue to expand our reach and impact to better serve our growing community.



**166,397**  
Emergency  
Department Visits



**21,439**  
Operating Room  
Procedures



**4,533**  
Births  
at WRHN



**559,042**  
Outpatient  
Visits



**757**  
Daily  
Diagnostic Tests



**448**  
Daily Oncology  
Outpatient Visits



**209**  
Daily Renal  
Outpatient Visits



**854**  
Beds  
Funded





# WRHN: Care Close to Home

At WRHN, we are one network of care with one focus: the health of our communities. WRHN serves over 1.4 million residents across Waterloo Region and beyond, delivering care at our Midtown, Queen's Blvd., and Chicopee sites, and in community-based sites and partnered hubs. While we continue to plan for our new hospital site at the University of Waterloo Campus, we remain focused on innovative, patient-centred care today, ensuring every individual feels supported, connected, and an active voice throughout their health journey.



For the most up to date listing of healthcare services and where they are delivered, visit our website at [wrhn.ca](http://wrhn.ca)



# The Region's New Hospital: Rooted in Care. Building for Health.



To meet growing demand, WRHN is planning to construct a new acute care hospital and redeveloping existing sites, expanding services and capacity while continuing to provide high-quality care to a rapidly growing region. Pending government approval, we will design and build facilities for future generations of healthcare workers and patients right here in Waterloo Region.



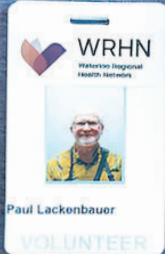
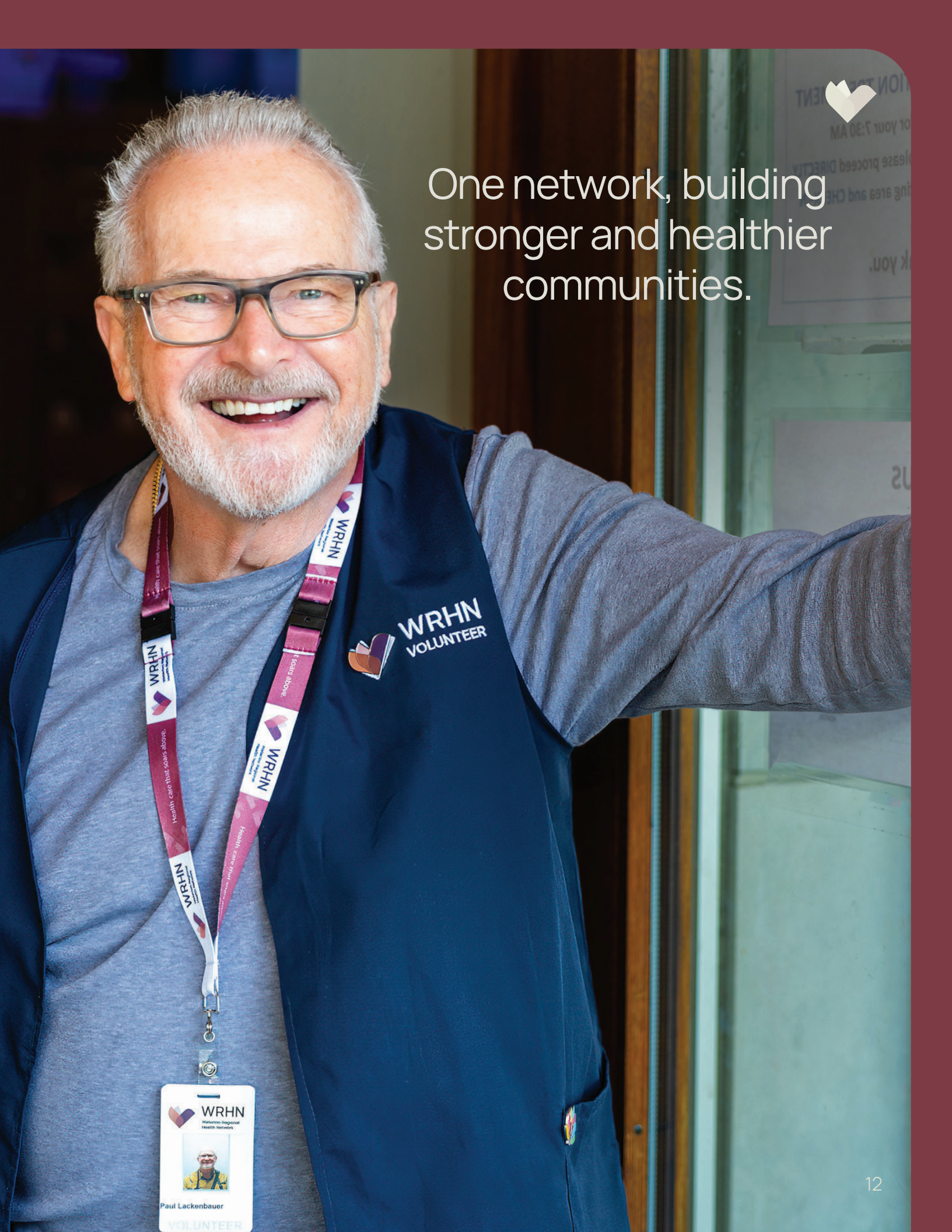
Over 2 million Ontarians will rely on our new hospital for care in the next 20 years.

**WRHN's new infrastructure will provide:**

- > Over 450 New Patient Beds
- > 100% Single Patient Rooms  
(at WRHN @ The University)
- > New and Expanded Programs
- > Significant Health, Social, and Economic benefits



One network, building stronger and healthier communities.



# Thriving Teams Deliver Outstanding Care

By 2029, team members and patients will experience one unified WRHN in action: one team, one shared values-based culture, and one coordinated and consistent approach to care.

At the centre of this work is our commitment to supporting the people who provide care every day. Every team member, in every role, contributes to patient care. When people feel valued and supported, they thrive and can provide the best care possible.

WRHN will be a place where people want to work and grow their careers—where learning, leadership, respect, and inclusion are part of everyday practice. We will engage our team members and use innovation to improve processes, test better ways of working, and scale solutions that advance AI-enabled operations and care, strengthening team member experience and retention.

## Where We'll Focus

- Building one WRHN team, one values-based culture, and one unified approach to care.
- Elevating the team member experience by fostering an inclusive and supportive workplace where people thrive and talent is attracted and retained.
- Fostering a flexible, future-ready workforce by developing the talent, skills, and leaders needed to deliver the future of health care.



### Thriving Teams, Outstanding Care: The Story of Medical Device Reprocessing (MDR)

In Medical Device Reprocessing, Lisa is building more than sterile instruments — she's building a culture where people belong and grow. Through recognition, community partnerships, and new pathways into healthcare, her team is helping shape the future of WRHN. This is what one unified WRHN looks like in action: inclusion with intention, growth with heart, and teams empowered to deliver outstanding care. Thanks to leaders like Lisa, that future is not just a vision. It is already being built, one person at a time and reflects our future: one team, one shared culture, and one consistent approach to care. [Read more at wrhn.ca](https://www.wrhn.ca)



## Advance Personalized Care

By 2029, connected systems and shared records will ensure care is coordinated and timely. Patients will experience safe seamless, personalized, high-quality care throughout their journey, and will feel safe, respected, and included, with care that reflects their individual, cultural, and emotional needs. Services will be shaped in partnership with patients and families and guided by strong quality standards, research, and innovation.

Through partnerships with primary care and Ontario Health Teams, care will become more flexible and proactive—helping people access compassionate, timely care closer to home. This approach will ensure the right care, in the right place, at the right time, whether at home, in the community, virtually, or in hospital.

### Where We'll Focus

- Providing care that is consistent, seamless, equitable, and more preventative.
- Delivering care that is compassionate, timely, and adaptive, by evolving delivery models to provide the right care at the right time in the right setting.
- Ensuring we have a relentless focus on quality and patient safety, building a just and learning culture, and high-reliability practices.



#### Advance Personalized Care: Natalia's Story

A diagnosis can change everything. For Natalia—both a nurse practitioner and a patient—it meant stepping into the healthcare system from the other side. What followed was a journey shaped by compassion, collaboration, and care designed around the whole person. Across WRHN, teams came together to guide her through uncertainty toward healing. Natalia's story reveals how one connected health system is transforming care—personalized, seamless, and built around every patient's unique path. **Read more at [wrhn.ca](http://wrhn.ca)**



## Build Our Network for Better Health

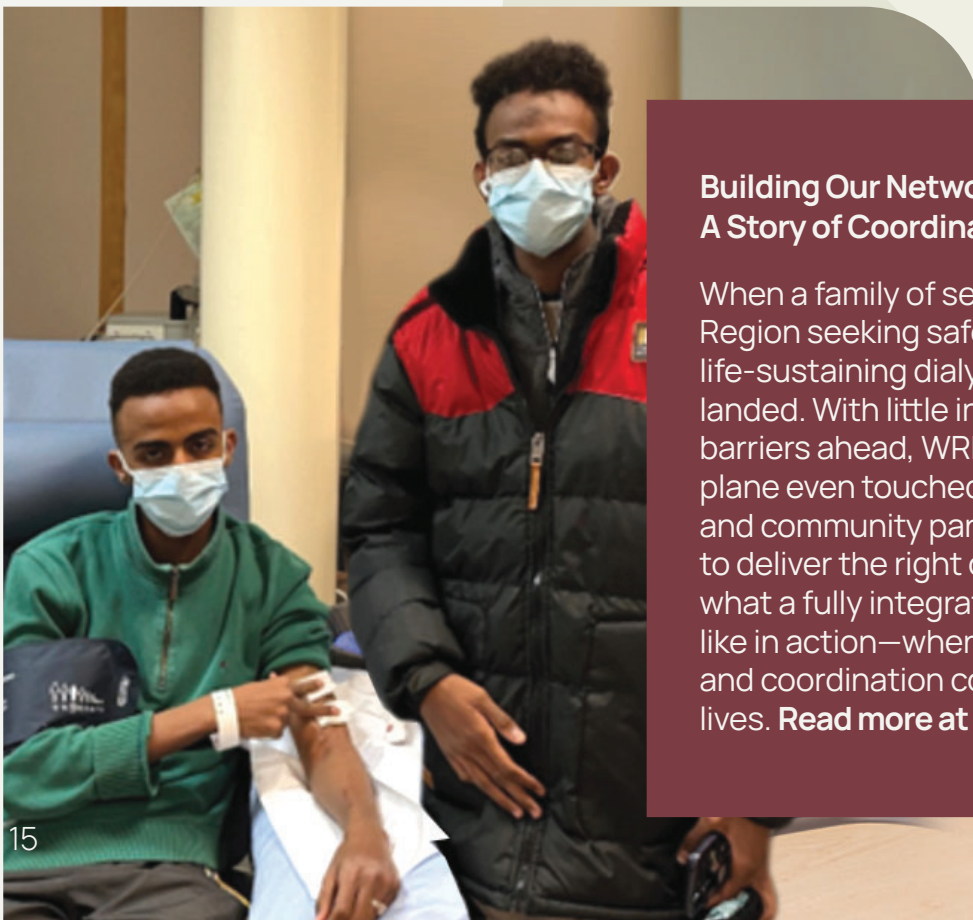
By 2029, WRHN will be a fully integrated hospital network with a shared culture, united in operations, care, and purpose.

Built on the thoughtful integration of people, processes, and tools, WRHN will use innovation to drive continuous improvement and reimagine care. Strong data, digital systems, and modern facilities, including progress towards the new hospital, will support this foundation.

As one cohesive team, WRHN will deliver high-quality, patient-centred care across a connected network where patients and team members feel supported and aligned.

### Where We'll Focus

- Building a strong and stable foundation of care by focusing on the essential activities and structures to realize our network potential.
- Care is supported by optimized, regionally integrated digital systems, and the adoption of AI.
- Investing in the future of care, creating spaces and systems that grow with our community by advancing our three-phase infrastructure plan.



#### Building Our Network for Better Health: A Story of Coordinated, Equitable Care

When a family of seven arrived in Waterloo Region seeking safety, three siblings needed life-sustaining dialysis the moment they landed. With little information and many barriers ahead, WRHN teams moved before the plane even touched down. Across programs and community partners, a network mobilized to deliver the right care at the right time. This is what a fully integrated hospital network looks like in action—where innovation, compassion, and coordination come together to change lives. [Read more at wrhn.ca](https://wrhn.ca)



Meeting the unique  
needs of each person  
we serve.





## Enablers

These enablers are the foundational building blocks that must be in place for WRHN to successfully deliver on its priorities. They strengthen execution and ensure the organization can sustainably adapt and thrive over time.

### Innovation

Teams will be supported to reimagine care by exploring new ideas, testing practical approaches, and integrating emerging technologies. We will build capacity to assess and scale innovations that improve care delivery, strengthen partnerships, and prepare for future needs. Innovation and AI will be applied purposefully in priority areas—grounded in strong foundations and focused on tangible benefits for patients and teams, improving access, coordination, and network performance.

### Financial Flexibility

WRHN will achieve fiscal balance through improved efficiency, exploring alternative funding models, strategic partnerships, new revenue opportunities, and close collaboration with our Foundation.

## Principles

Guiding principles ground how we think about care, permeate all our work, and help guide how care will be reimaged for everyone. These principles ensure that every interaction reflects our values and guide how we work, collaborate, and grow together.

### Truth & Reconciliation

WRHN will continue to foster meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities, grounded in respect for sovereignty, to co-create better care with communities and ensure active inclusion in patient, leadership, and decision-making processes and bodies.

### A Learning & Partnered Health Network

WRHN will build a health network that goes beyond our walls, accessible to everyone, rooted in partnership, and designed to evolve. We will be responsive and flexible, informed by evidence and experience and committed to continuous improvement. WRHN will learn and lead as we grow, ensuring care remains relevant, effective, and connected to the needs of the people we serve.

### Health Equity & Environmental Sustainability

WRHN will continue to advance health equity through multilingual communication, cultural competency, community engagement, and flexible care options. We will integrate social determinants of health as we build our network and reimagine care, while strengthening environmental sustainability to reduce our ecological footprint and support a healthier planet.

## MEASURES OF SUCCESS

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WRHN will set clear targets every year to show how we are doing in reaching the goals in our strategic plan. These targets will help us stay focused and accountable to the communities we serve. We will share regular updates on our public website, so you can see the progress we are making.

## How We Will Know We've Been Successful

- Team member experience
- Patient experience and outcomes
- Timeliness of care
- Effectiveness and appropriateness of care
- Operational sustainability

## How We Will Get There

- Realize “One WRHN” by investing in our people and their talents, and uniting tools and processes to enable them
- Embed innovation
- Deliver high quality care through highly-reliable practices
- Deliver care closest to home
- Be digitally and AI-enabled
- Embed truth and reconciliation, and equity and sustainability principles into everyday operations

## THANK YOU

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# Celebrating Our Communities and Teams

Our strategy is foundational, bold, dynamic, and co-created with our teams and communities. Shaped by over 2,500 diverse voices—who shared meaningful insights through team member surveys, in-person and virtual interviews and sessions—WRHN’s plan embodies true collaboration and a commitment to reimagined care, achieved together.

Our team members emphasized the importance of workforce sustainability, wellness, and stronger collaboration to maintain high-quality care.

WRHN’s patient and family partners emphasized the need for faster, more integrated care, and identified digital platforms as key to improving the overall experience.

Our partners in government, academics, and health emphasized the importance of collaboration and strategic partnerships to improve care delivery, through digital solutions, innovation, and the use of tools such as Artificial Intelligence.

Our communities emphasized the need to embed cultural safety and inclusion throughout the network to ensure care meets diverse needs.

Our evolving strategy relies on our community’s involvement to reimagine the future of care at WRHN.

### Ways you can support:



#### Donor Support

Financial contributions, philanthropy, and resource sharing from donors and partners sustain growth and innovation.



#### Participation

Diverse perspectives and experiences across patients and families help shape care that is equitable and inclusive.



#### Volunteer

Outstanding care is possible through our incredible volunteers for every patient we serve.



# WRHN is Looking Forward

Success for WRHN is defined not only by the milestones we reach in three and ten years, but by our ability to remain responsive, resilient, and relevant to the evolving needs of our communities. This strategic plan is designed to be a stable yet nimble plan, one that guides our decisions, measures our progress, and supports transformation within the organization and health system over time.



## 2029

Patients and families will experience seamless, personalized care through a network that feels like a trusted partner, not an institution.

Every interaction will reflect compassion, safety, respect, and a goal of achieving health equity. Teams will thrive in a workplace that champions wellness, growth, and leadership. The network will be optimized for both patients and team members. WRHN's success will be measured not only by outcomes, but by the trust we earn, the barriers we overcome, and the future of care we reimagine together, one where outstanding care is seamless and personal.



## 2035

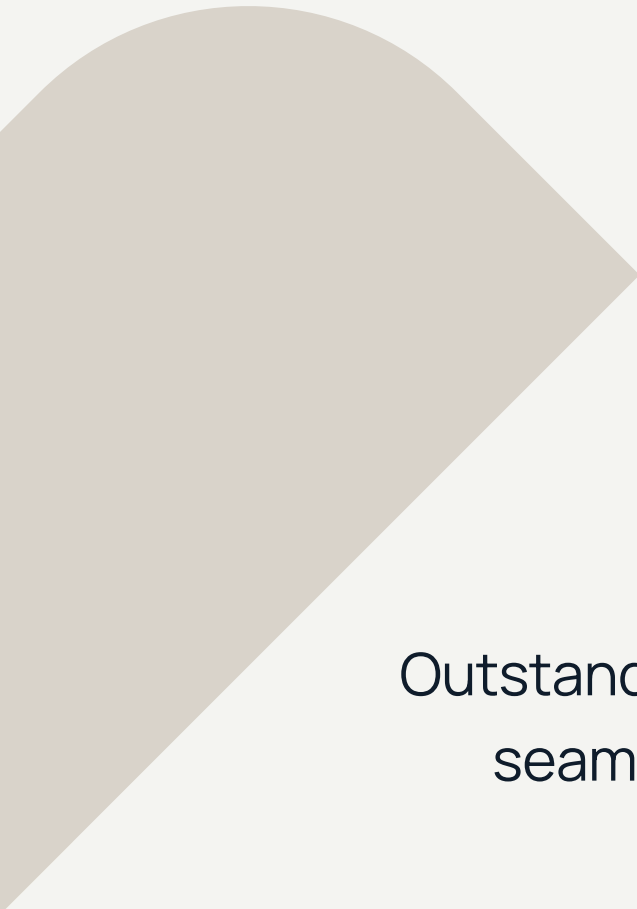
WRHN will be fully realized as a seamless, sustainable hospital network, with one team offering one service. With the new hospital site operating, the Region will experience expanded services, increased capacity, and outstanding quality of care. WRHN will have transformed into a future-ready health network that anticipates and meets the evolving needs of our communities. Patients will experience personalized and barrier-free health journeys, supported by advanced technology and empowered teams. WRHN will stand as a visionary leader, shaping the future of care.



Thank you to everyone  
who contributed insights  
and aspirations. Your  
input shaped WRHN's  
first Strategic Plan.







Outstanding care that's personal,  
seamless, and reimagined.



Scan the QR code to explore our Strategic Plan online.  
Publication Date: March 2026

**wrhn.ca**