



WRHN

Waterloo Regional
Health Network

Waterloo Regional Health Network

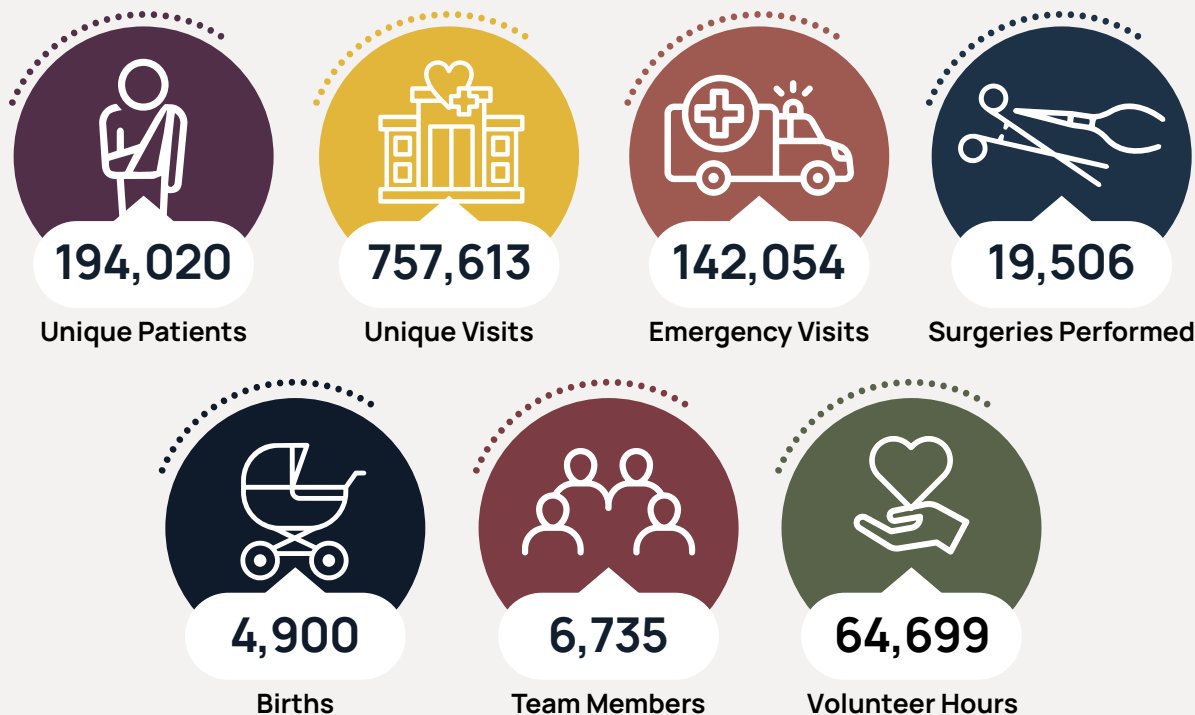
2025-2026 Annual Report

One WRHN: Building the Foundation for Outstanding Care

At a Glance

In our first year as a unified organization, Waterloo Regional Health Network (WRHN) brought together people, services, and systems to serve the community as one coordinated network of care. While integrating the two legacy organizations, Grand River Hospital and St. Mary's General Hospital, the focus remained on our patients. Our priorities for 2025-26 were high quality & expanded clinical services, merger success, and redevelopment progress. WRHN continued to deliver high-quality, safe and reliable care, while building the capabilities that will help us achieve our future where care is reimagined—through innovation, partnerships, and new models of delivery.

By the numbers:



Key indicators demonstrate WRHN's continued focus on patient care and quality:

- People are getting their surgeries faster, as evidenced by our surgical wait time performance which improved steadily throughout the year
- Our patient satisfaction results were at 90%, with 7 out of 10 ranking their satisfaction at the highest level
- The safety of our services continued to improve, as evidenced by the reduced frequency of hospital harm
- WRHN expanded the collection of sociodemographic information, including chosen name, gender identity, and pronouns, to better understand patient needs and improve personalized and equitable access to care

WRHN 2025-2026 YEAR-END REPORT

Since merging, WRHN has helped more patients get the care they need in the right setting, reducing the number of days people spend in hospital beds while waiting for other care options by 28%. This means more beds are available for patients who require more complex care, helping reduce bottlenecks across the system.

Patients are also spending less time in hospital overall, with inpatient stays reduced by 11% and Emergency Department stays reduced by 7%. In practical terms, this means patients are getting the care they need and returning home or moving to the next stage of care sooner.

"More people are getting the right care, at the right time, in the right place."

Ambulance crews are now able to transfer patients into hospital care 45% faster. This means paramedics spend less time waiting in hospital hallways and more time back on the road responding to emergencies in the community.

In one of the fastest growing communities in Canada, WRHN is caring for significantly more people than its facilities were originally designed for—Emergency Departments are seeing 35% more patients each day than planned capacity and the number of patients requiring admission to hospital due to more serious illnesses has increased by 5%.

These results mean more people are receiving timely care, hospital resources are being used more effectively, and emergency services are available when the community needs them most. Achieved alongside significant organizational transformation, these improvements position WRHN, now operating as one network, for long-term success and reflect our commitment to building a future of outstanding care that is personal, seamless, and reimaged.



Message From Leadership

This year marks a defining moment for healthcare in Waterloo Region.

On April 1, 2025, Grand River Hospital and St. Mary's General Hospital formally came together to form Waterloo Regional Health Network (WRHN). This merger represents far more than structural change. It reflects a commitment to delivering the best possible care for our communities.

Our first year focused on building the foundation of a new organization. Guided by three priorities in 2025/26, high-quality and expanded clinical services, merger success, and redevelopment progress, we worked to ensure continuity of care while transforming how we operate and preparing WRHN for the future.

Across WRHN, teams are moving to one way of leading, one way of caring, and one way of operating. Putting people first, our efforts focused on building a values-based culture and harmonizing practices, policies, tools, and systems.

We maintained a strong focus on patient care by improving quality and safety, reducing wait times, enhancing the patient experience, strengthening health equity practices, and advancing personalized care.

Our second year will build on this momentum by embedding new ways of working and delivering on the commitments of Care Reimagined, our inaugural [2026-2029 Strategic Plan](#). Guided by our purpose to lead boldly, serve with compassion, deliver high-quality care, and partner to advance health for all, along with our values of Put People First, Find a Way, Be Our Best, and Thrive Together, we are advancing three strategic directions: Thriving Teams Deliver Outstanding Care, Advance Personalized Care, and Build Our Network for Better Health.

We are proud of what has been achieved together in this foundational year. The work has been complex and, at times, difficult, but it has positioned WRHN to deliver more coordinated, equitable, and high-quality care now and into the future.



Janet Davidson

Janet Davidson
Board Chair



A stylized purple ink signature of Ron Gagnon.

Ron Gagnon
President and CEO

Year in Review: Building One WRHN, Together

The 2025-26 fiscal year was defined by integration—so we can better serve our community as one connected network of care.

While significant progress was made in WRHN's first year, the work of integration continues. Bringing together the way we deliver care, support our teams, and operate as one organization is essential to realizing our vision of One WRHN. Investments in governance, technology, finance, human resources, and clinical operations have aligned people, systems, and data, creating the foundation for new models of care, better coordination across the patient journey, and improved responsiveness to the needs of our growing and diverse communities. Ultimately, this work helps ensure patients experience a more integrated healthcare system, regardless of where they enter care.

- Care teams are increasingly supported by a single set of policies and practices, with 776 legacy policies reviewed to enable a more consistent patient and provider experience across WRHN
- Patients are increasingly able to receive more coordinated care as WRHN advanced legislative processes to allow unionized team members to work seamlessly across sites
- The Medical leadership structure was modernized to support greater consistency in care delivery, clinical decision-making, and service planning across the organization
- Committee structures were aligned across the organization to support more coordinated planning, prioritization, and delivery of care
- Leaders gained access to shared systems and tools that support timely, data-informed decisions and improved responsiveness to patient and community needs
- Integration of financial, human resources, and information technology systems began, laying the foundation for more efficient operations and better coordination of care across the network
- A new website, signage, and organizational brand were launched, making it easier for patients, families, and community members to access information and navigate services
- All leaders received focused change management training to help guide teams through transformation while maintaining a focus on high-quality patient care
- An enterprise risk management framework was implemented to strengthen patient safety, organizational resilience, and proactive management of emerging risks
- An enterprise governance framework was established to support consistent decision-making, accountability, and stewardship across the organization
- The WRHN Board of Directors and committee structure were established to provide oversight and strategic direction for the organization's future
- Work began to harmonize compensation and benefits programs across WRHN, supporting a more unified workforce and employee experience
- More than 85% of planned integration initiatives were completed in WRHN's first year, advancing the transition to a more connected, coordinated, and patient-centred organization.

Recognition and Accomplishments

WRHN was honoured to receive several significant recognitions in 2025 and 2026 that highlighted its leadership in healthcare quality, innovation, and patient outcomes.

Following the merger that created WRHN in 2025, the organization earned the inaugural CAN Health Network Groundbreaker Award for advancing Canadian healthcare innovation and was awarded Accreditation Canada's prestigious Stroke Distinction™ designation for excellence in stroke care. In 2026, WRHN was named among the top 100 hospitals in Canada in the annual Newsweek–Statista rankings, achieved Accreditation Canada's highest rating of Exemplary Standing as a unified health network, and received provincial awards from the Trillium Gift of Life Network recognizing our team members' dedication to supporting patients and families in making life-saving gifts through organ and tissue donations. Together, these honours reflect WRHN's growing reputation as a leading regional health system committed to clinical excellence, innovation, and compassionate, high-quality patient care.

[All WRHN sites are accredited with exemplary standing.](#)

WRHN recognizes the contributions of its team members - staff, physicians, volunteers, learners, and partners- in achieving these significant achievements.

Connected
by collaboration,
and driven by
purpose.



WRHN 2025-2026 YEAR-END REPORT

Supporting Our People

Recognizing the importance of workforce stability during a period of significant change, WRHN took a people-first approach to the merger. Throughout our journey, we made deliberate and sustained efforts to engage and collaborate with our dedicated and talented team members to co-create our new WRHN culture that honours our histories and celebrates our future as one.

This included in-person rounding on our units, town halls to provide timely and transparent information, and celebration events to mark our transitions including a Team Member & Family Appreciation BBQ with over 3,000 people in attendance.

Voluntary turnover remained better than target, reflecting strong retention strategies and workforce planning.

At the same time, employee engagement results highlighted the challenges associated with organizational transition, reinforcing the need for continued focus on strategic alignment, communication and leadership trust.

The Change Agent Network (CAN), a group of team members across our sites and roles, volunteered their time to serve as a two-way bridge between leadership and operational teams. Acting as liaisons and champions for organizational change, they brought patient-facing and behind-the-scenes perspectives directly to leadership, helping to ensure that integration decisions reflect real-world experiences. The CAN team was embedded into projects and changes across WRHN so that decisions were informed by those closest to care delivery and adopted effectively across teams.



WRHN 2025-2026 YEAR-END REPORT

Advancing Patient Care

Despite the scale of change, WRHN remained focused on improving patient care.

Surgical services saw steady improvements in meeting provincial wait time targets. Emergency departments implemented new models to improve patient flow and introduced targeted interventions reducing hospital harm beyond our target.

Programs such as transitional care and discharge planning were enhanced to reduce unnecessary hospital stays and improve patient outcomes. Medical leadership structure and function were modernized to create clarity, alignment, and effectiveness in how physicians lead and drive performance within WRHN.

The development of a Regional Community Indigenous Advisory Circle and the inaugural Patient and Family Partnership Council (PFPC), complement our Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) to bring a diversity of experiences, perspectives and voices, enabling better, personalized, and more culturally sensitive care.



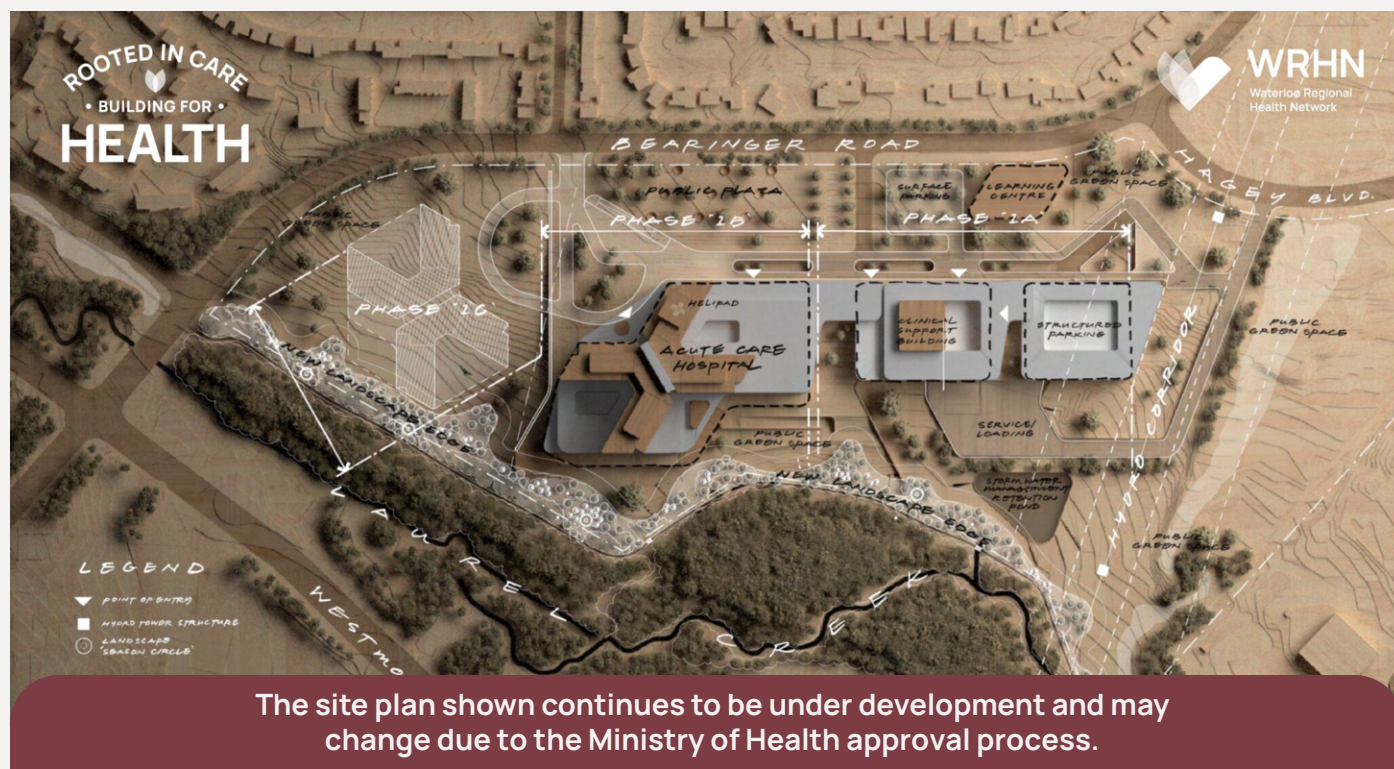
Strengthening Systems and Technology

Digital and data foundations are critical enablers of more coordinated care, improving patient flow, and better decision-making across WRHN. They strengthen the organization's ability to leverage data, support system-wide performance management, and build the foundation for future innovation and AI readiness.

To support these outcomes, WRHN advanced toward a fully integrated digital environment, building the backbone needed to operate as one organization and innovate confidently. Behind the scenes, WRHN continued implementing essential systems and tools, including launching a new multi-lingual and accessible website, improving how teams communicate and collaborate across sites, and developing real-time tools that help leaders make faster, data-informed decisions that are responsive to patient and community needs.



Building Waterloo Region's New Hospital



A key priority in WRHN's inaugural year was laying the foundation for the future of hospital infrastructure in Waterloo Region. As one of Canada's fastest-growing communities, the Region requires modern facilities that can meet increasing demand, support new models of care, and improve the experience of patients, families, and care teams.

Redevelopment is about more than new buildings—it is a long-term process to design a healthcare system that can serve the community for generations to come. During 2025–26, WRHN advanced the Stage 1.2 Functional Program, a key planning milestone that helps define future clinical services, infrastructure needs, and site requirements. WRHN also launched a 10-year capital plan to guide investments in facilities, equipment, and clinical spaces while ensuring existing infrastructure continues to support safe, high-quality care.

Planning has been informed by extensive engagement with patients, team members, physicians, partners, and communities. Feedback reinforced the importance of accessible and flexible facilities, expanded capacity, improved patient flow, greater integration of technology, and spaces designed to support outstanding patient experiences.

Alongside long-term redevelopment planning, WRHN continues to address immediate infrastructure needs through space optimization, operational planning, and targeted facility improvements. Looking ahead, WRHN will continue working with government partners to advance redevelopment approvals while aligning infrastructure investments with clinical service growth, population needs, and a more integrated model of care. This work represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to shape the future of healthcare in Waterloo Region.

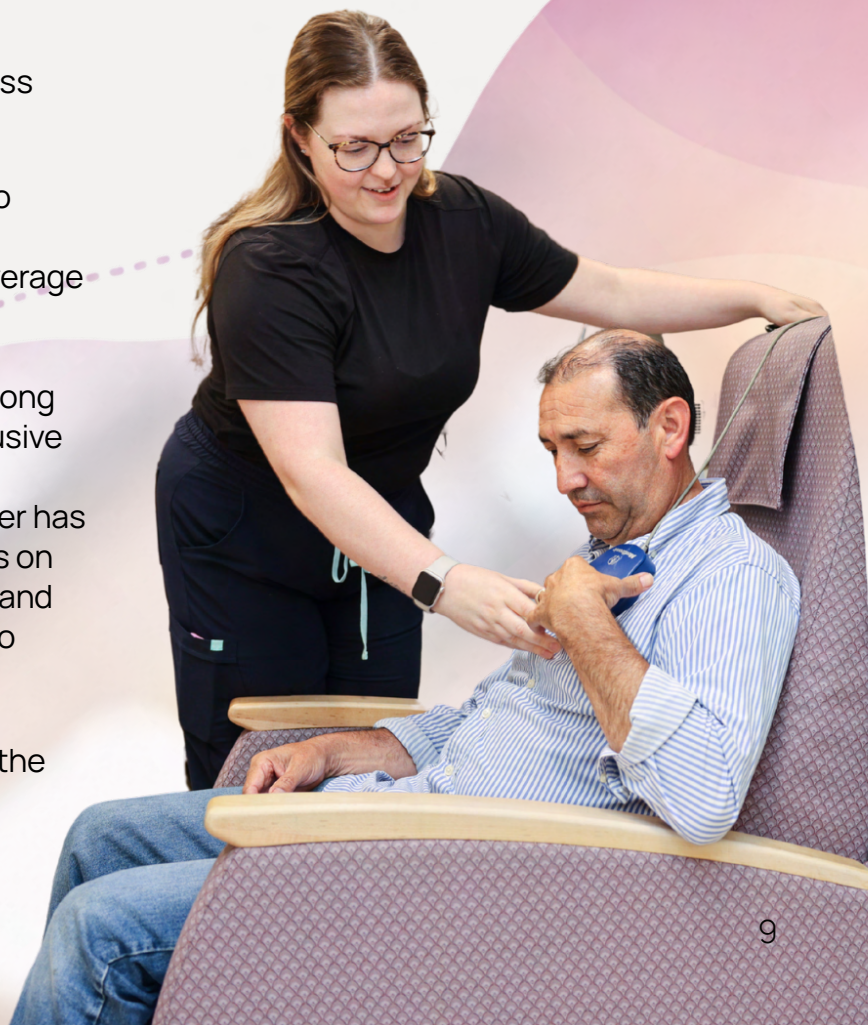
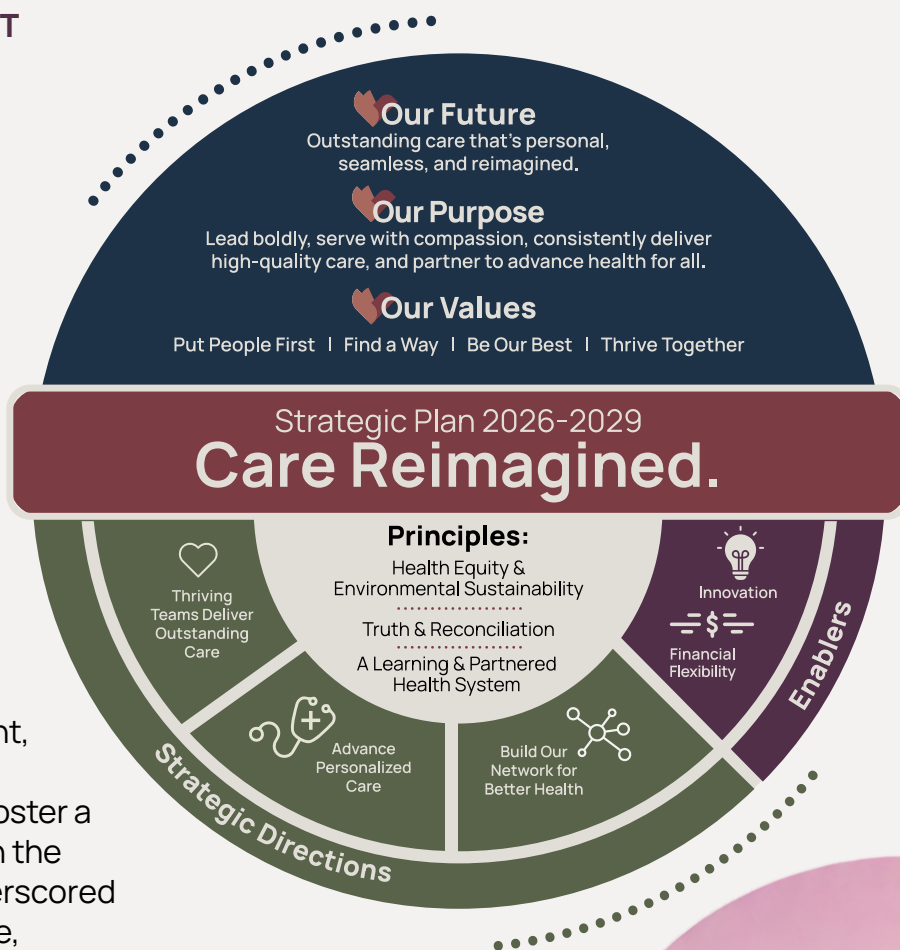
Planning for the Future

Thousands of team members, physicians, leaders, patients and community voices highlighted a shared commitment to building a strong, unified WRHN, alongside clear priorities for improvement. Engagements highlighted the need to accelerate innovation—leveraging digital tools, artificial intelligence, and new care models to improve access, coordination, and patient experience.

WRHN also heard of the importance of investing in people through recruitment, retention, wellness, and professional development, with a strong desire to foster a culture of belonging, pride, and trust in the new organization. Feedback also underscored the need to strengthen access to care, reduce wait times, and deliver more personalized, patient-centred services that remove barriers and improve continuity across the care journey.

Input consistently pointed to opportunities to expand care beyond hospital walls, enhance integration across the health system, and leverage technology—including digital tools and AI—to improve coordination, efficiency, and patient experience. At the same time, there was a strong call to embed equity, cultural safety, and inclusive care more deeply across all services. Overall, engagements reinforced that while the merger has created a strong foundation, continued focus on culture, communication, system integration, and patient-centred innovation will be essential to realizing the full potential of WRHN.

WRHN's [2026-2029 Strategic Plan](#) will guide the organization's transition from integration to growth, ensuring alignment across clinical, operational, and enabling services.



Innovating How Care Is Delivered

WRHN continued investing in innovation to strengthen how care is delivered today while building the foundation for the future, with a strong focus on how technology—including artificial intelligence (AI)—can support teams to work more efficiently and spend more time on patient care.

A key initiative this year was the advancement of the CareNext Innovation Coalition—a unique partnership between the University of Waterloo and WRHN—to advance our collective work to develop a coordinated, multi-year roadmap to accelerate innovation across clinical and enabling services. CareNext brings together health system partners, academia, and industry to design, test, and scale new models of care that improve outcomes and system performance. Through this collaboration, WRHN is advancing practical applications of data science and AI in healthcare, including better use of analytics to support decision-making, improve patient experience, and strengthen system coordination.

WRHN also launched its inaugural AI strategy, introducing early AI-supported tools into clinical workflows and exploring how advanced technologies can help with tasks such as documentation, patient flow, and care planning. These tools are not about replacing clinical expertise—they are about reducing administrative burden, improving access to timely information, and enabling care teams to focus more fully on patients. In this way, AI is helping team members work at the top of their scope and supporting more responsive, consistent care.

Together, these efforts are positioning WRHN as a leading centre for innovation in community hospital care—where AI and emerging technologies are used to support team members, enhance collaboration, and ultimately enable outstanding care for patients and the broader community.



Delivering Results

WRHN's performance reflects a continued commitment to high-quality care.

Patient Experience

Overall experience with care by year-end was rated at 90.4%, and higher than target satisfaction for patient communication with physicians and nurses at WRHN.

Safety

On the journey to zero hospital harm, WRHN reduced harm rates beyond expectations. Delirium prevention helped reduce confusion and complications, leading to safer care and faster recovery for patients.

Access and Flow

By year-end, more than 8 out of 10 patients were receiving their surgery within the recommended timeframe, reducing delays and helping people access treatment sooner. While Emergency Department wait times remain longer than we would like, focused improvement efforts continue to help patients receive the care they need more quickly.

Equity

WRHN expanded sociodemographic data collection—including chosen name, gender identity, and pronouns—and achieved 82.9% collection in program areas, supporting better understanding of patient needs and more equitable access to care.

Workforce

Voluntary turnover at WRHN remains low, helping to retain experienced team members, strengthen continuity of care for patients, and reduce disruption to services. Engagement was mixed during the transition, with lower staff engagement but higher provider engagement, and targeted improvements are underway to strengthen overall experience.



Patients
rated their
overall care
experience
at 90.4%.

Impact Stories

Patients and families are at the centre of everything we do and are an essential part of how we continuously improve and redesign services.

Meet Zara

Patient and Family Advisors like Zara Rafferty bring invaluable lived experience to our work, helping WRHN strengthen communication between care teams, patients, and families. Through collaborative working groups and ongoing engagement, patient feedback is actively incorporated into decisions and improvements, ensuring care remains compassionate, equitable, and centred on the needs of those we serve.

Zara shares "My experiences supporting loved ones through cancer care showed me how much communication matters. Through my work as a Patient and Family Advisor, I've seen how listening to patients and families—and making even small improvements in how information is shared—can have a meaningful impact on the care experience. It's encouraging to see patient perspectives helping shape decisions that support more compassionate, patient-centred care."



Improving Patient Experience

Patients told us that communication and understanding their care mattered most. In response, WRHN introduced bedside surveying, expanded standardized communication tools, and developed a Patient Declaration of Values and patient engagement roadmap to guide co-creation with patients and family partners.

These efforts improved patient engagement, increased satisfaction scores in the final quarter, and provided greater real-time patient feedback.

Meet Laurie

Laurie, a 44-year-old patient using a wheelchair, returned home to continue her rehabilitation through WRHN's outpatient program after experiencing paralysis following back surgery. During her care, she raised concerns about inaccessible washrooms at the Chicopee site, describing how narrow entrances and limited space prevented her from using them with privacy, leaving her feeling humiliated and discouraged.

Her feedback prompted a review and action by the Facilities team, who completed renovations to improve accessibility and create a more inclusive environment. While the organization was meeting legislative requirements, the decision to act reflected a commitment to dignity, equity, and patient-centred care—ensuring a better experience not only for Laurie, but for others with mobility needs.



Reducing Hospital Harm

To improve safety, WRHN focused on key drivers of hospital harm, including delirium, pressure injuries, and clinical practice variation. Multidisciplinary teams introduced evidence-based interventions and standardized care, including improved documentation and earlier identification of patients at risk. On the journey to zero harm, WRHN reduced harm rates beyond expectations, improving consistency in care and delivering safer outcomes for patients.

Meet Cynthia

"Keeping patients safe and preventing harm is a fundamental priority at WRHN," says Cynthia Welton, Director, Quality, Patient Safety and Experience. "Every patient safety event is an opportunity to learn, strengthen our systems, and improve care."



At WRHN, a just culture encourages teams to openly review safety events to understand what happened and prevent harm from happening again. Following a review of hospital-acquired pressure injuries, WRHN identified opportunities to strengthen prevention through standardized assessments, team member education, improved documentation, and electronic reminders that support consistent care.

The same commitment to learning is reflected in delirium care. After understanding one older patient's lifelong interests and routines, the care team created a personalized plan using familiar music, meaningful activities, and orientation supports. His distress decreased, restraints were discontinued, and he safely transitioned to assisted living.



Care Powered by Community Generosity

This year focused on aligning community partnerships under one organization, including fostering a relationship with the new WRHN Foundation.



Waterloo Regional Health Network Foundation: Fueled by community. Focused on care.

After Grand River Hospital and St. Mary's General Hospital merged in April 2025, the two former hospital foundations came together to better support our region's healthcare needs. The new WRHN Foundation serves as the unified philanthropic arm of WRHN building on decades of partnership between the legacy foundations.

Hospital foundations play a crucial role in bridging the gap between government funding and the true cost of exceptional care. As WRHN faces rising demand, aging infrastructure, and the urgent need to keep pace with medical innovation, the support of our communities has never been more important.

Most new and replacement hospital equipment is not covered by government funding. Instead, foundations work with donors and communities to bridge this gap by raising money for key needs such as:

- medical equipment
- new research
- specialized programs
- upgrades to hospital spaces
- education for healthcare workers
- community health initiatives

Fuelled by
community,
focused on
care.

When donors support WRHN through the Foundation, they help ensure friends, neighbours, and loved ones can access the care they need and deserve—right here at home. Every donation to WRHN Foundation makes a difference for patient experience and lays the groundwork for care that is fuelled by innovation, delivered with compassion, and accessible to everyone.

Find out more about WRHN Foundation and our important work at wrhnf.ca.



Financial Snapshot

As a newly merged organization, WRHN spent much of its first year bringing together financial systems, budgets, and reporting practices to support a single, integrated network—so that the organization can continue to serve generations of patients to come. The organization experienced a higher-than-planned operating deficit, driven by lower-than-anticipated revenues and broader system pressures, including inflation, affordability challenges, and economic uncertainty impacting public funding.

These pressures are not unique to WRHN—hospitals across Ontario are facing similar challenges as demand grows faster than funding, driven by population growth, an aging population, and rising complexity of care. At the same time, the provincial environment is increasingly focused on affordability and fiscal restraint, placing greater emphasis on efficiency and sustainability across the system.

Despite this, WRHN remains a highly efficient organization and is beginning to realize the benefits of the merger through improved coordination, standardization, and opportunities to optimize care and operations across sites.

A three-year financial plan has been approved to achieve a balanced position. Key actions include:

- Revenue optimization across Waterloo-Wellington hospitals
- Efficiency initiatives
- Workforce and operational improvements

This work is aligned with WRHN's [2026-2029 Strategic Plan](#) and provincial expectations for hospitals to strengthen financial sustainability while maintaining quality and access. In parallel, WRHN is undertaking clinical sustainability planning—reviewing all clinical services to determine where to protect, redesign, grow, partner, or scale back services based on patient need, system priorities, and available resources.

WRHN remains committed to operational sustainability, ensuring the organization is resilient, efficient, and ready to provide high-quality care for generations to come.



Building
a stronger
foundation for
the future.

Financial Results



Total Revenue
\$949,199,000



Total Expenses
-\$987,678,000



Operating Deficit
-\$38,479,000



Deficit before
Extraordinary items
-\$42,741,000



Extraordinary items
\$59,666,000



Total Surplus
\$16,925,000

Corporate Scorecard Indicators	Annual Target	Year-End Result
Voluntary turnover (resignation & retirement)	8	4.9
Hospital harm rate per 100 discharges*	5	4.5
Avoidable beds & ALC beds	158	139.2
Total margin % (adjusting for one-time items)	-2	-4.3
Overall experience with care (% top box)	70	68.4
Physician/provider engagement (% favourable)	56	58.8
Employee engagement (% favourable)	61	54.4
Surgical wait time targets met (%)	64.9	71.6
Provincial wait time target for ED met	82.2	79.1

Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) Indicators	Annual Target	Year-End Result
Rate of delirium onset during hospitalization*	1.1	1
ED Physician Initial Assessment (PIA) Wait in Hours - 90th %ile	4.6	5.1
Completion of sociodemographic data collection (%)	80	82.9
Communication with Doctors and Nurses (% Top Box)		67.8

*Represents Feb 2026 results; year-end results not yet available.

Looking Forward: Reimagining Care as One WRHN

The first year of WRHN has been a year of transformation. Through disciplined integration, strong leadership, and a shared commitment to people, WRHN has built the foundation for a stronger, more connected healthcare system. The work to bring two organizations together—across people, processes, and systems—has created the conditions for long-term success.

As we move into the next phase, WRHN will build on this foundation by continuing to complete key integration initiatives, advancing clinical services, supporting redevelopment and infrastructure planning, and embedding a strong, unified “One WRHN” culture across all teams and sites. This work will ensure that the investments made in Year 1 translate into meaningful improvements in care, access, and experience for the communities we serve.

Looking ahead, WRHN will begin full implementation of its [2026-2029 Strategic Plan](#), guided by three core directions: nurturing a thriving team that delivers outstanding care, advancing personalized care that responds to the unique needs of every patient, and building our network for better health through stronger integration, partnerships, and system transformation.

As WRHN transitions from integration to growth and innovation, the focus will be on realizing the full potential of a unified health network—one that is better connected, more responsive, and positioned to lead as a modern, innovative community hospital network.

The work ahead is significant—the foundation is in place, and the path forward is clear. The people who are WRHN, will continue to lead boldly, serve with compassion, consistently deliver high-quality care, and partner to advance health for all. With a values-driven culture, dedicated team members and partners, and an eye on the future, we will realize our collective future where outstanding care is personal, seamless and reimagined.

Guided by
people, purpose,
and a shared
commitment
to care.



Outstanding care that's personal,
seamless and reimagined.



wrhn.ca

Publication Date: July 2026