

Quality of Life Framework for Canada

Lessons Learned on Multisectoral Action for Public Health

In 2023, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) authored a case study that highlights the development of the Quality of Life Framework for Canada (the Framework) as a successful example of multisectoral action. Since 2021, the Government of Canada has used the Framework in decision-making settings by requiring an evidence-based Quality of Life analysis for all federal budget proposals. Integrating the Framework into federal budget processes demonstrates value for public health as an example of Health in All Policies, whereby health impacts are routinely considered by non-health departments.

Quality of Life Framework for Canada

Canada's Quality of Life Framework is an indicator framework that measures aspects of well-being important to people living in Canada. This holistic approach broadens the measurement of national progress from traditional stand-alone economic indicators, like gross domestic product (GDP), by incorporating social, health, cultural, and environmental perspectives.



Figure 1. Quality of Life Framework for Canada

Methods

- › PHAC's 2023 case study on the Quality of Life Framework responds to a 2022 call for submissions of multisectoral initiatives from the World Health Organization (WHO).
- › Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 18 representatives across 11 federal departments and agencies that participated in the Framework's development.

Key Success Factors, by Multisectoral Action Pillars

The development of the Framework brought together 28 federal departments and agencies representing diverse sectors and provided an opportunity for linkages to be identified across sectors. The case study highlighted examples of multisectoral actions that strengthened collaboration and coordination across the federal government, which are organized into 4 themes.

Governance and Accountability



- › Ministerial mandate commitment
- › Interdepartmental governance structure
- › Multi-level engagement of federal representatives

Leadership at All Levels



- › Leadership of a central agency
- › Support of senior management
- › Acknowledgment of interests, priorities and co-benefits across sectors

Ways of Working



- › Collegial and constructive working environment
- › Authentic and transparent communication
- › Feedback consistently sought by project leads

Resources and Capabilities



- › Engagement of diverse expertise across federal sectors
- › Dedicated project lead team
- › Best practices and application examples from the international community



Lessons Learned

- 1. High-level commitment signals importance.** Ministerial mandate letters sent from the Prime Minister raised the profile of the Framework and reinforced senior management support. The mandate letters set out clear accountabilities for leadership and key partnerships, ensured a collaborative approach between departments, and prompted application into decision-making across government sectors.
- 2. Intentional collaboration is key.** Participants from all levels (e.g., analysts, senior management) were engaged in a collegial working environment with opportunities to provide feedback throughout the Framework's development. This whole-of-government approach allowed for public health experts to share considerations with the appropriate level of technical expertise and interpretation.
- 3. Shared values set common ground.** Quality of life is a theme that held meaning across diverse departmental mandates and objectives. This shared value allowed participants to see their own department's goals in the collective and built momentum for participation.
- 4. Standard tools can prompt linkages between sectors.** Tools, like a budget proposal analysis, that systematically prompt diverse sectors to think about the health impacts of their policies can strengthen government decision-making with a holistic approach.

Opportunities for Public Health

Multisectoral action is a strategic policy approach that can promote a culture of holistic thinking and collaboration in government decision-making. The Quality of Life Framework for Canada demonstrates a successful example of a federal interdepartmental initiative that defines, links and advances aspects of wellbeing across policy areas. Where public health issues are multidimensional, multisectoral initiatives recognize opportunities to influence determinants of health outside of the medical care system and leverage shared goals, expertise and interests through coordination and leadership across sectors.

Learn more

- Read the full case study in the World Health Organization (WHO)'s Compendium report on multisectoral actions for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases and mental health conditions: <https://knowledge-action-portal.com/en/content/compendium-report-multisectoral-actions-prevention-and-control-noncommunicable-diseases-and#>
- Read a feature article on the Quality of Life Framework by the WHO: https://knowledge-action-portal.com/en/news_and_events/country-stories/8220
- Learn more about the WHO Framework: https://www.knowledge-action-portal.com/sites/default/files/msa_ncd_mh_call_for_submissions.pdf
- Read Finance Canada's Measuring What Matters: Towards Quality of Life Strategy report for more details on the Framework's consultation and development process: <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/services/publications/measuring-what-matters-toward-quality-life-strategy-canada.html>
- Learn more about Canada's Quality of Life Framework on Statistic Canada's Quality of Life Hub: <https://www160.statcan.gc.ca/index-eng.htm>