



# Strategic Directions

2008–2009 to 2011–2012



Canadian Institute  
for Health Information

Institut canadien  
d'information sur la santé

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## Message From the Board Chair

It is with great pleasure that I present the new strategic directions for the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI). These directional plans will guide our work over the next four years and are drawn from in-depth consultations and conversations with a wide variety of partners and stakeholders across the country.

This is not the first time in our history that we have conducted such extensive consultations. We consider them to be a critical part of our mandate, and we feel very good about what we have heard.



Our partners told us they regard CIHI as a credible leader in the field of health information. They respect the quality of our data, analyses, education and training. And because we are neutral and independent, they trust and rely on the objectivity of our information.

While much has been accomplished, it is clear from listening to our partners and stakeholders that much remains to be done. As the health care landscape evolves, there is a need for a great deal of new information.

There is increasing demand for health services. New drug therapies and medical technologies are offering new possibilities for treatment. Health care planners are constantly looking for ways to balance these needs and deliver the highest quality of care as efficiently as possible in a wide range of settings within individual communities. Having reliable, comparable pan-Canadian information is key to achieving this goal.

Over the next four years, we are committed to building on existing strengths and expanding what we know about the health of Canadians and the health care system. This, in turn, can lead to better-informed decisions and, ultimately, better care for all Canadians.

On behalf of the board of directors, I am proud to present our strategic directions to our stakeholders and all Canadians.



**Graham W. S. Scott, C.M., Q.C.**

Chair of the CIHI Board

## Message From the President and CEO

I am pleased to join our board chair in presenting the new strategic directions for the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI).

In consulting with our many partners and stakeholders about where we should concentrate our efforts in the coming years, we heard them say just how valued CIHI's pan-Canadian perspective is. This is what sets us apart.

The consultations also reaffirmed the power of comparable data. Although every health region in the country gathers data, it is because of CIHI's efforts to ensure information is collected and coded consistently on a pan-Canadian level that comparisons between provinces, regions and hospitals can be made.



Comparable data enable our stakeholders to share best practices and find efficiencies. They ensure transparency and accountability. Because, as the old saying goes, you cannot manage what you cannot measure, comparable data are essential.

Our partners and stakeholders told us they appreciate our leadership in supporting and promoting the role that information can and should play in Canada's health sector. As enthusiasts for health information, we welcome this feedback. We have seen the positive impact information can have on health care. We have seen the kind of difference information can and does make and the kind of change it can foster. And we are well aware that there is much more to be done.

To that end, our strategic directions focus on expanding our data holdings, enhancing existing databases and exploring new ones in priority areas. We are committed to using these data holdings to produce high-quality information and analyses that are relevant and actionable for our key stakeholders. And we are committed to turning more attention to helping our partners and stakeholders to better understand and use our data, always in a privacy-sensitive matter.

We look forward to the next four years, to better meeting the information needs of our stakeholders, and to taking health information further.



**Glenda Yeates**

President and CEO



## Introduction

The Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) is privileged to be playing an important role in Canada's health sector. As we began this strategic planning exercise, we realized from our extensive consultations with stakeholders that—while we have made considerable progress over the past decade—there is still much to do, and we were faced with having to make tough choices and decisions on how best to spend our resources. This strategic directions report, therefore, outlines the priorities identified by our stakeholders and what CIHI will be pursuing over the next four years in our efforts to serve their needs.

## Who we are

Established in 1994, CIHI is unique in the Canadian health sector. We are an independent, not-for-profit corporation that provides essential information on Canada's health system and the health of Canadians. We act as a strong voice for comparable pan-Canadian data to support decision-making and inform health care discussions. Funded by the federal, provincial and territorial governments, we report to an independent board of directors representing government health departments, regional health authorities, hospitals and health-sector leaders across the country.

## Our vision

CIHI's vision is to help improve Canada's health system and the well-being of Canadians by being a leading source of unbiased, credible and comparable information that will enable health leaders to make better-informed decisions.

## What we do

CIHI works with stakeholders to create and maintain a broad range of health databases, measurements and standards. We develop reports and analyses from our own data and other sources. We also work with health stakeholders and others to help them better understand and use our data and analyses. We do all of this in a way that ensures privacy and value for Canadians.

## Who we serve

CIHI produces information and analyses that are publicly available for many stakeholders in the health system and beyond. When setting priorities among the needs of stakeholders, we concentrate on senior government leaders and others involved in developing health policy; those who lead, manage and plan the delivery of health services at the front line; and members of the general public.

We also support those who use data for health and health-services research; health professionals and health records staff who are involved in the collection of data; and academics who help train our future health leaders.

### **Collaborating with partners**

In our effort to deliver the best possible service to Canadians, CIHI collaborates with a broad range of other health organizations throughout the country. Wherever possible, we also provide them with information they need to fulfill their mandates. CIHI works particularly closely with Statistics Canada, enabling both organizations to complement and support each other's rich data sources and expertise.

This collaborative approach helps avoid duplication of effort and cost, ensuring value for Canadians. It also enables the important policies and decisions that influence health in this country to be based on accurate, comparable and unbiased information.

### **Neutral, independent role**

CIHI's mandate is to remain neutral and objective, and to deliver quality, unbiased information. We are not policy-makers, yet we play an integral role in providing relevant and reliable data and analyses to those who manage health care and formulate health policy.

## Listening to stakeholders

In order to achieve our goals, CIHI must not only understand the current needs of the people we serve but also work closely with them to help identify future challenges and opportunities. In developing our new strategic directions, we spent a significant amount of time carefully listening to stakeholders. We held face-to-face meetings with senior health leaders across the country and also conducted a far-reaching online survey. We worked closely with Statistics Canada to collaborate on future strategies. We consulted with our staff to solicit their views on how to best assist our stakeholders. We also engaged our board of directors in what we heard from both internal and external stakeholders. We had deep and thoughtful conversations with our stakeholders and are grateful for the valuable insight they provided.

## What we heard

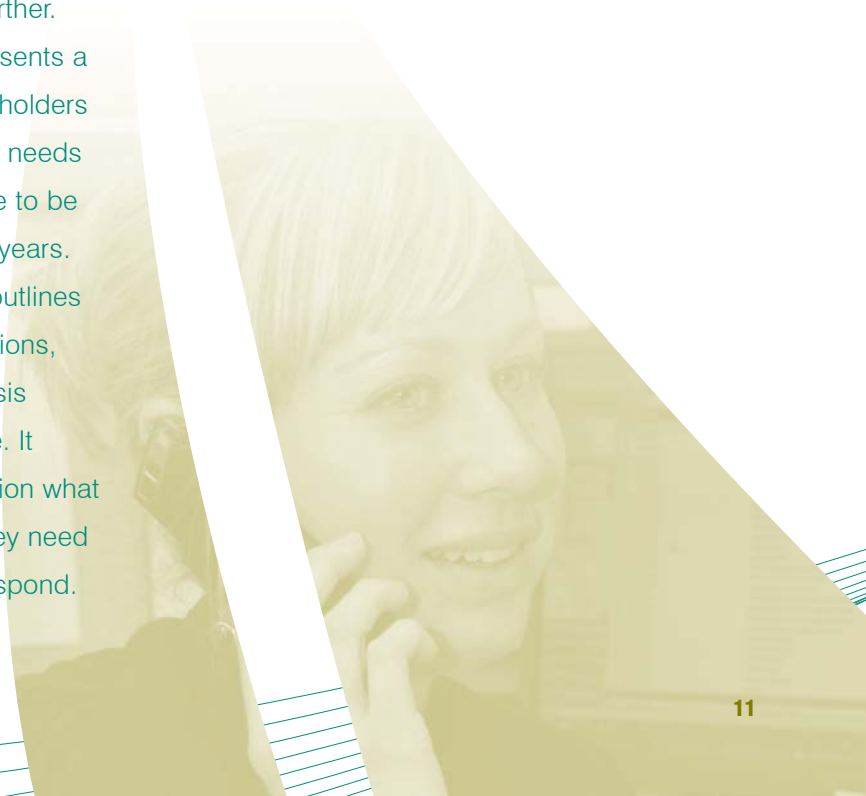
We were very pleased to hear that stakeholders respect the quality of our data, analysis, education and training and, as a result of our insistent attention to quality, see us as a credible leader. They said that because we are an independent organization that does not advocate for policy, they trust and rely on the objectivity of our data and analyses. They told us they value our reports, from the large national reports that synthesize information from a variety of sources to the small, more detailed reports that focus on a specific database. They said the breadth and depth of our reports allow them to compare their work with, and learn from, others across the country. They underscored the very important service CIHI provides in collecting comparable pan-Canadian data, as often it is only by comparing themselves with

others that individual jurisdictions, regions or programs can understand and assess their own efforts. They said they appreciate our leadership in promoting a culture where the important role that information can and should play in Canada's health sector is being more fully appreciated.

### **Looking to the future**

While our stakeholders confirmed the value we provide, they also provided insight regarding what we now need to focus on to help them further.

This report, therefore, represents a synthesis of what our stakeholders identified to be their priority needs and what we at CIHI believe to be possible over the next four years. The balance of this report outlines CIHI's three strategic directions, which focus on data, analysis and understanding and use. It summarizes for each direction what our stakeholders told us they need and how CIHI intends to respond.





# Our Key Commitments

At CIHI, we base our work on six commitments we believe are integral to our success.

- 1 Quality**
- 2 Privacy and security of data**
- 3 Teamwork and partnership**
- 4 Value for money**
- 5 Strong information technology (IT) infrastructure**
- 6 Dynamic organization**

# 1

## **Quality**

We will consistently produce timely high-quality data, analyses and services for our stakeholders.

# 2

## **Privacy and security of data**

We will ensure the privacy and security of the data we hold. We will work with the privacy community across the country so that our policies are in keeping with best practices.

# 3

## **Teamwork and partnership**

We will work collaboratively to ensure Canadians benefit from the country's collective expertise. We will work in close partnership with Statistics Canada and Canada Health Infoway, and we will also seek to partner with other national health organizations and stakeholders across the country.

# 4

## **Value for money**

We will consistently strive to be an efficient corporation that provides value for money to our stakeholders and to Canadians.

# 5

## **Strong information technology (IT) infrastructure**

We will continue to enhance our IT infrastructure so users can be assured that data are accurate and secure, analyses can be performed efficiently and IT applications are well supported.

# 6

## **Dynamic organization**

We will continue to be a forward-thinking and dynamic organization that is responsive to emerging trends. Critical to our success is ensuring we have the right kind of environment that will attract and retain a highly skilled, motivated and committed workforce.

# Our Strategic Directions





Strategic Direction  
**Data**

**1**



# Data

**We will enhance the scope, quality and timeliness of our data holdings.**

## **Enhance and expand existing data holdings**

Stakeholders stressed the need for us to make the most of what we have and to focus new data-collection efforts on priority needs. They talked about the significant time and cost associated with collecting data and asked us to be mindful of this when planning future initiatives. They asked us to consider new and different ways to make data collection easier and to work with other organizations wherever possible to align data needs and definitions.

CIHI will, therefore, continue strengthening and expanding the comprehensiveness of our existing databases by filling gaps in areas where there was a clear consensus, such as ambulatory/emergency care, home care and pharmaceuticals. For ambulatory/emergency care, we will look at introducing more flexible and timely approaches to collecting and reporting data. We will work with our partners to develop these new approaches in a way that will increase value and efficiency for our stakeholders. We will also strive to increase the number of jurisdictions that provide us with data.

### **Explore new areas**

Stakeholders expressed interest in knowing more about primary care, long-term care and community mental health, as well as the health of Canada's Aboriginal Peoples. We will, therefore, work on substantially

enhancing our data holdings in long-term care, including patient- and facility-level data. We will identify potential new data sources for primary care and community mental health and strive to create databases in these areas. In addition, we will explore approaches to Aboriginal health and health services data in close collaboration with the communities.

### **Provide leadership on data standards**

Stakeholders talked about the need to agree on not only what kinds of data to collect, but also a consistent way of defining and capturing those data. They asked CIHI to take a leadership role in this regard. CIHI will, therefore, promote standards for data collection and use, including grouping methodologies, throughout the health sector in Canada. Also, as Canada Health Infoway continues to promote the electronic health record

(EHR), we will work with interested stakeholders to explore and define what elements of an EHR could be appropriate for secondary use.

### **Enhance quality of data**

Stakeholders asked CIHI to continue efforts to enhance the quality of data. We will, therefore, improve the quality of incoming data by strengthening our existing data-quality edits and standards; developing new educational tools and workshops; and augmenting our re-abstraction study program. We will expand our annual jurisdictional data-quality assessments to deputy ministers. We will also continue to broaden our corporate data-quality strategy, focusing on the ongoing assessment of our data holdings through the application of the Data Quality Framework and analysis of the holdings.

### **Enhance timeliness of data**

Stakeholders asked us to explore new ways of making our data timelier. As a result, we will improve timeliness by reviewing and streamlining our internal processes; working with data providers to develop new processes to help speed up data submission; and reducing the time between data submission and publication. CIHI will also make mid-year data available through enhanced dissemination processes that use state-of-the-art technologies.



Strategic Direction  
**Analysis**

2

# Analysis

**We will continue to produce quality information and analyses that are relevant and actionable.**

## **Conduct more integrated and actionable analyses**

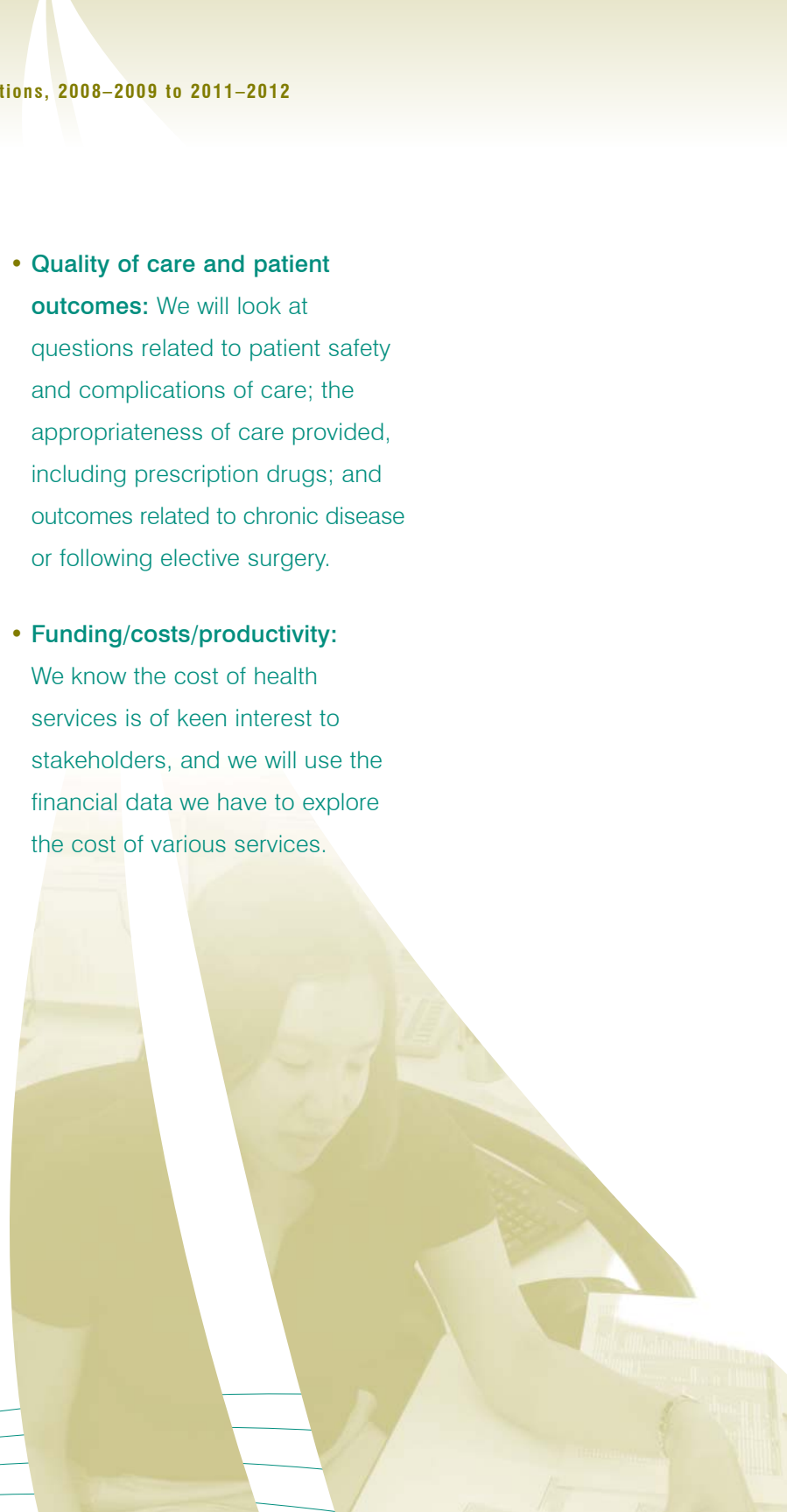
Stakeholders asked us to organize data from different databases to capture, wherever possible, an integrated picture of care. In addition to high-level information and analysis, they said they need “actionable information.” This means information they can readily use to improve policy and care in their own areas of responsibility. They said they would like more analytic tools, reports and training to make this happen. As a result, we will be emphasizing throughout all of our analytical work actionable information stakeholders can readily put to use.

We will also look for opportunities to integrate our population health analyses and expertise into our health-services work, and vice versa. We believe this holistic approach will help enrich and inform what we do across the board.

### **Focus on what's relevant**

Given the broad scope of the health system in Canada and the speed with which things change, it is challenging to identify with absolute certainty the priority issues that will emerge in the future and the areas where we should focus our analyses. However, the consultations we held with our stakeholders helped us understand their priorities:

- **Quality of care and patient outcomes:** We will look at questions related to patient safety and complications of care; the appropriateness of care provided, including prescription drugs; and outcomes related to chronic disease or following elective surgery.
- **Funding/costs/productivity:** We know the cost of health services is of keen interest to stakeholders, and we will use the financial data we have to explore the cost of various services.



- **Integration and continuity of care:** We know stakeholders are interested in the continuum of care and, wherever possible, we will look at questions related to how patients make the transition between different kinds of health services, such as moving from hospital to rehabilitation to home care.
- **Access, including wait times:** We will continue to report on wait times across the country. This will include understanding variations in measuring wait times and the volume of surgeries in priority areas.
- **Health human resources:** We will analyze the supply and distribution of health human resources related to specific providers.

### **Implement the Canadian Population Health Initiative (CPHI) Action Plan**

CIHI will continue strong and distinct population health analyses in support of the 2007 to 2010 CPHI priority themes: reducing gaps in health; determinants of mental health and resilience; healthy weights; and place and health. We will produce *Improving the Health of Canadians* reports and companion analytic products based on the above themes. We will synthesize, disseminate and promote research findings from CPHI-funded research programs and projects, and pilot intervention research initiatives. CIHI will also continue to implement an outreach strategy for knowledge exchange through partnerships, workshops, conferences and other products, such as e-newsletters. The goal is to improve our knowledge of population-health issues, including effective population health-intervention program and policy strategies.

### **Provide more health indicators**

Stakeholders stressed the importance of indicators. Ranging from the national level to the region and facility levels, these cross-sector indicators measure such things as the quality and efficiency of care, as well as specific patient and health outcomes. Stakeholders said these indicators are proving to be extremely actionable, because by tracking their progress over time and by comparing themselves to other jurisdictions they are able to readily identify areas for investigation and improvement. In response to these needs, CIHI and Statistics Canada will continue to strengthen their indicator reporting and, wherever possible, develop additional indicators that correspond with the Health Indicator Framework to focus on health status, non-medical determinants of health, health-

system performance, community and health-system characteristics, and equity. Based on what we heard from stakeholders, we will focus on health and health-service indicators in the following areas:

- **Outcomes, patient safety and access:** We will develop indicators related to variations in outcomes following treatment, as well as special indicators for such priority areas as cardiac and stroke care. We will continue to focus on quality and patient-safety indicators, including refining the hospital standardized mortality ratio (HSMR). We will also begin reporting on primary-care indicators and continue developing indicators on access.
- **Population health:** We will work with Statistics Canada to explore new population health indicators.

### **Enhance quality of information**

High-quality analysis starts with identifying the right questions, applying rigorous approaches and methodologies (to determine how we can best answer a given question) and validating results. To this end, we will continue to strengthen our quality assurance processes to ensure our reports and analytical products are sound and compelling. These processes will engage stakeholders and experts through advisory panels and external reviews. We will also focus on hiring excellent quality assurance staff and supporting them through education, training and professional development.





Strategic Direction  
**Understanding  
and Use**

3

## Understanding and Use

**We will work with stakeholders to help them better understand and use our data and analyses; we will do this in a timely and privacy-sensitive manner.**

### **Share CIHI expertise**

Stakeholders said they recognize CIHI has significant expertise in health data and analysis and that they need our help to effectively interpret and use this information in their day-to-day decision-making. They asked for more training and education—not just for new staff, but for senior leaders as well. While they expressed definite interest in e-learning, they are also interested in more face-to-face learning—especially at the local level.

In addition to building our capacity to increase the breadth and depth of the education and training opportunities we now offer our stakeholders, CIHI will seek out new ways of sharing our expertise. This includes e-learning and communities of practice/forums that will enable users and analysts to share ideas and best practices. We will support local and national workshops and conferences to help users better understand how to gain maximum benefit from our data and analytical products. We will look for opportunities to increase the understanding and use of our data and analyses beyond the health sector, including the general public and the news media. We will also build our capacity to respond better at a local level by further developing our regional offices. This will help ensure CIHI products, services and expertise are more accessible to stakeholders from coast to coast.

### **Enhance access to data and reports**

Stakeholders asked CIHI to make it easier for them to access our information. As a result, we will significantly upgrade our website to make it more user-friendly. For stakeholders who submit data to CIHI, we will further develop the CIHI Portal, giving users more electronic templates and analytic tools, including a new range of self-service e-reporting tools. These tools will give stakeholders the power to use pan-Canadian data to customize electronic reports directly from their own site—also maximizing the reuse of CIHI data and giving direct access to grouped data. We will provide Quick Stats—quick and easy information and tools covering a comprehensive span of health concerns. CIHI will also simplify access by standardizing interactive and detailed reporting.

### **Enhance responsiveness and timeliness**

While stakeholders appreciate the service they are receiving from CIHI, they said they needed faster turnaround times. CIHI will respond more quickly to requests for new data and analyses from key stakeholders by establishing a rapid-response team. We will also respond more quickly to requests for existing information from stakeholders and the general public by establishing a centralized-response centre.

### **Ensure privacy and security**

As we engage more stakeholders in using our information, those consulted wanted assurance that we will safeguard privacy. CIHI continues to be absolutely committed to ensuring the privacy and security of the data we hold.

We will invest in regular updates of our infrastructure to ensure we have state-of-the-art security technology. We will continue to develop data-sharing agreements with our stakeholders to make clear the privacy requirements and arrangements governing the use of data. We will also continue working closely with privacy commissioners across the country to ensure our policies and procedures are updated regularly in support of best practices.







## Moving Forward to Take Action

CIHI is pleased that stakeholders understand the value that quality data, and the ability to compare data on a pan-Canadian level, bring to decision-making. We are also pleased with the ongoing high level of trust they have for the objectivity and neutrality of our data and analyses. But we also recognize that the Canadian health sector is a changing landscape and that there are many new priorities that we now need to address while continuing to build our core expertise. CIHI believes this strategic directions report is an ambitious yet realistic plan to meet those needs in a timely and privacy-sensitive manner. We look forward to working with our partners and stakeholders over the next four years to translate these plans into concrete action.

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