

Research Workforce Strategy

Background

[HEALTHQ32](#) is Queensland Health's high-level vision for the health system. It sets out the future direction and focuses on being adaptable, embedding innovative models of care and new technologies that improve patient care, increase accessibility, and deliver services more efficiently. HEALTHQ32 is underpinned by seven system priorities (i.e. Reform, First Nations, Workforce, Consumer Safety and Quality, Health Services, Public Policy and Research). Each system priority will be supported by a strategy that outlines the focus areas and outcomes that will drive the future direction for health Queensland.

Queensland Health's Research Strategy

These underpinning strategies, including the Research Strategy which was developed by the Office of Research and Innovation, are expected to be released over the coming months. The Research Strategy sets out an approach to embed research and innovation as core parts of the health system.

Queensland Health's Workforce Strategy and Research Workforce Strategy

Queensland Health's Workforce Strategy sets out an approach to build a sustainable health workforce. It is currently under development and is expected to be released in mid-2024¹.

During the development of the Research and Workforce strategies it became apparent that the 'Research Workforce' was a distinct cohort within the Queensland Health System and faced unique challenges and opportunities. To address these, and to ensure that there was a focus on the future development of the Research Workforce, it has been agreed that a separate Research Workforce strategy would be developed.

The Research Workforce Strategy will be a subset of the Workforce Strategy and a companion to the Research Strategy and will ensure that there is a specific focus on the needs that will support a future focussed research workforce.

¹ <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/system-governance/strategic-direction/plans/health-workforce-strategy>

Queensland Health's Research Workforce

Queensland Health's Research Workforce is diverse and includes clinician researchers, research assistants, research support workforce (e.g. Research Ethics and Governance Officers), conjoint research positions, embedded researchers, Clinical Trial Coordinators, research coordinators, research development officers and other positions supporting the delivery, governance, uptake, strategy, and leadership of research and research capacity building of the workforce.

Consultation to Inform the Research Workforce Strategy:

Development of the Research Workforce Strategy will be led by the Office of Research and Innovation and informed by stakeholder input on the key issues, challenges and actions needed. The following sets out some of the key points that will be addressed during the consultation.

Current challenges:

1. **Insecure Research Workforce:** The overutilisation of temporary contracts for the health research workforce results in poor job security, workforce instability and recruitment challenges. This in turn leads to high turnover and loss of expertise.
2. **Access to Research and Professional Development Opportunities:** Training, funding and career development opportunities for Queensland's health research workforce are primarily concentrated in the metro locations resulting in inequity across the State.
3. **Protected Research Time:** Because of clinical workloads and other demands there is insufficient time available to undertake research activities. This creates a significant barrier for those who wish to engage in research and limits the potential benefits that research can achieve.
4. **Absence of Research Career Pathways:** The absence of a defined training pathway for clinician researchers (i.e. professionals who combine a career in clinical practice with a career in research across a range of areas including medicine, nursing, and allied health) and is a disincentive to building a clinical research career.

Future Focussed Health Research Workforce:

1. **Sustainable and Skilled:** Support and training to develop research skills, capabilities and career paths across the research workforce will build confidence, knowledge and expertise and embed a culture of research. This needs to be available across the system and tailored to different roles and should include an integrated training program for clinician researchers.
2. **Technology Proficient:** The application of technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning will play an increasingly important role in clinical research and healthcare delivery. To fully embrace the potential and application of these new technologies a multifaceted workforce which will include skills in data science, bioinformatics and statistics will be required.

3. **Rapidly Translating and Implementing research findings:** Skills in evaluation and implementation are critical to ensuring that there is faster access to better treatments, new models of care and new technologies.
4. **Consumer Centric:** Contemporary research will actively involve consumers. Innovative strategies, and support and training will be required for Queensland Health's research workforce that ensure consumers are true partners in research.