

Factsheet: Benefits and challenges

Strategic health workforce planning framework

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Benefits

Strategic workforce planning supports the achievement of organisational objectives for health service effectiveness and sustainability. In the context of the Queensland health system, this has a flow-on effect to the achievement of the broader government, policy and service objectives for the state's health system.

The strategic workforce planning process helps health service organisations to take stock of the workforce, and to understand its strengths, its trajectory and any areas of potential exposure or limitation. It allows organisations to make decisions about how they want to lead, shape and engage the workforce into the future.

Strategic workforce planning also supports future-proofing of the workforce by helping to build sustainability. In the context of today's rapidly changing operating environment, strategic workforce planning is a key enabler of the **transform, optimise, grow** approach outlined in the *Queensland Health System Outlook to 2026*. By exploring possible future scenarios, health service organisations can not only be better prepared, but can be the instigator and influencer of future changes. It is a tool to assist organisations to plan and prepare the workforce for changing environments, emerging technology, and rising workforce and consumer expectations.

Challenges

The challenges of strategic workforce planning are contingent on factors such as organisational structure, culture and stakeholder expectations. Some common challenges can be avoided through investment in the key foundations of any strategic planning process: *leadership, engagement and governance*.

Senior management endorsement of the planning process helps to build impetus and credibility. By championing strategic workforce planning and integrating it with other strategic planning functions and cycles, challenges and risks can be minimized. Robust consultation processes enhance stakeholder engagement and shared ownership of the process. Strong governance ensures accountability and focus.

Strategic workforce planning is best viewed as an iterative process of continuous improvement, where the extent of changes is consistent with the planning maturity of the organisation. Attempting to do too much, too quickly, or to have too many priorities to focus on at once, is likely to lead to poor outcomes.

It is recommended that strategic workforce planning teams aim for simplicity and clarity, focusing on a limited number of actionable priorities and strategies initially, to be built upon in future planning cycles.

Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps to achieve state and organisational strategic goals Provides greater agility and flexibility to deal with change Facilitates transitions to other models of service provision Supports future-proofing and service sustainability Enables more efficient and cost-effective use of resources Mitigates risks from future capability gaps and critical, hard-to-fill roles Identifies and prepares pipelines for future required workforce capabilities Encourages active consideration of organisational workforce diversity goals Improves employee mobility and provides more job security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempting more than is manageable Lack of organisational commitment to the process HR and business units being siloed, restricting collaboration and not linking workforce and service outcomes Getting caught up in the data and analytics, instead of starting with what is available Focusing only on day-to-day operations, budgeting and headcount Not thinking about potential broader macro impacts on the workforce when planning Treating the strategic workforce plan as a static document and not revisiting it throughout the planning life cycle

Source: Adapted from Human Capital Institute (HCI) Strategic Workforce Planning Participant Guide, 2015, p8.

FACT SHEET: Refer to the strategic health workforce planning framework Guide for more information.