



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES SYSTEM SUSTAINABILITY

How will the work of the HCSS Unit intersect with the work of the NTHSSA Public Administrator?

Both the HCSS Unit and the Public Administrator are examining sustainability of health and social services but through different lenses. The Public Administrator's role is more immediate and will review the NTHSSA's governance and daily operations, while the HCSS Unit role is more system focused in its review of what health and social services should be core to the NWT.

What has the HCSS Unit achieved to date?

Since its inception in July 2024, the HCSS Unit has focused on establishing its scope and monitoring and evaluation approach while progressing through internal hiring processes to ensure it has the resources necessary to achieve its objectives.

How is all of the sustainability work within the health and social services system being aligned?

The HCSS Unit meets regularly with a Project Team that consists of the Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services and the Chief Executive Officers of the three Health and Social Services Authorities to assure that sustainability activities across the system, including those being implemented by the Public Administrator are aligned and do not overlap. The HCSS Unit is specially tasked with defining a fiscally sustainable and operationally efficient approach to health and social services delivery (including insured services) for the NWT.

What are the current cost pressures faced in the health and social services system?

The HCSS Unit is currently conducting its preliminary analysis to this end, but two challenges that continue to be brought forward are the shortage of health and social services professionals, at a national level, creating a reliance on agencies to assist in the provision of service delivery in the NWT, as well as utilization and inflation increases that are having an impact on programs and services that rely on travel and contracted delivery.

Why was the Healthcare and System Sustainability (HCSS) Unit created?

The landscape of the health and social services system is changing and while we continue to expand our service delivery to address current cost pressures, we are in a position where the government can no longer afford to do this. Not only do we need to think differently about how our health and social services are delivered, but we also need to understand what our core health and social service needs are. The HCSS Unit is tasked with undertaking this work.

Why is the HCSS Unit located in the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs?

Delivering a more sustainable health and social services system will require several complex and multi-faced initiatives that should not be undertaken by the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) or the Health and Social Services Authorities (HSSAs) alone. By placing the HCSS Unit in the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs, the Premier is committed to doing his part to help DHSS and HSSAs to secure a more sustainable health and social services system for NWT residents. It also allows the Legislative Assembly to hold the Premier accountable to assuring the work does yield financial benefits for the GNWT in the long run.

What will the HCSS Unit be accountable for?

The HCSS Unit will be accountable for completing a review of core program and service delivery including insured services within the health **and** social services system. This work will need to be undertaken in cooperation with the of the DHSS and the HSSAs to better understand what factors may be increasing program delivery costs and to develop and implement a response to address these factors.

What makes the review the HCSS Unit is undertaking different than other system sustainability reviews that the health and social services system has undertaken in the past?

Previous reviews were foundational in guiding operational changes based on the way health and social services is currently being delivered in the NWT. This work is not being abandoned and will be used in the review that the HCSS Unit will undertake.

If we expect transformative change to happen, we need to first define and prioritize what the NWT residents need. The work of the HCSS Unit will define this need and further determine how that need can be fiscally sustained and operationally efficient for the long term benefit of the GNWT fiscal framework.

The HCSS Unit will also establish a continuous improvement framework that will allow the sustainability of the health and social services to be continually monitored and reported on, allowing for evidence-based adjustments to be made, as required.

Does a more sustainable system mean programs and services will have to do more with less?

We understand these concerns that frontline workers and operational staff have. The work of the HCSS Unit will adhere to the mandate commitment of finding fiscal and operational efficiencies without diminishing the quality of service provide.

What resourcing is being dedicated to the HCSS Unit?

Funding for this unit is fully supported through the Territorial Health Investment Fund (THIF) agreement, which includes a Health and Social Services System Sustainability stream.

Funding is time limited to March 31, 2028 and equals about \$2 million per year to support nine positions and some operational funding for engagement and communications. While any funding not spent each year will lapse, the THIF agreement does have carry-over provisions that will allow any unspent revenues to be allocated to a future period.

Is the creation of the HCSS Unit an appropriate use of funds when the GNWT is also trying to address the increased growth in the health and social services system?

Health sustainability is not a new challenge to the NWT, which is why it is an important part of the GNWT mandate and the priorities of the 20th Legislative Assembly. Health sustainability is also a National concern, which is why the Federal Government is committed to funding sustainability work through the THIF Agreement.

The funding from the Agreement is being used to fully support the creation of the HCSS Unit for the very purpose that it would not be appropriate for the GNWT to take resources away from, or create more work for, an already strained health and social services system.

How is the HCSS Unit structured?

The structure of the HCSS Unit consists of 8 staff that bring a combination of northern-based senior leadership expertise and program evaluation and fiscal analytical skills built into the team. The combined skills sets will assure our fiscal, policy, political and legal factors are considered throughout the review process and in any changes that are implemented.

Is it anticipated that the work of the HCSS Unit will be completed by March 2028?

The HCSS Unit is guided by a Project Charter, associated project management tools, and a monitoring and evaluation approach. Through its accountability to the Premier, the HCSS Unit will continue to provide updates on its progress which is anticipated for completion by the end of this Assembly in alignment with the mandate of the 20th Assembly. Implementation of any changes will be ongoing within this time frame pending the analysis from the review and any subsequent approvals required.

How will the work of the HCSS Unit overlap or compliment the work of the Government Renewal Initiative (GRI)?

The purpose of the GRI is to examine the success of programs and services and determine if that success provides value to the GNWT given the budgets allocated. The focus is more long term in nature and applies an accountability for results approach to program and service delivery through the establishment of a risk-based and outcomes-focused evaluation schedule for all GNWT programs and services.

The work of the HCSS Unit will examine the efficiency and effectiveness of the financial and operational processes of health and social services programs and outcomes. The focus is more immediate in nature and will apply a sustainability approach that maximizes the use of resources, time and money in the health and social services system.

While they are separate exercises with different purposes, the results of both GRI and the work of the HCSS Unit will compliment each other as work is completed.

Will there be a role for frontline workers in the work of the HCSS Unit?

The HSCSS Unit's review cannot be achieved meaningfully without engaging with those that are contributing most to our system: frontline workers and operational staff.

In preparing for meaningful engagement, HCSS Unit staff will review previous engagement documents and conduct research and analysis that will ensure future engagement is not repetitive to previous engagements, and the line of questioning is both evidence-based and forward thinking.

In the meantime, the HCSS Unit is providing monthly progress reports to front line workers and operational staff on the work being undertaken.

In the interim, frontline workers and operational staff are encouraged to email the HCSS Unit with any initial feedback they may have at HCSSU_Info@gov.nt.ca. Hearing from multiple voices will lead to a more sustainable health and social services system.

Will there be a role for community voices in the work of the HCSS Unit?

The HCSS Unit will rely on the 6 regional Wellness Councils as a voice for concerns and information about health and social services from residents within each region. The voices of each of these Wellness Councils will be imperative to the work the HCSS Unit is doing and will lead to a more sustainable health and social services system.

Will the HCSS Unit be required to provide regular reporting on progress?

Yes, regular reporting on progress and lessons learned will be important going forward. In addressing its requirement to develop a monitoring and evaluation framework to measure progress, the Unit is required to also provide progress reports on a bi-annual basis. The next report will be produced in June 2025. As noted above, the HCSS Unit also commits to regular progress reports to front line workers and operational staff on the work being undertaken as part of the internal newsletters distributed to internal staff within the department and the three Authorities.

Where can I get more information?

Please contact the HCSS Unit at: HCSSU_Info@gov.nt.ca
