



Advancing Health Equity Policy: Reflections on Governance and Accountability

Health Equity Division
Science and Policy Integration Branch
Public Health Agency of Canada

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Public Health
Agency of Canada

Agence de la santé
publique du Canada

Canada

Objectives



Overview of governance mechanisms to advance health equity within the Public Health Agency of Canada



Advancing policy-to-action using two levers: SGBA Plus and Quality of Life Framework

Health Equity at the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC)

Sustained commitment to advance equity at PHAC

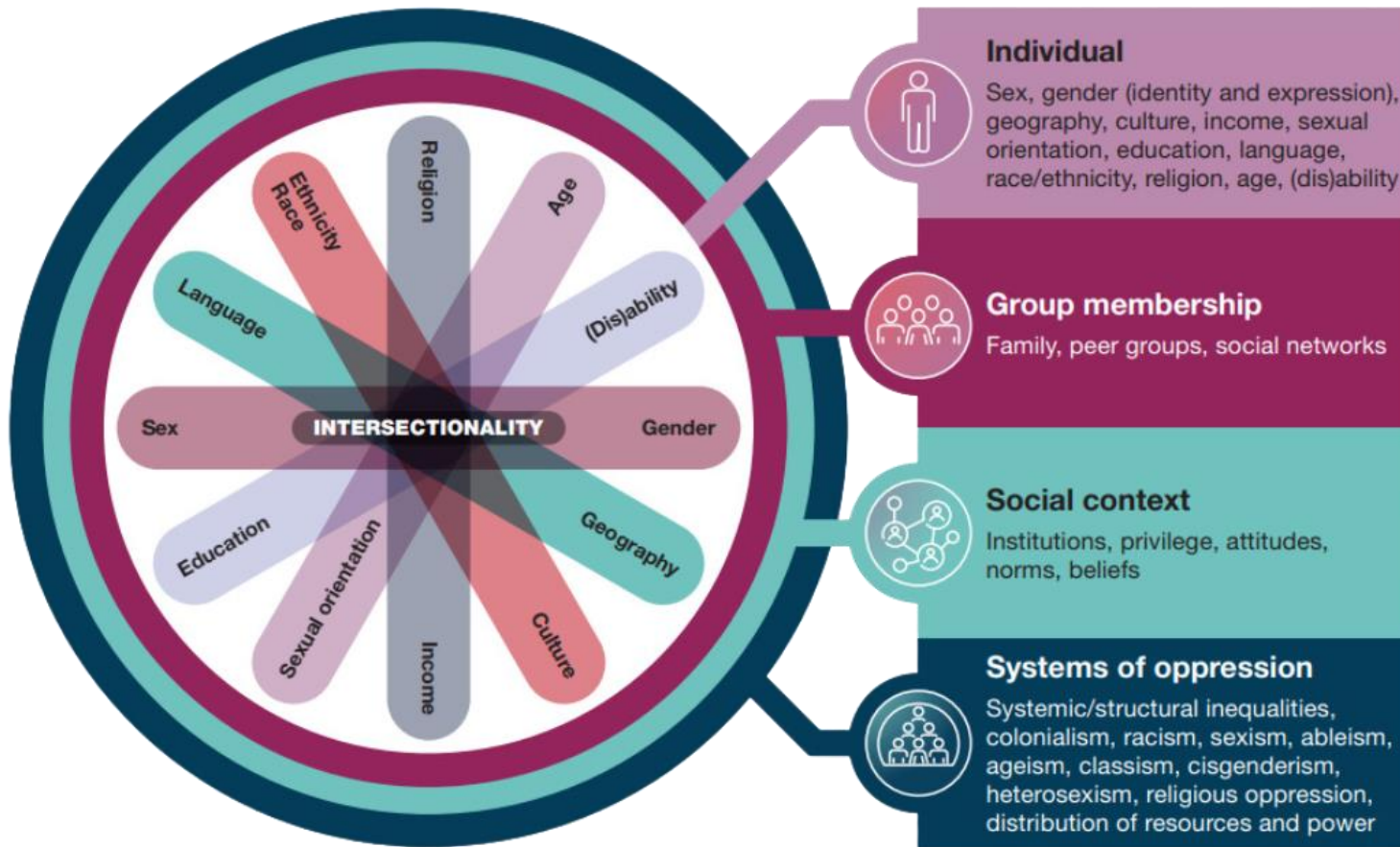


**Minister of Health
Marjorie Michel**

PHAC Vision

Health, well-being and equity for all people and communities in Canada

A Health Equity Lever: Sex and Gender-based Analysis Plus



- **Sex and Gender-based Analysis Plus (SGBA Plus)** is advanced through the [Health Portfolio \(HP\) SGBA Plus Policy](#) updated in 2021 to emphasize the application of intersectionality to advance health equity.
- The objective of this policy is to strengthen the **integration and application of SGBA Plus** in all Health Portfolio activities to advance health equity through the formulation of **responsive** and **inclusive** policies and programs

Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) is used throughout the entire Government of Canada. SGBA Plus is used within the Health Portfolio to emphasize the role that biological sex plays in influencing health outcomes.

From Policy to Action

Accountability & Governance

Agency Focal Point advances the implementation of the **Health Portfolio SGBA Plus Policy** through:

- Established and renewed three **year-Action Plan Framework and Implementation Strategy**
- Engaging horizontal and vertical governance tables at the Agency & across federal government departments
 - Annual update on progress to PHAC's **most senior management table**
 - Committee of Executive Leads to oversee the development of **program-specific SGBA Plus Integration Plans**
 - Transforming our working level network into a **health equity community of practise**
 - **Interdepartmental** GBA Plus Working Group
- Embedded SGBA Plus measures in **Executive Performance Agreements**

Tools to Support Implementation of Policy

- **Monitoring** implementation through the biennial HP SGBA Plus implementation survey
- Developed and disseminated **tools and resources** to enhance the integration SGBA Plus and health equity across various public health **functional areas and priorities**
- SGBA Plus **Learning Path** for PHAC employees
- Integrated SGBA Plus in key PHAC **scientific frameworks** and **policy tools**
- Developed **evidence synthesis products** on a range of topics to strengthen health equity integration in **priority areas**

Canada's Quality of Life Framework

- Indicator framework that measures quality of life (well-being) with over 80 indicators across 5 domains and 2 cross-cutting lenses
- Supports priority-setting and decision-making based on aspects of well-being that matter to Canadians
 - Prompts departments to think about how initiatives contribute across different domains of quality of life

Alignment with Public Health Priorities and Values:

- The Framework aligns with several core functions and values of public health
 - Intersectoral action
 - Health in All Policies
 - Evidence-based
 - Equity



Success Factors for the Framework's Development

Governance and accountability

- Interdepartmental governance
- Multi-level engagement
- Mandate letter accountability
- Requirements integrated into policy process and guidance

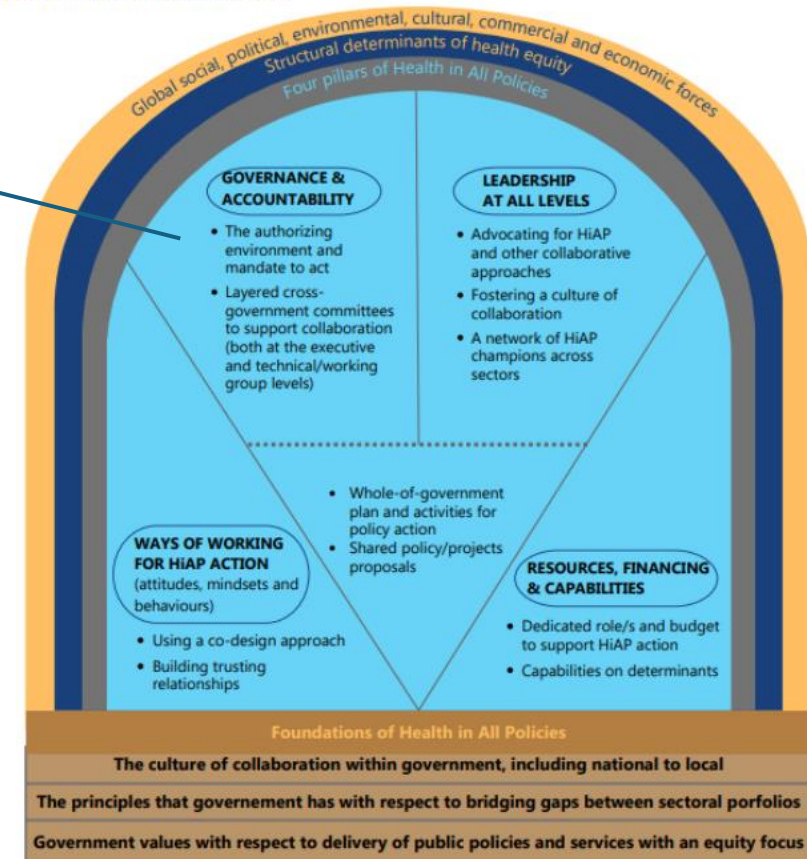
Quality of Life Framework for Canada: Lessons learned on multisectoral action for public health

WHO Compendium Report on Multisectoral Actions for the Prevention and Control of NCDs and Mental Health



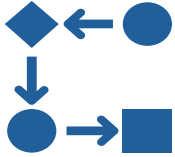
Compendium report on multisectoral actions for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases and mental health conditions

Figure 1 Four Pillars Model for HiAP



(Adapted from World Health Organization, 2023, p.21)

Key Learnings



High-level mandate:

The existence of mandate letter commitments helped to embed health equity into PHAC structures, by signalling high-level commitment.



Leadership at all levels:

Collaborative structures at the senior management and working levels allowed all actors and champions to advance common implementation goals, take ownership of the work, and represent diverse perspectives.



Accountability measures:

Shared accountabilities, with routine monitoring and reporting, ensures that all actors are progressing common goals and priorities.

Thank you!



Questions about applying SGBA Plus and health equity in your work? Reach us at:



HEALTH EQUITY DIVISION SINGLE WINDOW



SPB.HEPD-DGPS.DPEMS@phac-aspc.gc.ca

Annexes



Minister of Health

Health Canada
(HC)

Public
Health
Agency of
Canada
(PHAC)

Canadian
Institutes of
Health
Research
(CIHR)

Canadian
Food
Inspection
Agency
(CFIA)

Patented
Medicine Prices
Review Board
(PMPRB)

Main activities of the Health Portfolio:

- Support Canadians in making safe and healthy choices
- Manage risks to health
- Support health research and science, data collection, and surveillance capacity
- Strengthen Canada's universal health care system
- Enable access to safe and effective health products

HED is the Centre of Expertise focal point within the Agency on the social and structural determinants of health, intersectional SGBA Plus, and health equity.

- **We shape PHAC policy and practice** from an evidence-informed social determinants of health equity perspective
- **We foster intersectoral action** to improve the upstream social and structural determinants of health
- **We develop data and evidence** on health inequities, social determinants of health, and equity-focused public health interventions
- **We strengthen PHAC capacity** to integrate official languages and health equity considerations across all Agency core functions

Health Equity at the Core of Our Work

- During her tenure, Canada's former Chief Public Health Officer made **health equity** a foundational priority of her mandate and emphasized a social determinants of health approach throughout her annual reports on the state of public health in Canada
- The PHAC vision statement is "Health, well-being and equity for all people and communities in Canada" and one of our core values is health equity

Canada's Chief Public Health Officer—Championing Health Equity

Everyone in Canada deserves optimal health

I will continue to drive efforts to promote health equity so that everyone, including the most marginalized among us, have an opportunity to lead healthy lives, both physically and mentally.

I will continue to collaborate with partners, to advance the science and research needed to provide the best evidence to inform our decision-making and action.

And I will continue to engage with people across Canada, especially those with lived experience, listening and learning to ensure our actions foster health equity across the health ecosystem.

- Scientific research
- Lived experience and community knowledge
- Health data and surveillance

Generating evidence-based advice

2022–2025 Priorities

My primary focus is **health equity** because it directly affects the health outcomes of the whole of Canadian society. It also provides a central lens for action on my four priorities:

- Substance-related Harms
- Pandemic and Emergency Preparedness and Response
- Health System Transformation
- Health Impacts of Climate Change

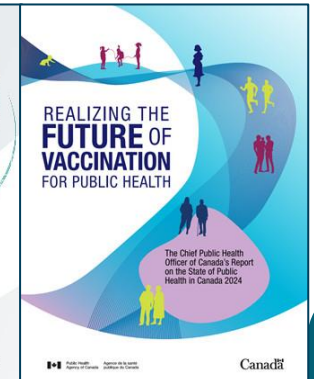
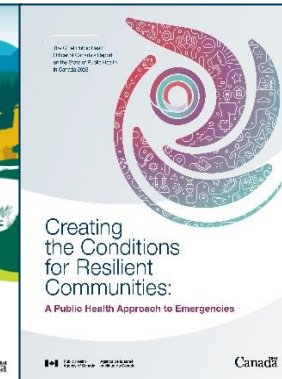
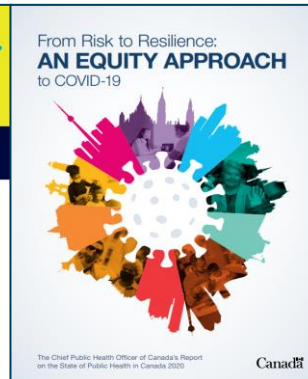
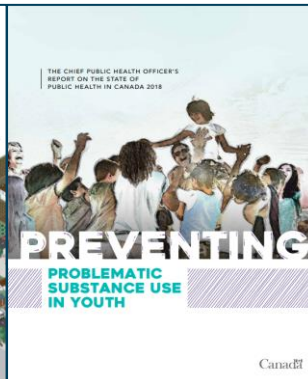
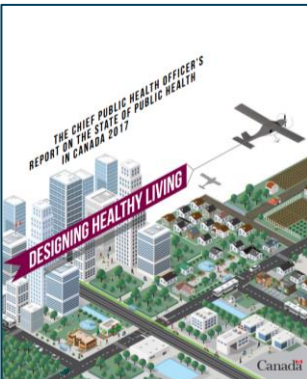
Helping people in Canada reach their optimal health

Championing action on the factors influencing health

- Social and economic conditions
- Physical environment
- Individual behaviours

Engaging with and through partners

- People with lived experiences
- Indigenous leaders and co-creators
- Community leaders
- Federal, Provincial, Territorial partners
- Health care providers
- Not-for-profit and private sectors
- International partners
- Academia



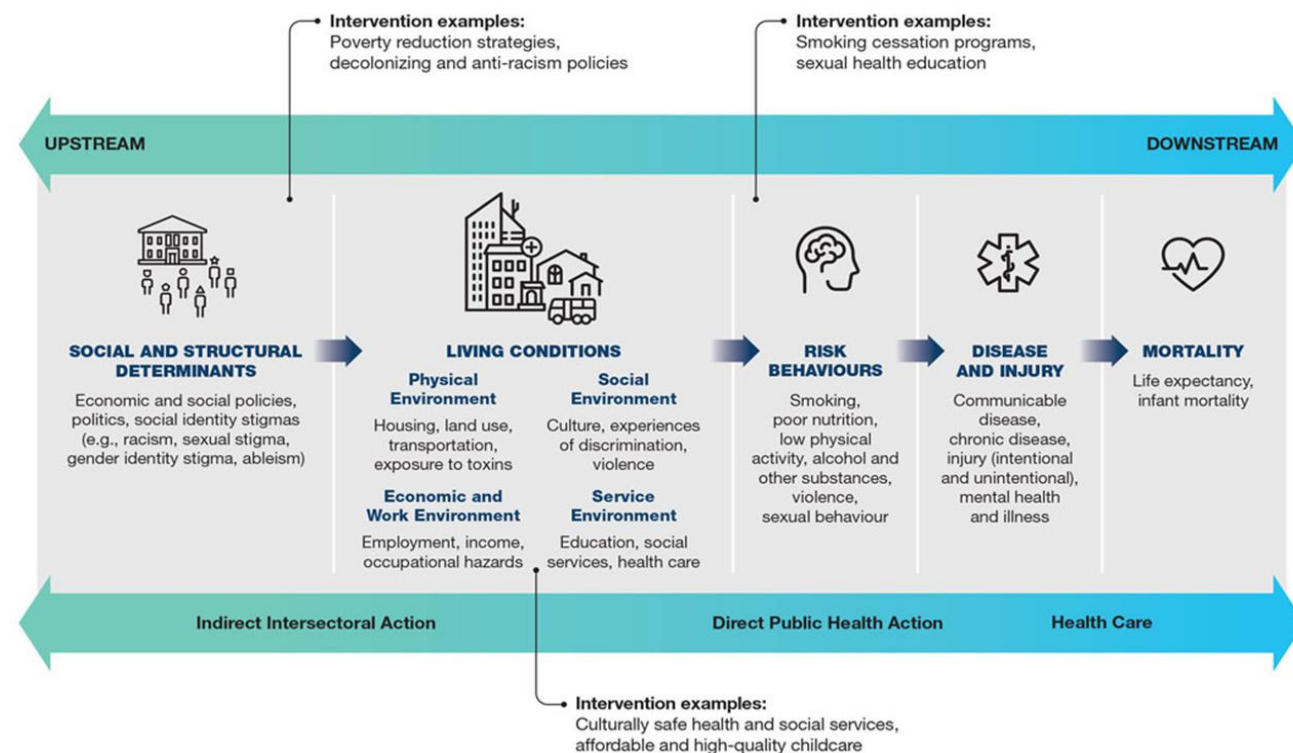
Policy Context: Domestic and International Health Equity Drivers

Domestic Drivers

- [Health Portfolio Sex- and Gender- Based Analysis Plus \(SGBA Plus\) Policy \(2022\)](#)
- [Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy, Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan, and Canada's Action Plan on Combatting Hate](#)
- [2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024 Chief Public Health Officers Annual Reports](#)
- [Official Languages Act \(2023\)](#)

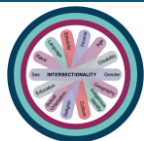
International Drivers

- [UN Sustainable Development Goals \(2015\)](#)
- [Rio Political Declaration on the SDOH \(WHO, 2011\)](#)
- [The Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion \(1984\)](#)
- [Canada's Feminist International Assistant Policy \(2017\)](#)
- [WHO Resolution on the Social Determinants of Health \(2021\)](#)
- [PAHO Policy for Recovering Progress Toward the Sustainable](#)



Source: Continuum of interventions to address determinants of health (CPHO Report, 2021) – **We need to move ‘upstream’ to improve population health and health equity through intersectoral action**

PHAC SGBA Plus Action Plan Framework for 2025-26 to 2027-28



GOAL: To become a leading public health organisation in applying an intersectional approach across all core functions, advancing health equity, diversity, and inclusion, and supporting improved health outcomes for people in Canada.



PILLARS

Governance and accountability

Knowledge and evidence

Capacity and expertise

PRIORITIES

Enhance SGBA Plus **accountability** in planning, reporting, and decision-making processes

Promote and enable the collection and use of **disaggregated data and scientific evidence** for intersectional and equity-informed analyses

Strengthen **awareness, understanding, and capacity** for SGBA Plus through tailored training, tools, and resources

Develop **strategic partnerships and collaborations** to enhance equity-informed policy and culturally-relevant programming

OUTCOMES

Employees, partners, and stakeholders systematically apply SGBA Plus and/or equity-informed approaches in all their work

All PHAC initiatives apply an intersectional, culturally-relevant, and evidence-informed approach

People in Canada experience improved health outcomes through tailored, equity-informed public health initiatives

Want to learn more about applying SGBA Plus

SGBA Plus Training

- [Women and Gender Equality Canada \(WAGE\) GBA Plus training](#)
- [WAGE GBA Plus micro-learning videos](#)
- Canada School of Public Service (CSPS) GBA Plus micro-learning video series: [Introduction to GBA Plus](#); [Importance of GBA Plus and Data](#); [Applying GBA Plus](#); [GBA Plus Policy Recommendations and Considerations](#); and [GBA Plus Consequence and Conclusions](#)
- [Online training modules from CIHR about integrating sex & gender in health research](#)

SGBA Plus Tools

- [WAGE GBA Plus Resources](#)
- [NCCDH Let's Talk Health Equity Series](#)
- [Towards Health Equity – Practice Tool](#)
- [Towards Health Equity: A tool for designing equity-sensitive public health Interventions](#)
- [Health Inequalities Data Tool](#)
- [How to integrate intersectionality theory in quantitative health equity analysis?](#)
- [CIHR Meet the Methods Series: Quantitative intersectional study design and primary data collection](#)
- [CIHR Meet the Methods Series: Questions to guide quantitative intersectional analyses](#)