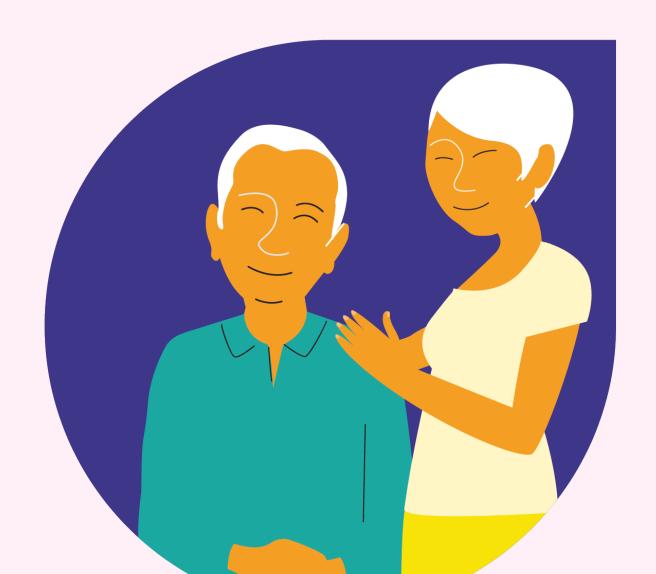# Nursing Home Without Walls (NHWW) – Guide for Jurisdictions

About Healthcare Excellence Canada

Healthcare Excellence Canada (HEC) works with partners to spread innovation, build capability and catalyze policy change so that everyone in Canada has safe and high-quality healthcare. Through collaboration with patients, caregivers and people working in healthcare, we turn proven innovations into lasting improvements in all dimensions of healthcare excellence.

HEC focuses on improving care of older adults, bringing care closer to home and supporting the retention of the health workforce – with quality and safety embedded across all our efforts. We are committed to fostering inclusive, culturally safe and equitable care through engagement with different groups, including patients and caregivers, First Nations, Métis and Inuit, healthcare workers and more.

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In the spirit of continuous improvement, we look forward to our ongoing journey of engaging, learning, reflecting and refining and will update this guide as we go forward with any new developments.

Contents

Introduction

This guide was developed to support decisions about the potential fit of the Nursing Home Without Walls (NHWW) program for provincial, territorial or regional-level implementation, and to provide guidance on how to get started.

The first section of this guide provides an overview of the NHWW program. It helps you assess whether the program is a good fit for your province, territory or region by considering the following:

- Is NHWW in alignment with strategic and relative priorities?

- Are the societal, political and economic conditions favourable for implementing NHWW?

- Can the nursing home[a] and community infrastructure support NHWW?

The second section guides you on a few key areas relevant to the early phases of planning the implementation of a NHWW program, including:

- building partnerships and connections

- exploring resource and funding directions

- identifying leaders to champion the program

- identifying what regions/communities could benefit from this program

The final section provides some considerations as you begin planning for implementation.

This guide provides example scenarios to demonstrate how you might approach each area of your assessment. The idea is to demonstrate how NHWW implementation can move forward, and what potential next steps may be, depending on different contexts.

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[a]*In this report, we have referred to nursing homes which have been defined as organizations that provide a wide range of health and personal care services for Canadians with medical or physical needs who require access to 24-hour nursing care, personal care and other therapeutic and support services. – CIHI 2024*
In some provinces, other terms are more common, including long-term care homes, continuing care facilities, and residential care homes.

What is NHWW?

NHWW harnesses community and nursing home assets to create a positive, person-centred and flexible approach to aging in place, enhancing quality of life for older adults and their care partners.

With costs rising to provide facility-based long-term care across Canada, policy solutions have centred on the need to shift or delay entry to nursing homes.[1,2] Research also shows that nearly all older adults in Canada would prefer to age in place within their own homes and communities for as long as possible.[3] This has resulted in the development of innovative programs and services to support aging in place.[4] Aging in place has been defined as having the health and social supports and services you need to live safely and independently in your home or community for as long as you wish and are able.[5]

A research team led by Dr. Suzanne Dupuis-Blanchard from the Université de Moncton developed an evidence-informed program to address the gap in services supporting aging in place in New Brunswick – while also providing cost-effective solutions for delivering community services by leveraging existing infrastructure and community assets.[6] The program identifies opportunities to enhance services and improve access and navigation for older adults.

Following a successful pilot phase, the program was spread across several communities in New Brunswick through a tripartite agreement among the Université de Moncton, the Department of Social Development with the government of New Brunswick and Healthcare Excellence Canada (HEC). The NHWW program has been promoted by HEC's Enabling Aging in Place program, which promotes promising practices in this area.[7]

NHWW increases community engagement and access to health and social services to address the needs of older adults. Through these efforts, the program aims to increase the number of older adults who can age in place, improve their quality of life, increase their sense of community and purpose, increase support for care partners, reduce unnecessary emergency department visits and support a healthy workforce to provide safe and high-quality care.

NHWW principles

NHWW is a program under the leadership of a nursing home, where the NHWW program staff develops partnerships and collaborations with the community to meet the needs, goals and gaps in support and services to age in place. Older adults, care partners, community members, organizations and NHWW staff collaborate to identify current services or develop new health and social services, at no cost, for older adults and their care partners, leveraging community and nursing home assets. This community model involves cultivating strong connections, working in ways

that redefine aging as a positive process where older adults are valued and engaged in the community, and optimizing autonomy.

Key activities for a NHWW site

NHWW addresses the challenges of aging in place by adopting a person- and community-centred approach, delivering coordinated, integrated services with older adults and their care partners in the community. Nursing homes offer the physical space and administrative oversight to support NHWW staff and operations, as well as trusted knowledge of the local community, community resources and aging.
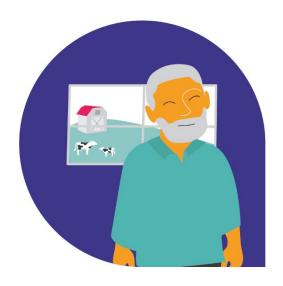
Key activities include:

- engaging nursing homes, older adults, care partners and community organizations in partnership development
- conducting a needs assessment of older adults in the local community
- selecting and co-developing adaptable and flexible services that meet identified needs
- connecting older adults and care partners with services to continue aging in place
- conducting an ongoing asset inventory
- continuously improving services with/for older adults and their care partners
- increasing awareness of available services to support older adults and care partners
- managing and tracking community

member/participant data

- evaluating and reporting outcomes and impacts of the program
- planning for sustainability

Flexible and adaptable program

The program allows flexibility in the services selected to address aging challenges based on the community's assets, needs and preferences. Services are identified and prioritized based on a community needs assessment and regularly reviewed to ensure they continue to be utilized, delivered with quality and address important needs of the community. Services do one or more of the following:

- improve access to supports and services to age in place
- offer social health initiatives to counter social isolation and loneliness
- increase knowledge of health-related issues important to aging in place and improving quality of life and well-being for older adults and their caregivers
- increase community awareness about healthy aging and the importance of aging in place

Is NHWW a good fit for this province, territory or region?

Purpose of this section

This section will help you assess whether the NHWW program is a good fit for your province/territory or region considering:

- Is NHWW in alignment with strategic and relative priorities?

- Are social, political and economic conditions favourable for NHWW?

- Can the nursing home and community infrastructure support NHWW?

As you review this section and assess the fit of the NHWW program for your province, territory or region, keep in mind that adapting the program's original implementation in New Brunswick may be necessary to suit your local context, needs and resources. To support planning and implementation in your jurisdiction, we recommend noting any adjustments that could optimize the program's fit in your jurisdiction.

Is NHWW in alignment with strategic and relative priorities?

Why is this important?

Aligning the program's mission with the government's strategic commitments and goals creates a stronger foundation for implementation, aids in identifying funding sources and allows you to leverage existing government resources that support the program's objectives.

Considerations

- What existing policies, government action plans or commitments align with this program and its intended benefits and outcomes?

- Do any existing funding programs and initiatives align with this program's goals?

- Are any initiatives already in place for this population? How does this program differ? Will the NHWW program meet specific needs that are not being met by existing programs?

Example scenarios

1

Scenario #1:

A team reviewing the NHWW program notes that the national Aging with Dignity agreement announced last year provides federal funding to the province to improve access to home and community services.[8] However, no additional provincial initiatives currently align with the NHWW program, which reveals a gap in support for healthy aging. This gap indicates a need for programs specifically aimed at improving access to services for older adults.

2

Scenario #2:

A team reviewing this program identifies a clear alignment with federal and provincial priorities. The NHWW program goals match those in the national Aging with Dignity agreement,[8] which the government prioritized for supporting older adults to age in place. This year, additional funding has been allocated for provincial senior care programs, and a program promoting aging in place is already underway, backed by government and external partnerships. While the existing program has limited sustainability, the NHWW could address these gaps, leveraging established resources and partnerships to expand and stabilize support for older adults.

Are social, political and economic conditions favourable for NHWW?

Why is this important?

Current political and economic conditions are critical factors in the success of this program, and they must be considered. Shifts in government priorities and economic conditions can impact funding levels, affecting both program investments and the sustainability of funding models needed to keep programs running.

When funding commitments fluctuate, it can place significant stress on programs, making it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality quality services and retain qualified staff.

Considerations

- How does the scope of this program, its goals, intended benefits and impacts align with current political agendas?

- Could any significant changes to provincial/territorial spending affect the sustainability of funding for this program?

- Are any elections on the horizon that could impact the momentum for launching or sustaining this program?

Example scenarios

1

Scenario #1:

Political and economic conditions are less than ideal for supporting the NHWW program. A new provincial government has been elected, and the lead is concerned that new initiatives may take priority, while existing programs that support health aging might be seen as sufficient.

The team reviewing this program engages policymakers and community leaders to understand their interests and priorities and to assess awareness of the value of programs that support aging in place. At the local level, some Members of the Legislative Assembly have highlighted support for older adults as key issues when seeking re-election, indicating a strategic opportunity to build support for this program.

To generate interest, the teams draft clear, compelling messages tailored to resonate with different audiences based on their knowledge and priorities. These messages are supported by specific recommendations, actionable steps and connections to current priorities. The timing of the program's introduction is carefully considered, aligning with budget cycles and upcoming provincial meetings.

Scenario #2:

The program is being considered in a jurisdiction with stability in the governing party. The government has built internal capacity to support a healthy aging strategy and has established strong partnerships with community partners, academics and leaders across various government levels. Social support for improving older adults' quality of life is also strong, with investments in age friendly communities reinforcing this commitment. The NHWW program is expected to benefit from favourable societal, political and economic conditions for implementation.

Can the nursing home and community infrastructure support NHWW?

Why is this important?

At a provincial, territorial or regional level, assessing system characteristics, structures and supports is essential to determine what is ideal for supporting the NHWW program and what existing elements can be leveraged.

Considerations

The NHWW program was designed to leverage nursing home infrastructure. Across Canada, funding models for long-term care can vary widely, with different proportions of private, not-for-profit, for-profit, or publicly owned sites. In New Brunswick, nursing homes are privately owned, with 86% not-for-profit and 14% for-profit.[9]

How are nursing homes funded in your province, territory or region? How might this impact the number of sites interested in participating?

In New Brunswick, the Department of Social Development oversees the long-term care portfolio, which aligns well with NHWW's emphasis on social and community support for older adults. This government structure helped facilitate an understanding of NHWW's principles and focus, and helped establish beneficial collaboration between the Department of Health and the Department of Social Development, allowing the program to align with their respective mandates.

What infrastructure (existing organizations, committees, funding models) is already in place that could support participating sites with implementation?

It will also be important to consult with partners familiar with long-term care legislation in your jurisdiction to assess how specific regulatory requirements might support or challenge NHWW's

implementation. Given that nursing homes provide the physical space and administrative oversight for NHWW, it is critical to consider any impacts on their ability to meet relevant standards and regulations.

Example scenarios

1

Scenario #1:

Upon review, there are some key differences in the infrastructure and government structure overseeing older adults in this jurisdiction compared to New Brunswick. In this jurisdiction, a different government support model may be needed, possibly requiring additional partnerships with other departments. The program team may need to emphasize NHWW's focus on filling gaps in social and community supports for aging in place.

The jurisdiction in this scenario has a larger proportion of publicly funded nursing homes. The program team is considering how differences in ownership structure could impact incentives and drivers for participation in their province and has decided to embed an assessment during the pilot phase to better understand what motivates interest in the program based on ownership type.

2

Scenario #2:

The team reviewing this program sees parallels between NHWW's goals and how the long-term care sector is structured in this jurisdiction. The program's focus on community and social support is expected to be well understood and aligned with local priorities. Additionally, nursing homes in this region have a similar ownership structure, with most homes being private, not-for-profit organizations.

Getting started with NHWW

Purpose of this section

The previous section guided you in assessing the fit of the NHWW program for your province, territory or region. This section offers additional insights on key considerations for the initial planning stages of NHWW implementation. We recommend that you consult early with senior leaders in ministries and affiliated organizations responsible for home and community health, social support services and services for older adults. In New Brunswick, this included the Deputy Minister of Social Development and members of the Legislative Assembly, whose support significantly contributed to the program's wider adoption.

Next steps to get started with NHWW include:

- Developing meaningful partnerships and connections

- Reviewing resources and funding

- Leveraging leadership capacities

- Exploring which regions and communities can benefit from this program

- Developing a tailored implementation and sustainability plan

Developing meaningful partnerships and connections

The NHWW program thrives on multi-level partnerships: with government agencies for sustainable funding, provincial partners for implementation support, national partners like HEC for resource sharing and community partners for local program delivery.

Goal: Leverage existing partnerships and cultivate new strategic relationships to enhance NHWW's impact.

Considerations

- What provincial or territorial government partnerships could be established? Which areas of government currently support older adults (e.g. home care, health, social support)? What existing partnerships could be leveraged?

- What partnerships with regional, provincial or territorial organizations could be established or leveraged to support this program?

- Can existing partnerships or connections to community partners and organizations be leveraged?

- Which organizations or individuals have influence in this space?

- What are the goals for each partnership? What is needed from each partner to support this opportunity?

Example scenarios

1

Scenario #1

The team reviewing this program identifies the relevant areas of government responsible for leading aspects of the province's seniors' strategy. They recognize a need for a deeper understanding of the landscape of organizations working in this space. As a next step, they consult with internal government leads to map out the work being done in this space and explore potential partnerships.

2

Scenario #2

The team quickly identifies complementary programs supporting older adults within their jurisdiction, including a strong partnership with a group of academics offering their expertise for evaluation. These existing programs could model how funding might support NHWW. Additionally, an established relationship with HEC offers potential support implementation. The team has a clear understanding of which areas of government and what leaders are currently overseeing the region's senior strategy.

Reviewing resources and funding

Cost and perceived value are often critical determinants in the adoption and implementation of programs. The NHWW program requires funding for sites to take on the planning and eventual operations of this program. Ongoing funding is needed to support participating sites.

Goal: Assess the resource and funding requirements for the NHWW program to evaluate alignment with existing budgets and opportunities for implementation across your province, territory or region.

Considerations

In New Brunswick, previous implementation sites submitted budgets for personnel, program administration, service delivery, transportation and other program costs, averaging up to $200,0000 a year. Your province, territory or region may need to adapt this model based on local resources and needs. For example, funding was allocated for new dedicated staff to help coordinate this program. Your province, territory or region may have existing roles or structures that could fulfill these needs.

Direct costs associated with site-specific funding need to be assessed, along with information on cost savings from keeping people out of publicly funded long-term care systems and emergency departments. Your jurisdiction may want to start by looking at the funding opportunities associated with the Aging with Dignity agreements[8] specific to your province or territory.

- What funding opportunities are available to support this program?

- How do the resource requirements align with similar programs in your province, territory or region?

- Are the funding requirements of this program feasible and sustainable for your province, territory or region?

- Are there organizations currently funded by the government that align with the program's goals? How could these funding structures be leveraged?

Example scenarios

1

Scenario #1:

The team reviewing this program learns that last year, the Aging with Dignity bilateral agreement announced additional funding to improve access to home and community care.[8] This year's provincial budget allocates increased investment in community-based services for older adults. However, there are limited models to review for how to fund nursing homes in the province as part of an initial pilot phase. The lead contacts HEC to learn more about funding models for the NWHH program.

Scenario #2:

The team reviewing this program confirms that additional funding was announced last year from the Aging with Dignity bilateral agreement to improve home and community care access. The provincial budget now includes dedicated funding to expand community-based and home care services for older adults and has specifically mentioned a community-based program that provides older adults with access to non-medical home support services. This existing program aligns well with NHWW and provides a model for designing the funding approach, as it has already been in place for a few years.

Leveraging leadership capacities

Consider the leadership capacities needed for this program and the available expertise needed to champion it, build partnerships and mobilize resources. You will want to engage government leaders who have a deep knowledge of the province's aging strategy, relevant policies and legislation, existing programs, and key health system and community connectors and partners.

Goal: Identify key contacts who can provide system-level support to champion this new initiative.

Considerations

The ideologies, belief systems and norms of people championing a program significantly affect the program's ability to gain support and maintain its core principles. A set of core principles at the heart of the NHWW program has been critical to its success:

- Are there leaders at the provincial, territorial and regional level who understand and value asset-based community development approaches, and who could champion this program?

- Can you identify leaders who have a strong grasp of existing health and social programs that support older adults?

- Are there leaders who have a track record of championing similar programs?

Example scenarios

Scenario #1

A team member with experience working alongside the leadership team for the region's aging strategy notes that substantial progress has been made to improve the quality of home healthcare services. However, there is limited leadership capacity in programs focused on community and social services and programs that use an asset-based community development approach. The government lead decides to leverage existing strengths of the leadership team and current programs, creating a plan to promote materials that highlight NHWW's unique focus and the importance of the asset-based community development approach.

Scenario #2:

The team reviewing this program identifies leaders at multiple levels who could champion the program. The government has substantial experience in this area, with numerous examples of senior leaders successfully championing community programs that embed an asset-based community development approach.

Exploring which regions and communities can benefit from this program

Currently, the NHWW program has been implemented by nursing homes in New Brunswick that are situated in urban areas and rural and remote communities. Assessing what communities are served by programs and services in your jurisdiction can help identify assets and ensure services are evenly distributed across your region. This will support equitable access to health and social programming for older adults to age in place.

Goal: Consider what regions or communities could benefit from this program.

Considerations

You can use existing data sources to gather statistics on the needs of older adults in your province, territory or region, as well as information on existing programs and health system utilization data.

It may be beneficial to begin identifying communities that require additional services to support older adults to age in place. Additionally, you could identify rural or remote communities that may have limited access to existing services and programs.

In 2019, Employment and Social Development Canada published a report on how well older Canadians are served to age in place.[10] You may want to review Annex C in this report as a starting point to learn about the current offerings in your province, territory or region and consider the following:

- If there are existing programs, your review and understanding of how they are similar or different from the NHWW program is crucial.

- What communities are serviced by these programs? Where are there gaps? Where are there existing programs that could be leveraged?

In 2023, the National Institute on Aging published a report on the results of the 2023 NIA Ageing in Canada Survey, which included 10 different indicators of aging well.[11] Each section summarizes how the results compare across various regions. You could use this report to gather information on what is known about the needs of older adults in your province, territory or region. Reviewing the action plan for your jurisdiction as part of the Aging with Dignity bilateral agreements finalized in 2023–2024 could also be helpful at this stage.[8]

Since 2007, most regions and provinces across Canada have been promoting age-friendly community initiatives. There are now active programs inspired by this initiative across Canada. The Age-Friendly Community landing page could help you explore what is currently in place in your province, region or territory and where there are gaps.[12] While some of these programs may have a different scope than the NHWW program, you may be able to leverage partnerships or find opportunities to review existing funding models.

Example scenarios

1

Scenario #1

In reviewing available
data sources, the team identifies the National Institute on Aging report (2023) and the Age-Friendly Community landing page as the most current sources. These sources identify limited existing programs. However, they also reveal that several communities are participating in the Age-Friendly Community initiative. This initiative can serve as a starting point to learn more about which communities are engaged and what types of programs and services are offered.

2

Scenario #2:

Provincial-level data sources are accessed to identify existing programs supporting aging in place and to understand which regions are currently served. Furthermore, it has been learned that the province has invested in developing senior community profiles to support local-level planning. These profiles provide demographic insights and key indicators – such as living arrangements, economic status, physical and mental health, healthcare utilization and a summary of current resources – that can serve as a foundation for considering what regions and communities could benefit from NHWW.

Developing a tailored implementation and sustainability plan

Implementation must be tailored at the provincial, territorial and regional level. It is important to set up the right conditions for implementation. This will involve identifying dedicated human resources to support planning, coordination, communications, implementation, evaluation, funding, accountability measures and sustainability.

Goal: Review needs and available supports that can be used to help implement NHWW.

The implementation of NHWW in New Brunswick has benefited from a partnership between the provincial government, HEC and a research team at the Université de Moncton Research Centre on Aging. This partnership has supported a rigorous provincial implementation plan and program evaluation, and played a crucial role in ensuring HEC and the government partners understand the program's components and evidence base.

HEC has developed a comprehensive model and supporting resources to guide the implementation and spread of the NHWW program within the province of New Brunswick. The supports that HEC has provided include promotion of the program and its intended benefits, recruitment of communities interested in implementing an NHWW program, a readiness assessment, site enrollment support and site implementation and evaluation support.

HEC, the Université de Moncton and the Department of Social Development, have worked together to identify coaches in the province of New Brunswick who have the knowledge and skills needed to support the implementation of the NHWW program and

ensure its alignment with the province's strategic priorities.

In addition to the materials described above, HEC has worked in partnership with Université de Moncton and the Department of Social Development to support the planning, development and delivery of implementation training to a network of participating sites in the province.

HEC has also provided guidance to the provincial implementation support team (Université de Moncton and Department of Social Development) to support sites with their documentation process, including tracking participation in the program, leveraging data to improve their services and sustaining the program. The process and materials developed to support sites through the implementation process have been developed in alignment with the Government of New Brunswick's funding requirements.

Considering the supports outlined above:

- Are there existing partnerships across government departments and with organizations in your province, territory or region that could support implementation?

- How has your province, territory or region approached recruitment for similar programs in the past? What successes can be leveraged from that experience?

- How has your province, territory or region built capability within the jurisdiction to support program implementation? What successes can be leveraged from that experience?

- What kind of evidence or data does your jurisdiction need to prove the success or impact of this program?

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- What other partners within your jurisdiction could support monitoring and evaluation?

- What additional support might your province, territory or region need to implement the NHWW program successfully?

Summary and conclusion

The NHWW program presents a promising opportunity for many jurisdictions seeking to enhance support for older adults in their communities by fostering a person-centred and flexible approach to aging in place. NHWW is an integrated service and part of the continuum of care that already exists in provinces and territories, leveraging existing community and nursing home assets to improve access to health and social services. This guide provides a comprehensive way to assess the fit of NHWW, considering strategic alignment with governmental priorities, political and economic conditions, and the infrastructure present in nursing homes and communities.

Successful implementation requires planning, strategic partnership development and a commitment to addressing the unique needs of diverse populations. This guide emphasizes that early collaboration with key partners – including government officials, community organizations and champions working in this space – is essential to understanding the context for implementation.

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