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Ethics are the principles and values that guide how we plan, deliver and improve services. Ethics involves a systematic method for deciding what to do and when to do it.

Every decision, action, and attitude of ours, personally and professionally, is based on our principles and values. By keeping Interior Health's organizational values in mind when we make decisions, provide culturally safe and inclusive person centered care, and conduct our business, we strive to ensure that the values of compassion, quality, integrity and safety are upheld.

Ethics often involves complex aspects that may result in one or more of the following:



Ethical Uncertainty

A situation in which it is unclear if an ethical problem exists and, if so, what principles are involved.



Ethical Dilemma

A situation in which two or more conflicting ethical principles or values are involved, neither of which outweighs the other.



Moral Distress

A feeling of discomfort that arises when a person believes they have not lived up to their own ethical standards. This often occurs when a person is unable to carry out what they believe to be the right course of action due to personal, professional, organizational or other constraints.

In order to strengthen a culture of ethics, we must ensure we are providing services and making decisions with the highest ethical standards. This framework assists in strengthening our ethics awareness and capacity for identifying situations that would benefit from an ethical process review.

The framework offers tools and resources to support leaders, employees, volunteers, and health professionals to manage ethical issues, dilemmas and concerns.

This transparent approach enhances and guides the ethical decision-making process in IH.



The IH Ethics Framework is a living document that will be regularly updated. Feedback and suggestions are welcome and can be sent to IHEthicsCouncil@interiorhealth.ca



VALUES

No matter what ethical situation is being discussed, solutions need to balance the values of all parties involved. This can be challenging when values, opinions or priorities differ. It is important to understand what values need to be upheld and are influencing the situation as options are being considered.

IH VALUES

IH goes through a regular process of reviewing and updating the organizational values. The following values were announced in 2021 and are aligned with the [strategic priorities](#).

COMPASSION

We seek to understand, to listen, and to show kindness, as we treat each other and all people with respect.

QUALITY

We strive for continuous improvement and best outcomes.

INTEGRITY

We are accountable for our actions and words, guided by honesty and trust.

SAFETY

We are committed to providing care and services that are safe, and to ensuring people feel culturally, socially, emotionally, spiritually and physically safe.

IH ETHICS COUNCIL

The IH Ethics Council guides employees, health professionals, students and volunteers on how to use the IH Ethics Framework to support ethical practice in all IH sites, programs, and services. The Council's function is to promote an integrated approach to ethics quality. The Council reports to the Senior Executive Team and includes a diverse representation from the organization including public partners.



Have you wondered, "What is the right thing to do?"



Would you describe yourself and others as feeling moral distress over an issue?



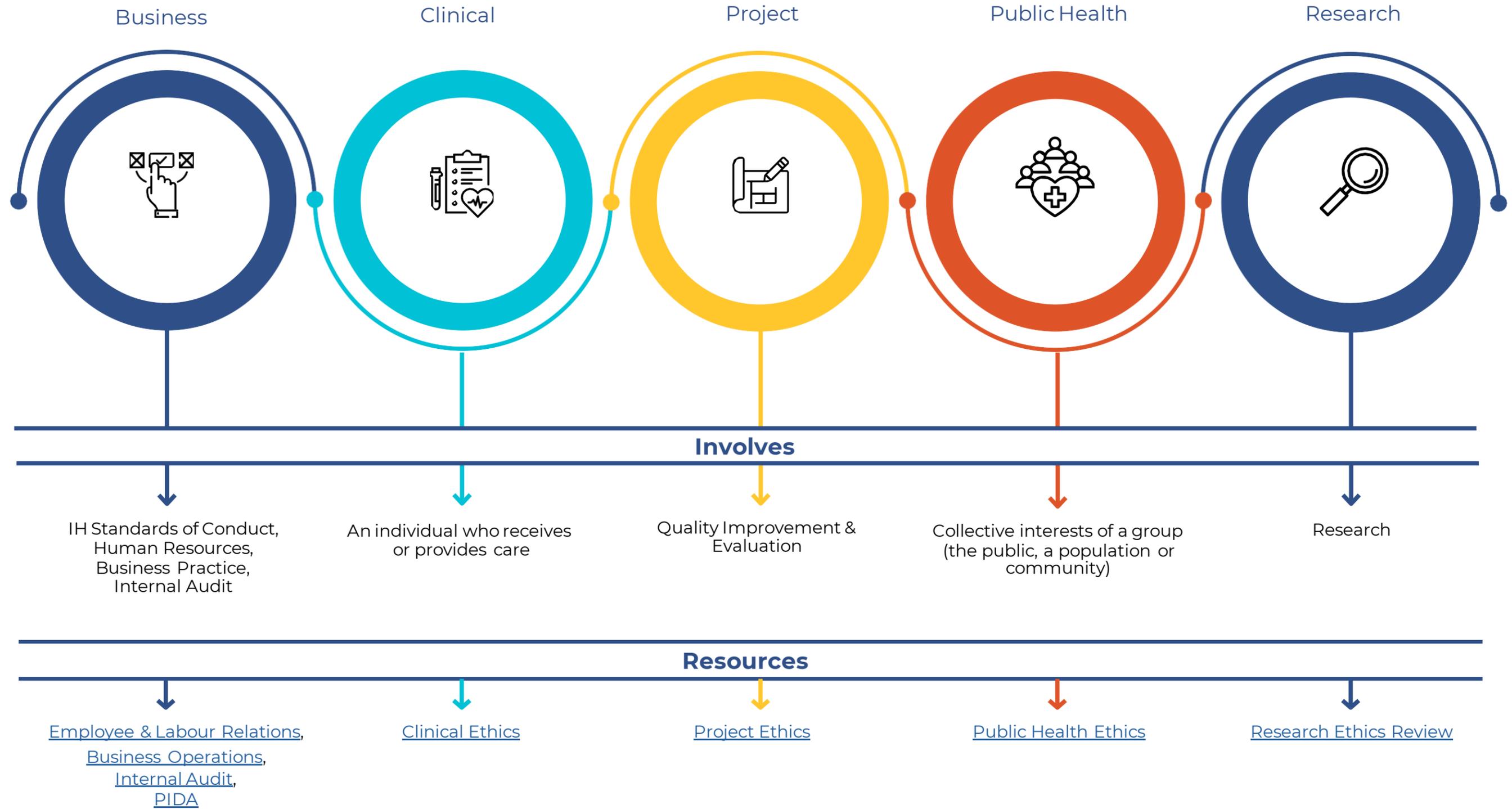
Are you feeling caught between two or more obligations? Do multiple options seem right, or seem wrong?



Are you concerned about how to protect others from harm?

ETHICS STREAMS

There are five ethics streams in IH (Business, Clinical, Project, Public Health and Research) that offer specific consultation regarding ethical questions or dilemmas. The question or dilemma might cross multiple streams, require a collaborative consultative approach, or may require input from additional functional areas of IH such as Digital Health or Environmental Sustainability. In these instances, please contact the lead of who you would consider the "primary" ethics stream—they will assist in identifying all parties that need to be involved. The info graphic on the following page will support you in determining the stream that most closely suits your needs.





BUSINESS OPERATIONS

IH managers have access to Business Operations contacts who provide an ethical lens for business decisions. Many of the Business Operations staff are Chartered Professional Accountants (CPAs) who are trained in business ethics, maintaining high levels of professional integrity in accordance with professional standards and ongoing professional development specific to ethics. Business Operations is available to managers to provide expert advice on business decisions.

For more information for managers, connect with [Business Operations](#).



HUMAN RESOURCES

[The Standards of Conduct for IH Employees](#) outlines the values, principles, and standards of conduct that guide our actions and interactions.

With these standards IH employees maintain and enhance the public's trust and confidence, and ensure superior service to those we serve. We have a number of duties including, but not limited to:

- loyalty to IH as our employer
- maintain the strictest standards of confidentiality
- ensure our conduct, actions and demeanor meet legislated standards (e.g., Human Rights Code) as well as acceptable social standards
- ensure caution when commenting on public issues so as not to jeopardize the perception of impartiality in the performance of our duties
- provide service to the public in a manner that is courteous, professional, equitable, efficient, effective and responsive to the expectations of a diverse public
- arrange private affairs in a manner that will prevent conflicts of interest or perceptions of such conflicts from arising

INTERNAL AUDIT

Internal Audit's mission is to enhance and protect organizational value by providing risk-based and objective assurance, advice and insight. The team helps IH achieve its objectives by evaluating and improving the effectiveness of governance, risk management and control processes.

Internal Auditors promote an ethical culture and help IH monitor and implement controls designed to prevent and detect fraud and other misconduct. Similar to Business Operations, Internal Audit is available for consultation as to ethical business considerations, especially where the potential exists for gaps in the design of internal controls.



Clinical ethics is focused on promoting quality health care with considerations to the values, benefits, risks and preferences of those involved, which includes persons, family and members of the care team. Health-care professionals are faced daily with decisions that include ethical obligations to people in their care, the organization and themselves.

If you are facing a clinical ethics issue, your manager or clinical lead is the first person to approach. If additional support is required, you can contact the Chair of the Local Clinical Ethics Committee (LCEC) or the Chair of the Interior Health Clinical Ethics Committee (IHCEC) to discuss an ethics consult. The committees will not make a decision for you but will aim to guide discussions to identify the best approach based on policy, legislation and ethical principles.

If a clinical ethics case involves an Aboriginal individual, it is recommended to partner with supports such as an [Aboriginal Patient Navigator](#), Elder or Knowledge Keeper.

The Regional Practice Leader (RPL) for Clinical Ethics is available for additional guidance, consults for IH staff and/or education requests. This could include simple one-on-one conversations or guided talks with teams. The RPL can be reached at clinicaethics@interiorhealth.ca

CLINICAL ETHICS COMMITTEES

Clinical ethics consultation can offer guidance for identifying and addressing ethical concerns. The value in consultation is improved and transparent decision-making with greater acceptance of outcomes.

LCEC:

IH has six LCECs that support the Healthcare team by facilitating ethical reviews and offering guidance through the decision-making process.

IHCEC:

The IHCEC has a different purpose than the LCECs. It provides overarching support to clinical ethics activities across IH in all sectors and offers consults to persons or programs that have a regional impact. This might include a standardized approach or the development of policies and guidelines.

The following clinical ethics resources are available on the InsideNet [Clinical Ethics](#) web page:

- [Clinical Ethics Guide](#)
- [Clinical Ethics Decision Making Quick Tool for Care Teams](#)
- [Clinical Ethics Decision Making System Level Worksheet](#)
- [Ethics On The Go Lanyard Card](#)
- [Informed Decision Making Worksheet for Public](#)
- [LCEC Consult Request Form](#)
- [IHCEC Consult Request Form](#)



All quality improvement and program evaluation projects involving people or their confidential information require an ethics review using the ARECCI© process.

Project Ethics refers to the use of a standardized ethical review framework for quality improvement and program evaluation projects. Project Ethics seeks to reduce risk to all involved, including the organization and the environment, while supporting innovation and quality improvement.

Ethics must be considered in all stages of a project. Following the established process helps teams identify ethical concerns and develop strategies to manage them. The use of an ethical review framework for QI and evaluation projects demonstrates our commitment to protecting and respecting people and their confidential information.

For more information about Project Ethics, including resources, decision support tools and education opportunities, see the [InsideNet Project Ethics \(ARECCI\) web page](#).

IH Evaluation Team:

Conducts and supports evaluations with IH projects and programs to determine what is working well and what needs improvement. The generated evidence can be used to create recommendations for improvement, informed decisions, accountability, and continued learning.

ARECCI Ethics Guideline Tool© and ARECCI Ethics Screening Tool©:

This tool provides a consistent framework to promote the ethical development of all non-research projects, including QI and evaluation projects involving people or their confidential information.



AL1600 Project Ethics Policy describes the procedures to follow to:

Ensure an ethical lens is applied throughout all phases of project development.

Ensure a systematic approach to reviewing ethical risk to project participants and the organization.

Establish accountabilities for managing ethical risk associated with non-research projects within the risk tolerance of the project team and the organization.

Continually improve the quality of health service delivery in IH by fostering the ethical development of QI and evaluation projects involving people and their confidential information.



Public health ethics are concerned with the collective interests of a group (e.g. a population or community) for the common good. Many public health activities are not carried out independently; there is often a strong municipal, provincial or federal government influence.

Ethics issues may occur in any of the core public health functions: health protection, disease and injury prevention, health promotion, health assessment, adaptation and mitigation of climate change impacts and emergency preparedness and response, evaluation and quality improvement and research.

The following principles may be useful for reflection and analysis of ethical issues in public health practice:

<p>HARM PRINCIPLE: The justification by which we may restrict the freedom of an individual or group to prevent harm to others.</p>	<p>RECIPROCITY PRINCIPLE: The obligation to assist individuals or communities to comply with public health action, in recognition that compliance may otherwise be a burden.</p>
<p>TRANSPARENCY PRINCIPLE: The decision-making process is as clear and as accountable as possible.</p>	<p>LEAST RESTRICTIVE OR COERCIVE MEANS: The full power and authority of public health be reserved for exceptional scenarios and that more coercive approaches be used only when less coercive strategies have failed.</p>
<p>PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE: Action may be taken before complete and fulsome evidence can inform every aspect of the action, if the risk of not acting is much greater than the risk of taking the precaution.</p> <p>For more information, visit the Public Health Ethics web page.</p>	



Research is the process of finding facts in an organized way. It starts with what we know and builds on.

The IH Research Ethics Board (REB) reviews applications for research that involve IH people or property to ensure that the research is ethical and appropriate.

For more information, visit the [Research Ethics](#) web page.

When this is done, the research participants, the researchers, and the organization are protected.

The REB follows a national research ethics standard called the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans as well as relevant provincial and Canadian laws.



SAFE REPORTING

The [Safe Reporting Policy](#) applies to everyone associated with IH including current and former employees, health professionals, volunteers, contractors and their employees, all researchers and the public.

Reports about allegations of wrongdoing may be made anonymously and via phone, in-person or in writing.

The [Safe Reporting Office](#) is staffed by the Internal Audit team which is an independent authority with a direct reporting relationship to the President and Chief Executive Officer and the Board of Directors.

Through Safe Reporting and the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) policies anyone associated with Interior Health including all employees and health professionals (current and former) and the public can confidentially report suspected cases of wrongdoing without fear of reprisal or retaliation.

All discussions are strictly confidential.

PIDA

Similar to Safe Reporting, the [Public Interest Disclosure Act \(PIDA\) Policy](#) provides for reporting of allegations of wrongdoing in the public interest.

PIDA applies only to current and former IH employees and health professionals, offering additional protections from reprisal under PIDA including if they ask for advice relating to PIDA or make a reprisal complaint.

The Vice President, Human Resources and the Vice President and Chief Financial Officer are the two Designated Officers who receive complaints and lead investigations.





Making ethical decisions can be a complex process and there may not always be a clear and perfect resolution. Using an ethics-guided approach can assist in making decisions and provide a basis for explaining those decisions to others. When dealing with ethical conflicts, a group review and discussion with the impacted parties is always beneficial.

USE THE SIX STEPS BELOW TO WORK THROUGH THE ISSUE.



Clarify the ethics question

- Identify the central ethics issue that needs to be addressed.



Identify the facts and invested partners

- Collect the relevant facts, and identify the facts you need but don't have.
- Review resources in the IH Ethics Framework.
- Are there organizational policies or guidelines addressing the question?
- Are there relevant laws?
- Which individuals are relevant to this issue and who should be part of the discussion/decision?
- Are there any actual, perceived or potential conflicts of interest?



Determine the values in conflict

- What are the key underlying values at play here?
- Which values are in conflict?
- How do you weigh these values against each other?
- What do you think is most important, and why?



Identify the options

- Identify all the potential courses of action, even the ones that don't immediately appear suitable. Weigh each option against the values that you determined to be of priority in step 3.



Evaluate & make a decision

- Evaluate the choices in terms of the key values.
- Make a decision that is consistent with the identified key values.



Review and adjust

- Review the selected decision and outcome.
- Did it achieve the intended result?
- What needs follow up or adjustment?
- What can we do better in the future?

Ethics Reflection Tool



Use this tool in the decision-making process to apply ethical guidance to support your steps and outcomes. If you answer “no” or “partially” to any of the questions below, review and determine the required next steps. When a group utilizes the tool, aim for consensus.

QUESTION	YES	NO	PARTIALLY	N/A
Have we brought all relevant voices to the table and considered the needs and interests of both internal and external partners?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have we consulted with the applicable ethics stream lead?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did we consider all relevant values and principles, policies, legal duties, professional requirements and person and family-centered care?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Before adopting an option, did we do our best to explore all viable courses of action and alternatives and to weigh the benefits and risks aspects of each option?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is our chosen course of action based on reasons that could be understood by all parties who might disagree with the decision?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Would we feel comfortable disclosing our decision and the rationale for our decision to members of the public?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the chosen course of action consistent with our commitment to compassion?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

QUESTION	YES	NO	PARTIALLY	N/A
Is the chosen course of action consistent with our commitment to integrity?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the chosen course of action consistent with our commitment to quality?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the chosen course of action consistent with our commitment to safety?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is our decision consistent with our commitment to making improvements in equity, inclusion, systemic racism and social accountability?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have we created a plan for respectfully and honestly communicating our decision to partners?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do we have the processes or structure in place that will allow us to learn from this decision by considering what has gone well and what could have gone better?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do we have the processes or structure in place that will allow us to revisit this decision in the future (near or distant), if necessary, and to consider invested partners feedback?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>