

The WHO Global Learning Strategy

The foundation of the draft WHO Global Learning Strategy: The Strategy aligns with WHO's Constitution, its Values, and the Organization's 13th General Programme of Work⁸ that implements the collective vision for global public health in all 194 member states.

Purpose: The purpose of the Strategy is to create a culture that redefines and creates the norm of life-long learning into active public health goals of individuals, communities, countries and the world; incrementally and proactively removing barriers to learning and promoting excellence in learning for improving people's health, using the most effective education standards and scientific know-how. It draws from adult learning science, behaviour sciences, neuroscience and other disciplines. It will harness the rapidly evolving digital technology that is in itself revolutionizing education. And it will build on lessons learnt in the dramatic developments of the COVID19 pandemic, the resulting lockdowns that have made digital platforms more accessible and familiar to people.

The learning strategy will not replace academic and other formal training of public health professionals. It will support and complement the lifelong learning and development needs of all personnel working in public health required to meet global, national and individual goals; and address existing and emerging gaps for learning in public health. It will support the learning of all individuals, conscious of their own and family members' health, by providing trustworthy and reliable health advice (global health literacy). Its focus will be on operational public health and achieving health goals and targets.

The Learning Strategy is aimed at powering lifelong learning in four main groups:

1. The global health workforce -of which there is an 18 million shortfall currently, and more than 100 million, who will need reskilling and upskilling in the next two decades.
2. The dispersed public health workforce – who currently have little or no access to lifelong learning, recognition, standards.
3. The global health workforce – that is required as demonstrated by the COVID19 pandemic, to spring into action during emergencies a trained, registered reserve workforce that countries can draw on as soon as there is a need
4. The individual – through massively transformed, and scaled up health literacy, transferring agency to individuals and families to protect and enhance their own health.

The Learning Strategy is intended to be considered by and implemented by Member States, WHO, partners, institutions, civil society, donors and other key stakeholders in all relevant sectors.

Within WHO, the proposed WHO Academy will be facilitating and monitoring the implementation of the Strategy as it applies to WHO's mandate and vision for the future of public health. As such, the WHO Academy will work with a multitude of stakeholders and actors towards creating a coalition, or movement, for lifelong learning in health. The ultimate aim is not education, but to leverage education to contribute to protecting and promoting the health of all people around the world. In addition, the WHO Academy will also play a similar role for the Organization's personnel to ensure that it is enabled to support this transition to better serve Member States and the global population.

Goal: The goal of this Strategy is to shape the future of learning in public health to support the achievement of international, national and individual public health goals ensuring equity and access, harnessing the potential of digital and technologies and using adult learning and behavioural change know-how.

The following mutually re-enforcing **objectives** are proposed as a means to achieve the goal of the WHO learning strategy:

1. Ensure equitable access to learning in health

Ensure fair and transparent access to Lifelong Learning (LLL) by removing barriers to learning and ensuring all persons working in public health, health care and associated disciplines access essential, high-quality, relevant, appropriate learning opportunities, to help achieve strategic health goals and that the public benefit from enhanced health literacy.

2. Build, sustain and energize learning ecosystems

Proactively shift to an ecosystems approach for establishing the norm of LLL for health, by convening and supporting existing and new knowledge networks, institutions, partners, agents and other stakeholders from within and outside public health and education, around a set of agreed values and ground rules, and create an enabling and mutually respectful environment, to further the big idea of LLL for achieving health goals.

3. Transform into learning organizations

Proactively support relevant stakeholders to integrate lifelong learning into their organizational strategies, as appropriate, and work to evolve WHO into a learning organization so as to act as champion and multiplier of lifelong learning in public health, and support Member States, agencies, institutions, partners and other stakeholders to do the same.

4. Use science-based approaches

Ensure learning activities and accreditation offered by entities that relate to the achievement of public health goals are based on the latest science, evidence and know-how.

5. Ensure ownership of stakeholders

Enable stakeholders to act at the most immediate (or local) level yet supported by expertise and knowledge held at a different location, and that stakeholders have reasonable opportunity as appropriate to voice their learning needs, prioritization, content development, learning delivery, learning evaluation, learning research and are given due recognition for their collaboration and inputs.

6. Innovate continuously

Promote, pilot, share and scale up innovations for learning for public health and ensure learners' access without discrimination viewing learning for health as a global public good.

Progress to date: Two literature reviews on lifelong learning have been completed. Four Advisory Group meetings were held (in January 2020, and virtually in June 2020, September 2020 and January 2021), bringing together experts from WHO, UN entities, universities, associations, networks and donors. Two thousand six hundred (2600) responses were received for the Big Idea survey, an online survey to external stakeholders, asking them to share their Big Idea for how training and learning can help improve health for all. The submissions to the survey were analysed and the findings were included in the draft WHO Learning Strategy. 38 internal focus group discussions (FGDs) were held in November 2020, with the participation of 180 WHO staff (G staff, National Professional Officers, women in/seeking leadership, young professionals, all staff), from all the WHO regions. Ongoing discussions with Human Resources and Talent Management (HRT), as part of the career pathways' framework. In depth external consultations with more than 400 experts, networks, organizations and professional associations have been conducted. An online public consultation is planned in March and April 2021.

