Forum positionality statement

The McMaster Health Forum is a timely, demand-driven evidence intermediary. For us, evidence and evidence-informed interest-holder engagement and citizen engagement constitute our motivating force, guiding the questions we refine, the work we undertake, and how findings are organized and shared.

This positionality statement provides shared context for the Forum's work and, where appropriate, may be complemented by project-specific positionality statements. This positionality is reflected in how we design evidence products, structure evidence-related processes, compose teams, apply an equity lens, advance Indigenous reconciliation, and work in solidarity with racialized communities.

Our work is informed by the best available research evidence together with the experiences and insights of citizens, professionals, organizational leaders, and government policymakers. We do not begin with predetermined positions or expected answers. Instead, we identify where evidence is strong, where it is limited, and where findings vary by groups and contexts. Research evidence operates within broader decision-making environments, alongside other forms of knowledge and within political realities that influence decisions. Our role is to ensure that evidence is systematically and transparently considered alongside these influences. We also recognize that evidence itself is shaped by the systems in which it is produced, including colonial histories, academic hierarchies, funding structures, and publishing norms that affect which questions are asked, which methods are valued, and whose knowledge becomes visible.

We design our **evidence products** to surface variation across groups and contexts. Through our demand-driven evidence support, we work with requesters to refine questions, consider equity from the outset, and organize findings using frameworks that help decision-makers understand how problems and their causes, impacts (such as benefits and harms) and implementation considerations may differ across populations and settings. Where the evidence base is uneven or limited, we make that clear.

We structure our **evidence-related processes** to bring multiple perspectives into discussion. Stakeholder dialogues and citizen panels bring together individuals with different roles, experiences and viewpoints, where research evidence is one input among several. Our citizen engagement program strengthens how evidence is interpreted by drawing on lived and living experience, and our community engagement work extends this approach by working with community-based organizations, particularly those serving equity-deserving groups, so that they can contribute to how issues are framed and how evidence is used.

We bring together topic-specific **teams** to ensure a range of perspectives are reflected in our work. Our researchers, staff, trainees, citizen partners, and community partners reflect diverse identities and experiences shaped by race, gender, class, sexuality, migration, ability, and faith. Some members have direct experience navigating inequities in health and social systems, while others work from positions of relative privilege. This mix strengthens our work and requires ongoing reflection on how our own lenses influence what we notice, what we prioritize, and what we may overlook. We also draw on advice from Indigenous experts, equity-focused organizations, and community leaders, and engage with partners working in and with racialized communities.

We apply an **equity lens** across all aspects of our work, including a focus on **racialized and other equity-deserving groups**. We examine how problems, options and implementation considerations may affect different groups and contexts, and we report openly where evidence varies or is limited. Current efforts focus on strengthening how equity-related insights are presented, expanding partnerships with organizations led by equity-deserving groups, and deepening community engagement so that lived and living experience continues to inform our outputs.

We are strengthening our approach to **Indigenous reconciliation** as an ongoing organizational responsibility. Our work takes place on Indigenous lands and within systems shaped by colonial policies. We are building capacity through Sa̱n'yas Indigenous-Specific Anti-Racism training, guidance from our Indigenous advisors, closer collaboration with Indigenous led organizations, and better integration of Indigenous ways of knowing alongside research evidence.

We will revisit this positionality statement over time to ensure it remains a clear and useful account of how we work and where we are seeking to improve.

References:

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