The past two years have been unprecedented in many ways, creating new challenges and opportunities for the Forum. First, the government of Ontario initiated a large-scale health-system transformation, and the Forum pivoted quickly to establish Rapid-Improvement Support and Exchange (RISE) to support emerging Ontario Health Teams. Second, the COVID-19 pandemic led government policymakers to ask many urgent questions about all aspects of the COVID-19 response, and the Forum pivoted quickly to establish the COVID-19 Evidence Network to support Decision-making (COVID-END), with a global focus on enhancing coordination and reducing duplication in the evidence response to COVID-19 and a domestic focus on synthesizing and contextualizing the best available research evidence for Canadian decision-makers. Third, the COVID-19 pandemic required new ways of working, and the Forum pivoted quickly to hosting virtual versions of its stakeholder dialogues, citizen panels, and other engagement processes.

The Forum was able to move as far and as fast as it did because of its partnerships with groups that powerfully complement the Forum’s areas of strength. With RISE, for example, we partnered with Rob Reid and colleagues at Trillium Health Partners’ Institute for Better Health. With both RISE and COVID-END, we partnered with Jeremy Grimshaw and colleagues at the Ottawa Hospital Research Institute. With COVID-END global we partnered with more than 55 world-leading evidence-synthesis, technology-assessment and guideline-development groups, and with COVID-END in Canada we partnered with the SPOR Evidence Alliance, Cochrane Canada, and more than 40 evidence-synthesis teams from across the country.

Through all of this work, the Forum maintained its focus on impacts, whether that involved: 1) helping OHTs achieve the quadruple-aim of improving care experiences and health outcomes while keeping providers engaged and per-capita costs manageable; 2) helping leaders around the world make evidence-informed decisions about COVID-19 related public-health measures, clinical management, health-system arrangements, and economic and social responses; or 3) strengthening health systems and getting the right programs, services and products to those who need them.
“Transforming our system to support population health and to deliver seamless experiences requires a new way of thinking and working together. RISE has been instrumental in this journey. RISE provided one-on-one coaching for the Mississauga OHT, with practical, evidence-based advice from around the world on how to design and build sustainable population health systems that work for the people they care for and for providers.”

Georgia Whitehead, Mississauga Ontario Health Team

“RISE has helped to bring rapid learning and improvement supports to Ontario Health Teams (OHT), and our work together at the OHT Forum, Learning and Improvement Collaboratives, RISE briefs and jamborees have set the stage for our coordinated efforts to support and enable all teams and advance provincial coverage.”

Ivan Yuen, Ontario Health
“As systems have struggled to adapt to the constantly changing evidence base around COVID-19, there has been a lot of duplication of effort occurring around evidence synthesis. COVID-END offers an opportunity to reduce that duplication, and ensure a timely common high standard of evidence synthesis across Canada (including for provinces that may not have the resources available to the larger provinces).”

Braden Manns, Alberta Health Services

Canadian COVID-19 evidence

Canadian decision-makers can keep current through twice-a-month email updates about COVID-19 responses with three types of products from COVID-END in Canada:

1) Canadian spotlights;
2) global spotlights; and
3) horizon scans.

COVID-19 responses can include the full spectrum of public-health measures, clinical management, health-system arrangements, and economic and social responses.

COVID-19 living evidence profile

COVID-END and the McMaster Health Forum are producing living evidence profiles, which identify research evidence addressing pressing questions related to the COVID-19 pandemic and are updated regularly. Each update focuses on profiling insights from the most salient newly identified highly relevant evidence documents and from the jurisdictional scans.

The living evidence profiles address:

- COVID-19 vaccine roll-out elements
- Long-term care crisis management and renewal
Growing networks

AGREE
AHRO ACTS Initiative
HiRU, McMaster PLUS
HTai
INESSS
MAGIC
McMaster Health Forum (Co-lead)
Memorial University of NL
NCCMT
DHRI (Co-lead)
SPOR EA
Veterans Affairs ESP

3ie
Campbell Collaboration
Cochrane
Cochrane Germany
Cochrane Ireland
Cochrane Rehabilitation
Collaboration for Environmental Evidence
COVID-NMA (Cochrane France)
EPPI-Centre
EUnetHTA
Evidence Aid
Evidence Synthesis International
Evidence Synthesis Ireland
GIN
MAGiCapp
NICE
NIPR - FHI
Oxford Centre for Evidence-based Medicine
PROSPERO
TRIP
UNCOVER
UNICEF Innocenti
WHO

Epistemikos
Fiocruz
ACE
ACRES
Africa Centre, Makerere University
Africa Evidence Network
CEBHC, Stellenbosch University
Cochrane South Africa
eBASE
SAMRC

EBMC, Lanzhou University
EBSSHC, Nanjing University
GESI
K2P Center
PREBP
University of Putra

Lesley Stewart, Director & Professor of Evidence Synthesis Centre for Reviews and Dissemination, University of York, UK

“The work that you have done in bringing together international agencies, evidence users and producers has been phenomenal. I am particularly impressed that despite the urgency of action, you have brokered a truly international collaboration that from an early stage placed equality and diversity at its centre - showing welcome leadership in this area.”

Global COVID-19 evidence

Global decision-makers can keep current through twice-a-month email updates about COVID-19 responses with two types of products from COVID-END:

1) global spotlights; and
2) horizon scans.

COVID-19 responses can include the full spectrum of public-health measures, clinical management, health-system arrangements, and economic and social responses.

Horizon scans for emerging issues

The panelists comprise a mix of strategic and ‘out-of-the-box’ thinkers and doers who collectively bring diverse perspectives to our horizon-scanning work. They cover a range of expertise, regions and perspectives.

Public-health measures

Clinical management*

Health-systems arrangement

Economic and social responses

*Clinical management of COVID-19 and pandemic-related conditions

4
We have worked with partners to address a wide range of key issues, spanning a range of jurisdictions including:

As the World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre for Evidence-Informed Policy, the Forum supports evidence-informed policymaking in WHO member states, WHO regional offices and at WHO headquarters:

» Co-developed (with WHO) and continue to support Evidence-Informed Policy Networks that undertake similar work to the Forum in 75+ low- and middle-income countries

» Hosted 140+ capacity-building workshops for policymakers and stakeholders from 60+ countries

» Trained 2,100+ health- and social-system leaders in how to support evidence-informed policymaking

Arranged and funded over 72 internships to support health- and social-system strengthening in 45 organizations in 16 countries

Our collaborations by region

- Africa: 18%
- Americas: 23%
- Eastern Mediterranean: 2%
- South-East Asia: 2%
- Western Pacific: 18%
- Europe: 30%
Key Forum programs

Learn how

1,000+ Canadian policymakers trained in how to find and use research evidence to inform policymaking, and how to set agendas and develop and implement policies.

Find evidence

22,300+ documents in the COVID-END inventory, Health Systems Evidence (HSE) and Social Systems Evidence (SSE)

Spark action

65+ stakeholder dialogues and 50+ citizen panels

With the help of 500+ advisors (e.g., as steering committee members, key informants and merit reviewers), we’ve addressed a diverse array of topics in local communities, provinces and nationally:

- System arrangements
- Sectors, conditions, treatments and populations
- Cross-cutting arrangements

Embed supports

Approaches to institutionalizing promising and proven approaches to evidence-informed policymaking

Evaluate innovations

200+ widely cited peer-reviewed papers, including evidence syntheses and frameworks, about how to support evidence-informed policymaking
Key Forum programs

Pivoting to a virtual model

The Forum, like many teams, has switched to working remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our team has:

• transitioned to hosting online events, having now hosted two virtual stakeholder dialogues and four virtual citizen panels, with more to come in the future
• continued to host a range of webinars for the Forum, RISE, and COVID-END, as well as targeted webinars for EVIPNet teams.

Exploring new ways to support evidence-informed policymaking

Over the past two years, we have continued to improve our existing approaches and developed new ways to respond to time-sensitive requests from policymakers and stakeholders for evidence about high-priority issues. In addition to completing 23 rapid syntheses on a broad range of topics, we responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in the following ways:

• prepared 26 rapid evidence profiles on one-off issues
• initiated and maintained two living evidence profiles
• responded to many requests by packaging existing best-in-class resources for the Canadian context
• launched two twice-a-month spotlights, with one profiling new Canadian evidence syntheses and the other profiling the best evidence syntheses from around the world
• added new content to the McMaster Optimal Aging Portal to help citizens cope as best they can in a period where opportunities for social interaction, physical activity, etc. were limited.

Funding

The Forum has received a total of $22.5 million in funding from a diverse array of sources ($6 million in the last two years alone). In many cases, we have successfully leveraged initial investments into larger and more diverse funding support to achieve greater impact and support a broader development of key networks. For example, our work with RISE made possible an expanded investment from OSSU to support a rapid-learning health system in Ontario. Similarly, our work with the COVID-END global community, initially supported by charitable foundations and the National Institute of Health Research in the UK laid the groundwork for us to secure a $1 million grant from the Government of Canada through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to establish a national network (COVID-END in Canada) to accelerate our impacts domestically.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding breakdown for the biennium</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer-reviewed awards (e.g., funding from granting agencies such as the Canadian Institutes of Health Research)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grants and service agreements with government (e.g., B.C. Ministry of Health, Ontario Ministry of Health, Nova Scotia Health Authority), government agencies and related organizations (e.g., Public Health Agency of Canada, Canadian Partnership Against Cancer, AGE-WELL NCE), and professional organizations (e.g., Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation grants (e.g., Azrieli Foundation, the US Centre for Effective Altruism and Fidelity Charitable (USA)) and donors (Suzanne Labarge in support of the McMaster Optimal Aging Portal, Social Systems Evidence and other initiatives)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University support (e.g., McMaster’s Forward with Integrity initiative, Health Evidence and Impact (HEI) Agenda 2020)</td>
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Since our 10-year anniversary report, we have introduced many new innovations (like rapid and living evidence profiles to inform COVID-19 responses) while continuing to execute our existing programs to a very high standard (like building capacity to find and use research evidence, maintaining one-stop shops for synthesized research evidence, and convening citizen panels and stakeholder dialogues). We have also expanded our reach and accelerated our impacts by creating and co-leading impact-oriented networks at the provincial level (with RISE), national level (with COVID-END in Canada), and global level (with COVID-END’s 50+ world-leading evidence-synthesis, technology-assessment and guideline-development groups). These achievements were possible because of the dedication and perseverance of our talented team of staff and students during unprecedented times.

In all of our work we strive to be agile, collaborative and impact oriented. We want to see research evidence and systematically elicited citizen values and stakeholder insights drive change.

Looking forward, we are excited for the next two years where we plan to build on lessons learned during the pandemic, respond to emerging issues on the horizon, and continue to advance human and societal health and wellbeing.

We already work with a diverse array of individuals and organizations, but we’re always looking for ways to expand our networks. If you’re interested in working with us to make an impact on health or social systems, contact us at forum@mcmaster.ca.

Let’s collaborate