

Guidance Document:

Environmental Stewardship Within Leadership Standards

Case Studies to Support Accreditation Readiness

April, 2026



Introduction

Purpose of the document

- Develop a guidance document on meeting accreditation standards, by creating connections between the standards and environmental stewardship. The document will illustrate how these standards are being operationalized through case studies, serving as a guide for other organizations. The aim is to provide examples that would be useful to organizations with different levels of resources, scope, and needs.
- Scope: As a starting point, we will focus solely on the Leadership Standards, Section 2. Planning and Designing Services, and provide examples suitable for organizations of varying sizes, budgets, and resources.
- Project will be co-branded by CASCADES, Health Quality BC, Vancouver Coastal Health, Interior Health, and Victoria Hospice.

Background

Accreditation is an ongoing process of evaluation with a quality and safety focus. This process provides an independent third-party assessment of our organization using standards created from the latest research and best practices used and validated by organizations around the world. The evaluation of services against these standards measures an organization's performance and helps to identify opportunities for improvement. It is helpful to view accreditation as a process that promotes continuous quality improvement and aspires to meet or exceed the standards in our everyday work.

When it comes to making environmental sustainability improvements in organizations, the Leadership Standards, outline five criteria on how organizations are managing sustainability, reducing impacts on the environment, and preparing to respond to environmental changes. The inclusion of environmental sustainability criteria in the Accreditation Standards should be seen as an opportunity to promote environmental best practice, to promote the inclusion of environmental and climate-related actions in organizational planning and encourage leadership to advance organizational initiatives that support environmental stewardship.

To guide organizations undergoing Accreditation preparation and site visits, the following table and case studies have been prepared to highlight example evidence that could be used for Section 2.7 - *the organization manages sustainability, reduces its impact on the environment, and is prepared to respond to environmental changes* as per the Leadership Standard.

Guidance document

Accreditation standard set: Leadership				
Section 2: Planning and Designing Services				
Criterion	Example Evidence	Case study: Interior Health (IH)	Case study: Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH)	Case study: Victoria Hospice (VH)
2.7.1 The organization considers sustainability when establishing goals and designing and implementing services, to ensure its services can be maintained in the long term.	<u>Strategic Planning Documents:</u> - Organization's Strategic Plan and Priorities - Climate Change, Sustainability, Planetary Health, Environmental, Social, Governance (ESG) - Strategies - Energy Management Strategies - Electric Vehicle Strategies	- Under IH's Strategic Plan, there is a dedicated Strategic Priority for Climate Change and Sustainability - IH developed the Climate Change and Sustainability Roadmap for 2023 - 2028 – a five year organization-wide plan on proactively responding to the challenges of climate change, and to promote the pillars of sustainability across the organization and the communities IH serves - On a yearly basis, IH reviews and updates their Strategic Energy Management Plan - IH has developed an organizational Electric Vehicle Strategy	- In 2019, Planetary Health was embedded into the strategic plan as a strategic priority. However, in 2023, Planetary Health was expanded to become one of four foundational pillars to span across the strategic plan as a component of the strategic framework VCH developed a 5-year organization-wide Planetary Health Strategy to address the challenges posed by climate change while also working towards making a more equitable, high quality, low carbon health care system - The VCH Sustainable Clinical Services (SCS) team, within the Quality and Patient Safety portfolio, established strategic priorities for FY 2026–2027 that include engaging the clinical workforce in planetary health, embedding planetary health into Quality and Safety governance and measurement, and advancing low-carbon, high-quality clinical care. These priorities are maintained as a living document that is reviewed and updated quarterly to reflect evolving priorities and initiatives - VCH regularly updates their Strategic Energy Management Plan	- Victoria Hospice has developed a Green Team Feuille de Route (roadmap) to guide the integration of planetary health, climate resilience, and environmental sustainability into hospice operations and clinical care. This roadmap outlines a clear vision, mission, priorities, strategies, and implementation goals that support the long-term sustainability of hospice services - The Victoria Hospice Interim Strategic Plan 2025 identifies sustainability as a key strategic priority, with initiatives focused on environmental, financial, and workforce sustainability to support the long-term resilience of hospice services

Accreditation standard set: Leadership

Section 2: Planning and Designing Services

Criterion	Example Evidence	Case study: Interior Health (IH)	Case study: Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH)	Case study: Victoria Hospice (VH)
2.7.2 The organization develops, implements, regularly reviews, and updates as needed policies and principles to guide its environmental stewardship. *High priority*	<u>Policies</u> - Environmental, Planetary Health, Energy Management Policies - Annual Climate Change, Sustainability, ESG Reports - Legislative Reporting Organizations should also discuss their policy renewal processes and the auditing of implemented policies to ensure content is not outdated and to flag if revisions are needed.	- IH has an Environmental Sustainability Policy AP1000 Environmental Sustainability (interiorhealth.ca) which encourages all staff to get involved in environmental stewardship, and energy management. - Fleet Vehicle Policy and use of Electric Vehicles - IH has a policy review process and cycle to regularly review policy content for updates - IH publishes the Climate Change Accountability Report, once a year, in accordance with the Climate Change Accountability Act and British Columbia's CleanBC plan and Roadmap	- VCH has an Environmental Sustainability policy (BCD-12-11-40000) which encourages staff to be involved through environmental leadership, sustainable operations, sustainable facilities, and sustainable partnerships - VCH has an electric vehicle charging station framework - VCH publishes the Climate Change Accountability Report annually in accordance with the Climate Change Accountability Act and Clean BC - Recently updated and utilizes the Climate Resilience Guidelines for BC Health Facility Planning and Design – Climate Resilience Guidelines for BC Health Facility Planning and Design Low Carbon Resilience and Environmental Sustainability Guidelines - Planetary Health is involved in policy review and cycle for materials that can have an environmental stewardship lens	- Monthly meeting with initiative updates and decisions for advancing initiatives - The Victoria Hospice Green Team produces a yearly Impact Report summarizing activities, measurable environmental impacts, testimonials and success stories, challenges and learned lessons, and outlining next steps and future goals - The team has also adapted the Planetary Health Care framework (MacNeill, McGain, and Sherman, <i>The Lancet Planetary Health</i>, 2021) to the hospice and palliative care setting. This adaptation applies the framework's three principles by: - Reducing demand for health services through a palliative approach to care, advance care planning, and goals-of-care conversations - Matching supply to patient needs through equitable access, person-centred care, and patient-reported outcomes and experiences - Reducing emissions from care delivery by advancing planetary health research, climate-conscious palliative care practice, a climate-smart workforce, and climate-resilient infrastructure and supply chains

Accreditation standard set: Leadership

Section 2: Planning and Designing Services

Criterion	Example Evidence	Case study: Interior Health (IH)	Case study: Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH)	Case study: Victoria Hospice (VH)
2.7.3 The organization implements initiatives to support environmental stewardship	<u>Environmental Stewardship Topics</u> - Material Stewardship and Waste Management - Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction - Climate Risk and Resilience - Water - Clinical Initiatives	- IH piloted a PPE Recycling Program in 2021, and will be expanding to several other acute sites - IH diverted 2.5 million kilograms of waste from landfills in 2022 through composting, recycling, and focusing on staff education programs for the management of biomedical waste - Climate risk assessments are conducted across IH facilities to assess for climate-related hazards and identify design adaptations - IH assesses infrastructure (HVAC, steam generation, boilers, etc.) to ensure that we are operating as efficiently as possible, and where appropriate requesting funding for replacement/refurbishment of inefficient equipment. - Implementing a HVAC OR Setback project, that conserves energy during unoccupied hours. - Climate Conscious Inhaler Initiative lead across IH sites - Greening the Labs Initiative and Focus Group	- Advocates for policies that ensure safer indoor temperatures, such as updates to the Vancouver Building By-laws that require cooling in new buildings and promotion of denser tree canopies in urban areas - Cooling strategy - To ensure thermal comfort for our patients and staff, especially vulnerable populations in our health facilities, a long-term cooling infrastructure strategy was required. Starting with Vancouver General Hospital, we captured a baseline of existing cooling systems and assessed enabling infrastructure and known risks. This was followed by a multidisciplinary process to develop a long-term cooling infrastructure strategy, building by building. By using climate projections to inform and prioritize capital investments, VCH is future proofing our infrastructure. This planning process enabled a low carbon resilience lens, preparing for a shifting climate while identifying decarbonization opportunities	- The Victoria Hospice Green Team developed the Feuille de Route 2025-2030, a strategic roadmap to integrate planetary health and sustainability into hospice operations and clinical care, which was submitted to Victoria Hospice leadership to inform organizational planning - Victoria Hospice implemented waste reduction and circular economy initiatives, including mixed PPE recycling, reusable gowns, and recycling systems across clinical areas to divert materials from landfill - A reusable tumbler initiative was introduced to reduce single-use plastic cups, demonstrating measurable reductions in disposable cup use and supporting long-term waste reduction goals - Victoria Hospice launched a Sustainable Commute Program encouraging staff to use low-carbon transportation; by mid-2025, staff had recorded over 500 km of travel by bike, walking, and public transit - A "Second Life Supplies" initiative was created to donate unused patient supplies to community health services, supporting both environmental sustainability and community benefit

Accreditation standard set: Leadership

Section 2: Planning and Designing Services

Criterion	Example Evidence	Case study: Interior Health (IH)	Case study: Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH)	Case study: Victoria Hospice (VH)
2.7.3 The organization implements initiatives to support environmental stewardship (continues)	<u>Environmental Stewardship Topics</u> • Material Stewardship and Waste Management • Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction • Climate Risk and Resilience • Water • Clinical Initiatives		• Eliminated the use of the anesthetic gas desflurane at Vancouver General Hospital (VGH). Desflurane has a global warming impact potential 2,500 times greater than carbon dioxide and up to 26 times worse than other inhaled anesthetic gases. For context, using one 250-millilitre bottle of desflurane is equivalent to burning 440 kilograms of coal • VGH reduced waste of nitrous oxide. Although it was rarely used for anesthesia and pain control, 95 per cent of the gas supply was lost due to leaks in the piped network before it reached patients. To address this, the committee replaced the existing network at Vancouver General Hospital (VGH) with a small local supply that is used only when needed. This move was widely supported and has an impact equivalent to removing 57 cars from the road each year • VCH implements clinical environmental stewardship initiatives including surgical instrument optimization to reduce unnecessary instrument processing, expansion of regional anesthesia as a lower-carbon alternative to inhaled anesthetics, and implementation of a planetary health menu to reduce the environmental impact of hospital food services	• Composting initiatives divert approximately 1,000 pounds of organic waste from landfill annually, demonstrating measurable environmental impact from operational sustainability practices • Victoria Hospice maintains a rooftop garden with trees and flowers • Members of the Victoria Hospice Green Team led provincial knowledge exchange on sustainable hospice care through initiatives such as the webinar "Planetary Health in Hospice Palliative Care: Building Climate Resilience and Low-Carbon Health Systems," highlighting strategies to strengthen climate resilience and integrate planetary health into hospice and palliative care practice

Accreditation standard set: Leadership

Section 2: Planning and Designing Services

Criterion	Example Evidence	Case study: Interior Health (IH)	Case study: Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH)	Case study: Victoria Hospice (VH)
2.7.4 The organization uses defined performance indicators to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of its environmental stewardship initiatives, and uses the results to make improvements	- Performance Dashboards - Annual and Quarterly Reporting to Senior Executive Team - Strategic Priority Reporting - Legislative Reporting (BC Clean Government Reporting Program) - Portfolio Level Workplan Reporting	- Through strategic priority reporting to the leadership team, and through the Climate Change Accountability Report, IH reports on the following performance indicators: - Greenhouse Gas Emissions for: buildings, paper and fleet - Progress made in completing actions in the Climate Change and Sustainability Roadmap.	- Through strategic priority reporting to the leadership team, and through the Climate Change Accountability Report, VCH reports on the following performance indicators: - Greenhouse Gas Emissions for: buildings, paper and fleet - VCH evaluates the effectiveness of sustainability initiatives using performance indicators. For example, the Surgical Instrument Optimization initiative measures instrument utilization and environmental impacts associated with medical device reprocessing. Baseline analysis identified that 12–42% of instruments were unnecessary and 25–48% remained unused, and subsequent tray standardization reduced instrument counts and associated reprocessing impacts	The Victoria Hospice Green Team uses defined performance indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of its environmental stewardship initiatives. Through its yearly Impact Report, the team tracks measurable indicators such as waste diversion through recycling and composting programs, adoption of reusable clinical supplies (e.g., gowns), participation in sustainable commuting initiatives, and the quantity of unused medical supplies donated to community organizations. Results are reviewed alongside lessons learned and challenges and are used to identify opportunities for improvement and inform future sustainability goals

Accreditation standard set: Leadership

Section 2: Planning and Designing Services

Criterion	Example Evidence	Case study: Interior Health (IH)	Case study: Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH)	Case study: Victoria Hospice (VH)
2.7.5 The organization regularly evaluates the impact of climate change on the organization and on the health of the community, and uses the information to adapt to and mitigate climate change.	- Health Emergency Management Planning - Medical Health Officer Reports - Population and Public Health Reporting to the Ministry of Health	- IH leads pre-season planning, event response, and after-action reviews in collaboration with Health Emergency Management BC. - Other tools utilized include: Community Health and Climate Change Maps, Seasonal Readiness Planning and Facility Climate Risk Assessments. - IH's 2023 Medical Health Officer Report was on Climate Change, Health and Wellbeing	- The 2023 Chief Medical Health Officer Report identifies populations in the VCH region facing urgent harms to health due to climate change - In 2021, VCH partnered with FH and UBC to conduct a mapping of exposure, sensitivity and adaptive capacity based on four health-related climate hazards: Regional Maps - The Seasonal Readiness Committee emerged out of the unprecedented June 2021 heat dome, which caused severe health impacts regionally. The Committee is striving to align its objectives with organizational goals and existing frameworks, including the VCH strategic framework, inclusive of planetary health, and an adapted version of the WHO operational framework for building climate resilient health systems - VCH screened 47 facilities for climate hazards - Created a heat check-in support framework for NGOs to guide check-in planning for people vulnerable to extreme heat - Initiated analysis of UBC Hospital's electrical system capacity and metering to better understand energy demand and improve resilience to power outages	Victoria Hospice evaluates climate change and planetary health considerations through the work of the Green Team and the development of a Planetary Hospice Palliative Care framework, adapted from the planetary health framework proposed by MacNeill and colleagues. This work helps translate planetary health principles into hospice care and informs mitigation initiatives such as waste reduction programs, reusable clinical supplies, and a Sustainable Commute Program implemented at the hospice

Accreditation standard set: Leadership

Section 2: Planning and Designing Services

Criterion	Example Evidence	Case study: Interior Health (IH)	Case study: Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH)	Case study: Victoria Hospice (VH)
2.7.6 The organization provides leaders and staff with education and training to build organizational capacity to support environmental stewardship initiatives, and adapt to and mitigate climate change	- Staff Engagement Programs - Webinars - Education Sessions - Courses	<u>Education</u> - As part of the Staff Sustainability Engagement Program, staff are provided with education and learning opportunities including the Fundamentals of Sustainable Health Care course delivered by CASCADES. <u>Staff engagement</u> - IH staff can join the Sustainability Engagement Program to lead environmental committees and initiatives across their sites. Once staff are onboarded to the engagement program they are provided with training, meeting materials, and project management training for leading environmental sustainability initiatives. - IH launched the “Regional Physician Table for Planetary Health”, where physicians across Medical Staff Associations (MSAs) collaborate on clinical sustainability initiatives.	Green plus leaders and green care network: - Host lunch and learn sessions for all staff to engage in sustainability initiatives - Gain access to sustainability project funding, training, toolkits and other resources - Vancouver Physician Staff Association (VPSA) Planetary Health committee where medical staff can collaborate on sustainability initiatives - Partnered with CASCADES to develop introductory education material for all staff on sustainability in health care from: Introduction to sustainable health systems Climate, Health, and Sustainable Care ECHO - VCH builds organizational capacity through education and engagement initiatives including Planetary Health and Sustainability Rounds, workshops, and presentations for staff and medical staff - Development of the Sustainability-Embedded Quality Improvement (SE-QI) toolkit, in partnership with CASCADES Canada, Health Quality BC, and Interior Health, to support teams to integrate sustainability considerations into quality improvement projects	Victoria Hospice builds organizational capacity for environmental stewardship through its Green Team, which participated in the first Island Health Green Team cohort and provided staff education on planetary health and sustainability initiatives. Victoria Hospice continues its support of the Green Team by offering administrative support for Green Team in addition to 15 hours per month of paid protected time for clinical staff engagement in the Green Team mentorship and rotating leadership roles, and knowledge-sharing activities such as conference presentations and ECHO sessions support ongoing training and capacity building across the organization

Overall recommendations and guidance

Preparing for Accreditation against the Leadership Standard that addresses environmental stewardship demonstrates that alignment is strengthened when sustainability is integrated directly into existing structures for strategy, governance, quality, and safety. The practice examples from Interior Health and Vancouver Coastal Health show that success does not depend on identical resources or maturity levels. Rather, it stems from embedding environmental responsibility into the organization's planning processes, measurement systems, operational decisions, education programs, and leadership accountabilities. The following lessons and recommendations are offered as practical guidance for organizations preparing evidence and advancing internal readiness for Accreditation.

Embed environmental stewardship in existing governance and strategic planning

Strong alignment with Leadership Standard 2.7 is seen when sustainability is incorporated into the organization's strategic plans, foundational pillars, or system-wide priorities. Clear alignment with these instruments signals that environmental stewardship is part of how leadership defines quality, allocates resources, and evaluates performance. For Accreditation purposes, evidence that environmental considerations shape goals, planning, and decision-making helps demonstrate commitment from the highest levels of governance.

Use policy instruments to establish consistent expectations

Policy documents, guidelines, and procedures help translate environmental intent into consistent practice. Policies that address sustainability, energy management, facilities design, procurement, or operational expectations offer strong evidence of commitment to environmental stewardship.

Highlight applied initiatives that reduce impact and strengthen resilience

Leadership Standard 2.7 places emphasis on action. Evidence that describes environmental or climate initiatives across clinical and operational practice demonstrates that environmental considerations are integrated into everyday work. Case studies that highlight results, improvement methods, partnerships, and measurable outcomes offer compelling proof of environmental stewardship in practice.

Demonstrate measurements, reporting, and performance improvement

Defined performance indicators are essential. Greenhouse gas measurement, annual environmental reporting, priority dashboards, climate accountability reporting, and tracking of actions against organizational roadmaps are all suitable sources of evidence. Organizations are encouraged to show how results inform resource allocation, operational decisions, or capital priorities. The strongest

evidence also illustrates how measurement leads to continuous improvement, new initiatives, or changes in practice.

Invest in education and capacity building for leaders and staff

Environmental stewardship becomes durable when it is understood as a shared responsibility. Training programs, professional development, engagement networks, and educational materials all serve as evidence that stewardship is supported and resourced. Organizations are encouraged to document participation in sustainability training, access to learning resources, and opportunities for staff or medical leadership to lead or contribute to environmental initiatives.

Prepare for Accreditation as a cross functional team

Effective preparation involves leadership, quality and safety teams, executive offices, facilities planning, capital and infrastructure, operations, infection prevention and control, finance, environmental services, clinical leaders, and many more. Each area carries evidence that can support the standard. Establishing early coordination supports comprehensive preparation, reduces duplication, strengthens analysis of gaps, and ensures that all criteria can be addressed confidently.

Build awareness and shared understanding in advance

Awareness and communication are essential to successful Accreditation preparation. Leaders and staff should understand the intent of Leadership Standard 2.7, be familiar with local initiatives, and be able to describe how environmental stewardship is integrated into planning and service delivery. Organizations are encouraged to schedule advance discussions with site leaders, share summaries of evidence and case examples, and review expectations together to support readiness. Communication tools can reinforce consistent interpretation of the standard and strengthen preparedness. Visual materials, orientation slides, briefing sheets, summary posters, and reference templates can help teams understand evidence sources and prepare for Accreditation dialogue. [Appendix 1](#) provides examples of visual aids developed by Interior Health to support education, awareness, and shared understanding, which organizations may adapt to reflect local governance structures, strategic priorities, and environmental goals.

Appendix 1

Examples of visual aids used to support Accreditation preparation and communication

Appendix 1 contains examples of communication tools created by Interior Health to support awareness, education, and consistent interpretation of Leadership Standard 2.7. These materials were used to help site leaders and managers prepare for Accreditation visits by clarifying expectations, highlighting sources of evidence, and reinforcing key messages related to environmental stewardship.

