

DRAFT Briefing Note: CHLNet Secretariat Update and Succession Planning

February 2026

Situation

After 12 years as CEO and Executive Director (ED) of CHLNet, on June 30th, 2026, Kelly Grimes will step down. On January 7th, an embargoed announcement was shared with the Board and Secretariat to provide time to ponder both CEO succession planning but also how the network could best enhance and scale its value proposition going forward.

Background

In late 2009/early 2010, CHLNet as an unincorporated value network formed to grow leadership capacity as a key enabler of organizational and system performance. Fundamentally the 12 founding partners believed it needed to collectively act together. One of CHLNet's founding principles of "leadership without ownership" helped to explain rotating co-chairs and an expectation of periodic reconsideration of host organization. CMA served as the first host and CCHL the second until December 2023. Rather than paying an annual partner fee, the host organization provided in kind support of office space, IT and accounting services.

In the Fall 2022, the Secretariat (precursor to the current Board) and CHLNet's 40+ Network Partners approved the 2023-2026 *Strategic Plan* and agreed to revisit incorporation in 2025. Following this new plan, CCHL approached CHLNet to discuss if deeper partnership model could be developed with an affiliative structure proposed at CHLNet's April 2023 Secretariat meeting. With no seat offered on the CCHL Board and no overall agreement reached, CHLNet decided to pursue incorporation and give up CCHL head office operations support.

In January 2024, CHLNet officially incorporated allowing the value network to house grants, assume intellectual property rights, and sign contracts on its own. With bylaws, board policies, directors' liability insurance, and more in place, the Board officially began with Scott Malcolm acting as the founding chair. Subsequently, four *Courses of Action* serve as the network's 2025-2026 short term objectives to champion strategic leadership excellence.

Bill Tholl acted as the network's inaugural ED until he took on another position as CEO of HealthCareCAN. On July 1, 2014, Kelly Grimes assumed the part time role as ED, as an independent contractor and this arrangement continues to this day but evolved to the CEO title with incorporation. In 2014, no formal recruitment process occurred but rather the cochairs of CHLNet along with the Secretariat decided to offer the position to Kelly, who had been doing other work for the network on a project basis.

In the past 10 years, new partner acquisition has been steady with overall size hovering around 40 organizations with representation as 40% national, 22 % health service delivery, 17% other nonprofit, 12% government and 9% academics (source: Membership & Partnership Subcommittee Report, 2024). CHLNet's new bylaw expanded membership to "Membership in the Corporation shall be available to

public, private, not-for-profit health and/or social, health-related or leadership-related organizations which are interested in furthering the Corporation's purposes." Since its inception, fees have remained the same at \$5,000 per organization with some exceptions for size and budget e.g. Emerging Health Leaders pay nothing. In the last few years, CHLNet has run a small deficit although our equity position remains positive for a nonprofit value network. In October 2025, the Board agreed that times are difficult for member-based organizations, therefore the network should hold off on increasing fees until our value proposition is enhanced through ideas such as the *Canadian Learning Collaborative for Health Leadership (The Hub)* and private sector partnerships such as with KPMG for leadership dialogues.

Considerations

Considerations are outlined below for the Board to discuss at its February Board in camera session. Currently, no recommendations are provided.

- **CEO Recruitment:** As a consultant, the CEO is compensated for 14 days per month although typically works 4 or more days per week. If a new CEO or other support is not yet in place, the current CEO is willing to sign an additional contract to undertake very specific tasks that might need to be done over the summer to keep the network going. Current CEO responsibilities and accountabilities are outlined in Appendix A.
- **Senior Advisors:** In 2014, East (Rachel Maillet/Bard, former CEO CNA) and West Champions (Chris Eagle, former CEO AHS) served as advisors to the ED for two years (volunteer). These two advisors evolved to the current positions of Senior Policy Advisor and Senior Research Advisor (see Appendix B and C for duties) where a small stipend of \$5,000 per year provided. Until 2022, Bill Tholl and Graham Dickson served in these roles respectively that were subsequently assumed by Stephen Samis and Dee Taylor. To allow the Board a blank slate of what to do next, both current advisors have signed contracts until June 30, 2026. Stephen has indicated that he will reassess his role at the end of his contract, but Dee is willing to continue depending on what Board decides.
- **Administrative and Operations Coordinator:** In September 2025, Zaina Asfour signed a 12-month contract as the network's new coordinator replacing Grace Gemin in July 2025 who left for a full-time position at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons. Given the difficulty in recruiting a part time person, LEADS Global agreed to share a new resource. Each organization now contracts 10 days per month for services (down from 12 days for CHLNet). On April 10th, the current coordinator will begin maternity leave and hopes to return in late summer. The hope is that an organization might provide support as either an in kind or paid contribution until the maternity leave concludes.
- **Secretariat Structure:** The network's equity position remains positive however its deliverables such as toolkits, dialogues, roundtables, research and more are greatly limited by its current financial and human resources. Communications/marketing expertise is greatly needed, and this potentially could be purchased through another network partner. CHLNet's working and steering groups will be reviewed in the next few months to streamline work.

Ten Questions for the Board in camera session:

1. Over the next few months, should the Board recruit for the position of CEO of CHLNet?
2. If yes, should the CEO contract be for only one year to develop a plan to sustain and grow the organization going forward?
3. If yes, would the CEO responsibilities, accountabilities, days of work and compensation remain the same (Appendix A)?
4. As a virtual organization, to what extent does the geographical location of a future CEO matter?
5. What type of experience, skills and capabilities should be prioritized for the new leader of CHLNet?
6. Now that the network is incorporated, what fair and due process should be undertaken for the CEO recruitment (e.g. executive recruiter, LinkedIn, broad recruitment message to the network)?
7. Should a Board Recruitment Subcommittee be formed? And if yes, who should be on it?
8. Should the two senior advisor positions continue past June 2026 or evolve to another form?
9. Should the Board hire someone to do an independent review of the network, its structures and outputs to enhance our value proposition? Or wait until after the CEO replacement is hired?
10. What communication from the Board Chair should be sent to Network Partners and other interest holders around the CEO's departure and recruitment of a new leader (i.e. following the Board meeting, during recruitment process, final candidate selected, etc.)?

Appendix A: CEO Responsibilities and Accountabilities

The Canadian Health Leadership Network is a not-for-profit, incorporated value-based network of partners. Health and healthcare organizations from across Canada come together to grow collective leadership capacity, knowing that better leadership will lead to better healthcare and better health for all Canadians.

At present, the CHLNet Board of Directors require services of a consultant as *Chief Executive Officer (CEO)* to administer the strategic and operational activities as outlined below. These accountabilities and responsibilities would be part time up to 14 days per month. The CEO will serve as the support to the CHLNet Board of Directors, its officers, and its Network Partners. This position is responsible for developing, implementing, and monitoring the CHLNet strategic plan, workplan and budget in consultation with the CHLNet Chair, Board of Directors (Board), and Network Partners.

The CHLNet CEO responsibilities and accountabilities will include:

- Prepare, implement and monitor the CHLNet strategic plan, priorities and deliverables in consultation with the Board and Network Partners.
- Working closely with the Program Coordinator, take responsibility for the day-to-day operations of CHLNet including meetings, budget, and staffing.
- Prepare and monitor the CHLNet workplan plan and budget in consultation with the Board.
- Oversee agendas, minutes and materials for the semi-annual Network Partner Roundtable, AGM, board meetings and all working/steering groups.
- Oversee CHLNet communication tools including the website and e-blasts.
- Manage ongoing projects including CHLNet research, tools, knowledge mobilization, and health leadership capacity efforts, in consultation with CHLNet's senior policy and research advisors, and as assigned by the CHLNet Chair and Board.
- Provide regular communication and consultation with both CHLNet's Chair and Board on the activities of CHLNet.
- Market and seek strategic alliances in tandem with the Board and Network Partners.
- Recruit and retain network partners based on our value add.
- Seek new funding opportunities for sustainability, in conjunction with the Board.
- Externally represent and present at key meetings and workshops including the LEADS Collaborative Steering Group.

Appendix B: Senior Research Advisor

Purpose

To provide advice and guidance to the CEO and work in collaboration with the Senior Policy Advisor in support of CHLNet's efforts to grow leadership capacity and capabilities across Canada.

Duties and Responsibilities

- Advise and assist the CEO, as needed on growing CHLNet's value proposition generally but more specifically on its value stream of building and applying health leadership research, evidence, and knowledge.
- Participate in:
 - Monthly virtual advisor meetings with the CEO and the Senior Policy Advisor
 - Quarterly CHLNet Board meetings and/or board retreat
 - Semi-annual Network Partner roundtables, AGM, executive roundtables and leadership dialogues
 - To Be Agreed Upon: Working Groups and ad hoc Steering Groups
- Advise on grant funding and opportunities to build health leadership evidence and integrate into policy and leader practices.
- Represent and/or present at meetings, health leadership panels, and/or conferences on behalf of CHLNet with prior mutual agreement of the CEO.
- Chair or co-chair ad hoc working groups as mutually agreed upon including the Research & Evaluation Working Group and Learning Hub Collaborative for Health Leadership.
- Prepare briefing notes and other background materials in collaboration with the Senior Policy Advisor and the CEO.
- Provide other advice or assistance as may be necessary for the consideration of the CHLNet Board and/or CEO.

Term of Position

12-month contract. Renewable with mutual consent.

Benefits

- Stipend
- Listing on the CHLNet website and documentation as "CHLNet's Senior Policy Advisor"
- Access to the password-protected side of the CHLNet website
- Access to Network Partner e-blasts
- Attendance at semi-annual Network Partners' roundtables either virtually or in person.
- Attendance at conferences or events if CHLNet requests/approves your participation (with reimbursement of associated registration, travel, and accommodation expenses).

Appendix C: Senior Policy Advisor

Purpose

To provide advice and guidance to the CEO and work in collaboration with the Senior Research Advisor in support of CHLNet's efforts to grow leadership capacity and capabilities across Canada.

Duties and Responsibilities

- Advise and assist the CEO, as needed on growing CHLNet's value proposition, retaining/ recruiting network partners, strategic planning, strategic partnerships, and advocacy.
- Participate in:
 - Monthly virtual advisor meetings with the CEO and the Senior Research Advisor
 - Quarterly CHLNet Board meetings and/or board retreat
 - Semi-annual Network Partner roundtables, AGM, executive roundtables and leadership dialogues
 - To Be Agreed Upon: Working Groups and ad hoc Steering Groups
- Help with developing semiannual NP Roundtable agendas, including seeking/securing speakers for leadership dialogue sessions.
- Represent and/or present at meetings, health leadership panels, and/or conferences on behalf of CHLNet with prior mutual agreement of the CEO.
- Chair or co-chair ad hoc working/steering groups or board subcommittees as mutually agreed upon including the Membership & Partnership Subcommittee.
- Prepare briefing notes and other background materials in collaboration with the Senior Research Advisor and the CEO.
- Provide other advice or assistance as may be necessary for the consideration of the CHLNet Board and/or CEO.

Term of Position

12-month contract. If both parties agree, renewable annually with mutual consent.

Benefits

- Stipend
- Listing on the CHLNet website and documentation as "CHLNet's Senior Policy Advisor"
- Access to the password-protected side of the CHLNet website
- Access to Network Partner e-blasts
- Attendance at semi-annual Network Partners' roundtables either virtually or in person.
- Attendance at conferences or events if CHLNet requests/approves your participation (with reimbursement of associated registration, travel, and accommodation expenses).

Appendix D: Administrative and Operations Coordinator

Position Type: Remote Work, Full Time Contract. Twenty days per month at 7.5 hours per day shared equally between CHLNet and LEADS Global.

The Canadian Health Leadership Network (CHLNet) is a virtual a not-for-profit, incorporated value-based network of partners (40+ organizations). Our purpose is by working together, better incorporate evidence and systems thinking into the practice of 21st century health leadership to improve system performance and advance transformation.

LEADS Global is a virtual organization providing resources, tools, and training programs to enable individuals and organizations to develop their leadership capacity using the LEADS framework. We aim to create a community of healthcare leaders who can transform the industry and improve patient care

The Administrative and Operations Coordinator works remotely in collaboration with the CEO, CHLNet and Lead Director, LEADS Global. This dual reporting position is suited for someone who is highly organized, takes initiative, anticipate needs and is comfortable handling sensitive information with professionalism and care. This person must be adaptable and flexible in working under a dual reporting system however the contract itself will be CHLNet.

Key Responsibilities

Administrative Support

- Schedule and coordinate meetings for the primarily virtual gatherings of Board, roundtables, dialogues, working and steering groups, and other meetings as required.
- Assist in the preparation of agendas, minutes and other supporting materials.
- Manage and update group distribution, contact and committee lists.
- Coordinate annual partner letters, eblasts and other communication tools.
- Ensure organizational files are stored, organized, shared, maintained and accessed centrally.
- Conduct other administrative duties that may arise.

Operations Support

- Create, send and track invoices and process expense claims.
- Maintain and reconcile financial records with bank and credit card statements at least monthly for accuracy of the accounts and transactions.
- Enhance social media presence on LinkedIn.
- Regularly update website presence.
- Generate eblasts
- Ensure weekly updates to each CEO on progress of the updated responsibilities and external email.

Qualifications and Experience

- Meeting software such as Doodle, Zoom, Google Meet and/or MS Teams.
- Productivity software such as MS Office Suite, Adobe Acrobat, SharePoint
- Financial software such as QuickBooks
- Website hosting and email/marketing platforms such as WordPress and Mailchimp
- Social media platforms such as LinkedIn
- Minimum of 3+ years of experience in administrative or operational role
- College diploma or university degree preferred (equivalent experience considered)
- Bilingual skills in French and English an asset

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