



REGIONAL INFECTION  
CONTROL NETWORKS

**South Western Ontario**

*Giving Health  
a Helping Hand*

**Strategic Multi-Year Action Plan  
for the  
South Western Ontario Infection Control Network**

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## **Background and Introduction**

The South West Ontario Infection Control Network (SWOICN) was formally established earlier this year as part of a province-wide process to create Regional Infection Control Networks (RICNs) in each planning region. This provincial initiative was originally launched in 2004 as part of *Operation Health Protection* with the creation of the Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee (PIDAC).

One of the mandates of PIDAC was to: *help create regional networks for infection control and communicable disease that will coordinate infection control activities at the local level.*<sup>1</sup>

The provincial vision articulated for RICNs is: ***“A recognized and referenced source of infection prevention and control best practice in the region”***.

Over the last few years, the following RICNs have been established through a local grass-roots development process based on stakeholder consultation and proposal development:

- 2005 – Central South, Champlain, South Eastern Ontario
- 2006 - Central, Central East, Mississauga-Halton, North Simcoe Muskoka, Northeastern Ontario, Northwestern Ontario, Waterloo-Wellington
- 2007 – Central West, Erie St. Clair, **South Western Ontario**
- 2008 - Toronto Central

This report sets out an initial action plan for SWOICN based on a review of provincial reports including the recent provincial plan for RICNs<sup>2</sup>; the results of a facilitated planning retreat held November 22, 2007; and follow-up meetings with the Network Coordinator following the Retreat. The plan builds on the Network’s accomplishments to-date and strives to balance the needs and perspectives of key stakeholders in the Southwest with the goals and strategies of the provincial plan for RICNs.

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Operation Health Protection (Executive Summary), June 2004, p. 4

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, A Plan of Systematic Action: Regional Infection Control Networks Work Plan – 2008 and RICN Strategic Plan, 2006-2009

## **Accomplishments To-Date**

Before turning to the results of the planning retreat, it is useful to highlight some of the key accomplishments of SWOICN during its first six months of operation because they set the stage for the retreat discussions.

SWOICN has articulated the following mandate supported by draft terms of reference:

*“... to maximize coordination and integration of activities related to the prevention, surveillance and control of infectious diseases across all health care sectors and for all healthcare providers”.*

With the recruitment of founding Network members (see Appendix 1), the hiring of a Coordinator in June, the creation of a SWOICN web page at the provincial web portal for all Networks ([www.ricn.on.ca](http://www.ricn.on.ca)), the release of two newsletters and the opening of a new office this fall, SWOICN has begun to establish a clear presence in the Southwest.

While SWOICN is relatively new, it already has established a consultation and partnership-building tradition with key stakeholders as a result of its 2006 advisory committee process which led to the development of the proposal for the creation of SWOICN. Now, as part of its partnership building strategy, SWOICN staff has been busy, over the summer and fall, meeting and consulting with key stakeholders to better understand their infection control needs, issues and resources.

In addition to helping establish a local presence, SWOICN staff have been actively participating in a number of provincial RICN projects which will provide all Networks with some important standardized products. The experience and collaborative efforts of the ten other RICNs that preceded SWOICN have certainly helped to contribute to SWOICN's successes in its first six months of operation.

In terms of these provincial projects undertaken by multiple RICN's for the benefit of all, there are two which are already helping to shape and inform SWOICN's work plan. The first is a Resource Survey begun in the fall of 2007. This survey seeks to establish a better understanding of the assets and needs of a representative group of RICN stakeholders. The survey has heard from acute care organizations, long-term care homes, public health units, emergency medical services, and community care agencies. SWOICN will participate in the second phase of this survey in the early part of 2008, and will use the results to better inform the implementation of the strategic initiatives outlined in this document.

Another important provincial initiative impacting the work of SWOICN is a communications/marketing review performed by Navigator. The

recommendations stemming from this review will move all RICN's to more concerted communications with all stakeholders across the province. Common communication and marketing tools as well as common messages will be created by Navigator, and will inform SWOICN's communication and marketing plan.

### **Planning Retreat Highlights**

SWOICN organized a one-day planning retreat on November 22, 2007 for the purpose of developing an initial action plan. The agenda for the retreat and the retreat participants are found in Appendices 1 and 2. There were a total of 34 participants from across the Southwest representing different sectors (see below). Steering committee members and Network staff accounted for about 30% of participants. There were also 3 other RICNs represented at the planning day: Central South, Erie-St. Clair and Waterloo-Wellington.

Sector	# Reps
LTCH	7
Acute Care	7
Public Health	5
First Responders	2
Community Care	2
Academic	1
Administration	2
Physicians	2
Other	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>

### **Review of Provincial Strategies**

During the morning session of the retreat, participants reviewed the following key strategies from the provincial plan for Regional Infection Control Networks:

- 1) Knowledge Transfer Strategy**
- 2) Marketing Strategy**
- 3) Partnership Strategy**
- 4) Information Management Strategy**

There was also discussion of *what was missing* from the provincial plan from a Southwest perspective and the following key themes & issues emerged:

- Funding and Resources:
  - for front-line implementation (incl. staff time & equipment)
  - for the Network itself to fulfill its mandate

- greater accountability of funds already spent on infection control
- Knowledge Transfer Strategy:
  - Front-line practitioners need decision-making tools, process support and problem-solving structure which goes beyond the Network simply providing information
  - Need to share best-practices between Networks and from across the country to avoid duplication of effort
  - Appears to be missing an evaluation component including both process & outcome indicators
- Partnership Strategy:
  - Need greater role clarity in terms of relationships between SWOICN, Public Health Units, the LHIN and other key stakeholders
  - Need to build trust among Network partners
  - We have a broad & varied client base making it very challenging to reach everyone so we need to be clear about our priorities
  - Need to consider the expectations of our 'end-users' (incl. patients, doctors and front line staff); their input will impact on how we apply guidelines and best-practices

There was agreement that the issue of “advocating for resources”, while not a specific provincial strategy, needed to be considered as an integral part of all SWOICN projects. SWOICN has an obligation on behalf of its partners to identify where additional resources may be required to support the successful implementation of IPAC initiatives.

The following were identified as necessary evaluation and action steps as part of each SWOICN project:

- Identify resource gaps (needs assessment surveys, stakeholder consultations etc.);
- Identify resource requirements and indicators for success;
- Investigate and evaluate previous resource advocacy initiatives;
- Identify 'individuals of influence' who can lend support;
- Develop and implement specific communication strategy to support resource request.

## Setting Priorities

Because priority-setting is such a key issue for RICNs, participants also offered the following suggestions for criteria that can be used by SWOICN for setting of workload priorities:

- Network's key 'clients' should be health care workers (HCWs) instead of the general public
- Marketing should come first in order to establish 'buy-in' with HCWs
- Successful process and the establishment of trust need to come first and other strategies will follow
- Stakeholder consultation should help to establish areas of greatest need and how can SWOICN help
- Should we try and reach as many HCWs as possible or target specific HCWs?
- Should build on existing expertise in the Southwest
- Flexibility and amount of effort required can guide implementation

The remainder of the retreat was devoted to two small group sessions:

1. sequencing of the key strategies and their targeted results in terms of priorities for action; and
2. developing detailed action steps for those strategies that require implementation in 2008-09.

The results of the retreat were then synthesized and reviewed in relation to the provincial plan for RICNs. Based on follow-up interviews with the Network Coordinator, a fifth strategy called "Organizational Development" has been added to the four provincial strategies. Because SWOICN is still a relatively new organization, there are a number of staffing and infrastructure requirements that are still being put in place. While staffing is normally considered an operational issue, the relatively small operating budget allocated to each RICN means that each new staff person is a strategic hire for the Network, including the recruitment of a Medical Coordinator. The core competencies, job descriptions and contractual arrangement for each new Network staff or resource person will need to be carefully considered in relation to SWOICN's strategic plan.

The result of the retreat deliberations and subsequent analyses is a multi-year Strategic Action Plan which is described in Appendix 3. The highlights of the Action Plan for the coming year are described below.

## **Strategic Action Plan Highlights (Year One)**

**Organizational Development Strategy** – In order for SWOICN to successfully achieve its mandate and to implement its strategic plan, a number of a key infrastructure requirements and staff resources have to be put in place. Therefore in 2008-09, the Network will:

1. ***Recruit talented individuals to fill key strategic Network positions*** including Consultant/Educator and Medical Coordinator
2. ***Support provincial infrastructure projects for all RICNs*** including but not limited to policy & procedure development, evaluation methodologies and financial reporting

**Knowledge Transfer Strategy** - In order to fulfill its mandate the SWOICN needs a comprehensive understanding of the current resources available to organizations, agencies and individual practitioners in the South West. Therefore in 2008-09 the Network will:

1. ***Complete a detailed resources needs assessment to establish the resources that partners have available to them to implement IPAC best practices and to identify gaps.***  
The survey instruments have been developed through provincial collaboration with other RICNs (RSG Survey) and will be administered by SWOICN.
2. ***Develop a detailed plan for dissemination of information and for an implementation of an education program.***  
Once the Network has established the resource gaps in the South West, it can develop a plan to address the information and education gaps for partner organizations, and through this to begin to design its overall plan for knowledge dissemination including evaluation mechanisms and outcome indicators to measure the success of the knowledge transfer.
3. ***Support provincial projects that are intended to improve and strengthen infection control best practices*** including:
  - a. PIDAC Best Practices Guide
  - b. Core competency modules for LTCH and Public Health

**Communications & Marketing Strategy** – In order to become the recognized and referenced source of infection prevention and control in the South West, it is imperative that the Network increase its presence and legitimacy within local and regional infection control environments. To do this requires a focused communications & marketing strategy with clear messaging to partner organizations and prospective partner organizations regarding its mandate, role and methods of operation. Therefore in 2008-09 the Network will complete a:

1. **Detailed communications & marketing plan for the South West region** based on the provincial marketing plan being developed by Navigator with tools and communication strategies that can be customized to ensure effective communication with SWOICN's partners.
  - Establish effective communication channels with its partners
  - Begin to build the bridges required to support its Partnership strategy

**Partnership Strategy** – The SWOICN has been created to support organizations, agencies and individuals with infection control requirements and mandates and the building of strong partnerships is critical to the Network being able to serve others and to fulfill its mandate. In SWOICN's first year of operation, the following organizations have been identified as key partners: Long Term Care Homes (LTCH), Acute Care (Hospitals) and Public Health. To ensure success in the long term, the Network must also work in partnership with the other RICNs and with the Provincial government. Therefore in 2008-09 and on an ongoing basis the Network will:

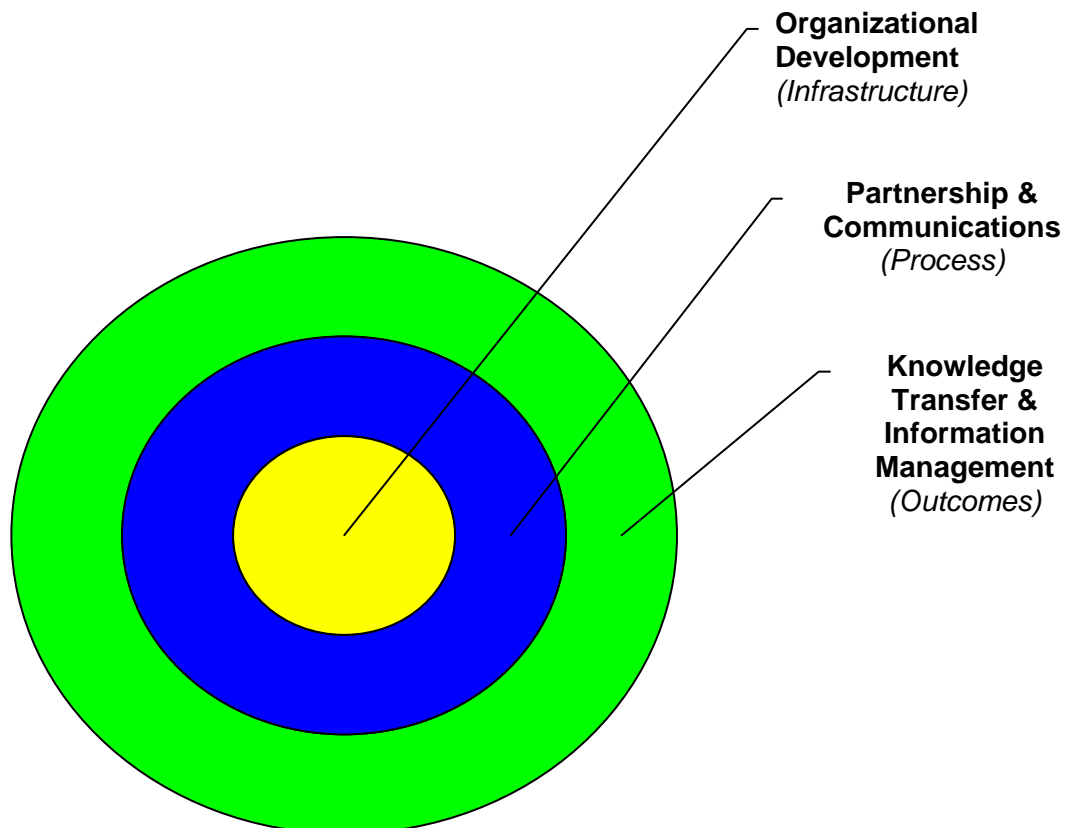
1. **Build relationships with key partners and measure the strength of those partnerships:** (Year One – Long Term Care Homes, Acute Care and Public Health)

**Information Management Strategy** – Having access to the right information at the right time is key for decision-makers and infection control practitioners to ensure that there is an efficient and effective IPAC system in the region and the Province. SWOICN along with the other RICNs has the ability to take the lead in designing a system for the gathering & dissemination of relevant IPAC information. SWOICN also has an opportunity to build an *inventory of knowledge* for partners and other stakeholders to use. Therefore in 2008-09, SWOICN will create and implement with its partners:

1. **A strategy to ensure consistency of surveillance reporting** through facilitated discussions with partners about consistent definitions, standardized data collection and reporting methods supported by training. This strategy will incorporate materials and initiatives spearheaded by provincial bodies such as PIDAC. It will not be the role of SWOICN to receive data collected through surveillance programs, but rather to ensure consistent methodologies
2. **A repository of IPAC knowledge & expertise** which includes library resources, index of experts, speakers, projects & products completed by SWOICN partners, other RICNs, MOHLTC, national and international resources

## Inter-relationship between Strategies

While the five strategies are presented as discrete activities, they are very inter-related as described in the diagram below. The 'Organizational Development' strategy is focused on SWOICN's infrastructure including capacity and the core skills & competencies which are critical to the success of the Network in achieving its mandate. The 'Partnership' and 'Communications & Marketing' strategies are focused on process and relationships. The quality of the partnerships developed and maintained by SWOICN and the effectiveness of its communication with its partners underlie everything that the Network hopes to achieve. Finally, 'Knowledge Transfer' and 'Information Management' are important outcome strategies for SWOICN in terms of measurable deliverables but are dependent on the Network's infrastructure and processes.



## Year One Implementation Timeframes

The following sequencing of key SWOICN's action plan components is recommended in 2008-09:

Action Plan Component	Last Quarter (Jan. – March 2008)	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter (April – June 2008)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter (July – Sept. 2008)	3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter (Oct – Dec. 2008)	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter (Jan – March 2009)
Strategic staffing decisions					
Support provincial RICN projects					
Resource assessment survey					
Communications & marketing plan					
Info dissemination plan and education program strategy					
Consistency of surveillance practices					
Building strong relationships with key partners					

Most if not all of these action plan initiatives will involve ongoing work so this recommended sequencing is meant to suggest reasonable timeframes for *'project start-up'* but does not include ongoing implementation and evaluation activities for each initiative. This level of detail (i.e. project activities and milestones in each quarter) will need to be incorporated into detailed annual operational (business) plans developed by the Network Coordinator. The sequencing of strategic action plan components in 2009-10 will be dependent on lessons learned & progress achieved in Year One of this Action Plan plus ongoing modifications to the provincial plan for RICNs.

## **APPENDIX 1 – SWOICN *Planning Retreat***

When: Thursday, November 22, 2007, (9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.)

Where: Elmhurst Inn, Ingersoll

<b><i>Timeframe</i></b>	<b><i>Agenda Activity</i></b>
9:00 – 9:15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Coffee &amp; Registration</i></li> </ul>
9:15 – 9:45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Welcome &amp; Introductions</li> <li>▪ Reviewing the Agenda/Setting the Context for the Day</li> <li>▪ Questions &amp; Clarification of background documentation</li> </ul>
9:45 – 10:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Putting the Provincial Priorities in a Southwest context:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ what's missing?</li> <li>○ evaluation criteria for setting priorities</li> <li>○ identifying key Southwest priorities for 2008-09</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
10:30 – 10:45	<i>Refreshment break</i>
10:45 – 11:45	Small Group Exercise #1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reviewing/Validating 2008-09 Priorities</li> <li>▪ Sequencing of Targets in support of Priorities</li> <li>▪ Confirming areas of focus</li> </ul>
11:45 – 12:00	Small Group Report Back
12:00 – 1:00	<i>Lunch</i>
1:00 – 1:15	Brief Review of Morning Results
1:15 – 2:30	Small Group Exercise #2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Detailed action planning</li> </ul>
2:30 – 3:00	Small Group Report Back
3:00 – 3:30	Review of Network decision-making process
3:30 – 4:00	Review of process steps following receipt of draft facilitators' report

**Retreat Facilitators:** Dora-Lynn Davies and Jim Whaley

## **APPENDIX 2 - SWOICN Planning Retreat Participant List**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Representation</b>		<b>Attendance</b>
Alice Newman	LHSC	UH	Steering Committee	Acute Care	Y
Anna Hunt	STEGH	St. Thomas	ICP	Acute Care	Y
Anne Bialachowski	CSICN	Dundas	Network Coordinator	RICN	Y
Brenda Prouse	Alexandra Hospital	Ingersoll	ICP	Acute Care	Y
Brenda Tanner	South Bruce Grey Health Centre	Owen Sound	ICP	Acute Care	Y
Cathy Walker	Care Partners/Community Nursing Service	Belgrave	Director of Professional practice	Community Care	Y
Christine Moussa	LHSC	St. Joseph's	Steering Committee	Acute/LTCH	Y
Colleen Robinson	Trillium Court	Kincardine	Steering Committee	LTCH	Y
Deanna Brophy	Chateau Gardens	Aylmer	ICP	LTCH	Y
Deirdre Boyle	Elgin Manor	St. Thomas	Steering Committee	LTCH	Y
Dr. Michael John	LHSC	Victoria	Steering Committee	Physician	Y
Ellen Otterbain	WWICN	Cambridge	Network Consultant	WWICN	Y
Francine Paquette	Oxford Health Unit	Woodstock	PHI	Public Health	Y
Grace Forget	Woodingford Lodge	Woodstock	ICP	LTCH	Y
Joyce Moore	Village Seniors Community	Hanover	ICP	LTCH	Y
Nancy Brown	LWHA	Wingham	Steering Committee	Acute Care	Y
Nora Boyd	ESICN	Windsor	Network Coordinator	RICN	Y
Norma Reese	SWOICN	St. Marys	AA	RICN	Y
Rick Bedard	AMGH	Goderich	Steering Committee	Administration	Y
Sue Shular	GBHU	Owen Sound	Administration	Public Health	Y
Tim Cronsberry	SWOICN	St. Marys	Network Coordinator	RICN	Y
Donna Taylor	PDHU	Statford	Steering Committee	Public Health	TELE

### **APPENDIX 3 – Strategic Multi-Year Action Plan – 2008-09 and 2009-10**

<b>Strategic Direction</b>	<b>Measurable Accomplishments &amp; Milestones – 2008-09</b>	<b>Measurable Accomplishments &amp; Milestones – 2009-10</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>
<p><b><i>Knowledge Transfer Strategy - resources needs assessment, info dissemination and education program plan</i></b></p>	<p>Completion of resources needs assessment (RSG Survey)</p> <p>Analyze survey data, pull out themes plus trends from data base information to establish issues and action plans</p> <p>Develop dissemination strategy for survey results (<i>link to Communications &amp; Marketing strategy</i>)</p> <p>Develop education plan and get feedback from partners regarding its usefulness</p> <p>Develop evaluation methodology for the plan including indicators for success</p> <p>Respond to individual requests for information &amp; education</p> <p>Create supports for CIC certification</p>	<p>Evaluate dissemination strategy effectiveness and refine methods of dissemination (<i>link to Communications &amp; Marketing strategy</i>)</p> <p>Update and fine-tune education strategy based on feedback from partners</p> <p>Refine CIC study groups, incorporating aspects of provincial project</p> <p>Respond to individual requests for information &amp; education</p>	<p>Partner requests of Network resources &amp; supports</p> <p>Number of partner education sessions</p> <p>Increased number of CIC-certified ICPs</p> <p>RICNAC data</p>
<p><b><i>Knowledge Transfer Strategy –support for provincial best practice initiatives</i></b></p>	<p>Support PIDAC Best Practice Guide development &amp; roll-out</p> <p>Support role out of core competency modules to LTCH and Public Health</p>	<p>Assess update of PIDAC Best Practices and create additional tools to aid organizations in implementing BP</p>	<p>Increased knowledge and use of IPAC best practices</p>

<b>Strategic Direction</b>	<b>Measurable Accomplishments &amp; Milestones – 2008-09</b>	<b>Measurable Accomplishments &amp; Milestones – 2009-10</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>
<b>Communications &amp; Marketing Strategy</b>	<p>Create detailed communications &amp; marketing plan (based on provincial Navigator project) that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-key messaging</li> <li>-role clarification</li> <li>-target audiences</li> <li>-effective communication channels</li> <li>-brochures</li> <li>-media tool kits &amp; media moment strategies</li> <li>-partnerships for joint messaging</li> </ul> <p>Annual Open House</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-showcase accomplishments and provide useful information</li> </ul> <p>Website and E-bulletin communication tools</p>	<p>Develop and implement an evaluation strategy, incl. <i>brand awareness</i> survey and partner satisfaction survey with current modes of communication</p> <p>Refine and revise plan based on evaluation results</p>	<p><i>Brand awareness</i> of SWOICN (its role and accomplishments) among key frontline staff and key decision-makers</p> <p>Effectively functioning communication channels</p>
<b>Partnership Strategy</b>	<p>Foster strong relationships with key partners, and facilitate signed letters of partnership (Year One - Acute, Public Health, Long Term Care Homes)</p> <p>Identify <i>people of influence</i> in each organization and develop a regular contact strategy</p> <p>Regular meetings with partner organizations to discuss what SWOICN <i>can do for them</i>; to understand their resource challenges; and to learn about their most effective communication channels</p> <p>Regular evaluation of the strength of each partnership</p>	<p>Foster strong relationships with key partners, and facilitate signed letters of partnership (Year Two – Community Agencies; Year Three – physicians, dentists)</p> <p>Regular evaluation of the strength of each partnership</p>	<p>Comprehensive contact database</p> <p>Signed letters of partnership</p>

<b>Strategic Direction</b>	<b>Measurable Accomplishments &amp; Milestones – 2008-09</b>	<b>Measurable Accomplishments &amp; Milestones – 2009-10</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>
	Establish processes with other RICNs to collaborate on projects of mutual benefit		
<b>Information Management Strategy</b>	<p>Consistency of Surveillance Practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-determine surveillance activities for key partners – Acute Care, LTCH, Public Health</li> <li>-facilitate the implementation of consistent definitions, standardized data collection and reporting methods (based on provincial guidelines)</li> <li>-provide training on surveillance packages</li> <li>-implement and monitor (evaluate) surveillance practices</li> </ul> <p>Compile compendium of expert resources on different IPAC topics, incl.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-library resources</li> <li>-index of experts/list of speakers</li> <li>-other projects &amp; products from SWOICN partners, other RICNs, MOHLTC, and national and international resources</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing monitoring of surveillance practices</p> <p>Ongoing development of resource compendium</p>	<p>Increased consistency in surveillance practices</p> <p>Increased surveillance in LTCH</p> <p>Request for info about IPAC resources</p>
<b>Organizational Development Strategy</b>	<p>Fill key Network positions based on core competencies required for implementation of strategic plan</p> <p>Support provincial infrastructure projects for all RICNs that will allow each Network to strengthen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-budgeting and financial monitoring</li> <li>-policies and procedures</li> <li>-Network decision-making processes</li> <li>-evaluation methodologies</li> </ul>		Staff retention and recognition of staff accomplishments by Network partners

