Advancing BC's clinical trials competitiveness

2026-2029 Implementation strategy

British Columbia is home to Canada's fastest growing life sciences sector, with more than 1,800 companies advancing health discoveries and technologies across the province. Within this momentum, clinical trials research is foundational — bridging discovery and access to innovative treatments that improve people's health and wellbeing, and attracting investment that drives economic growth. With over 100 active clinical trials sites and more than 600 clinical investigators, BC is recognized globally for its world-class clinical research infrastructure and scientific expertise.

Yet the clinical trials system is not keeping pace with sector growth. A recent situational analysis identified persistent barriers limiting BC's competitiveness for attracting and conducting clinical trials, including long startup timelines and inconsistent, fragmented processes. Without coordinated action and sustained investment in clinical trials infrastructure and talent, BC risks losing opportunities that directly benefit patients, the health system, and the economy.

In response, the BC government asked Michael Smith Health Research BC (Health Research BC) to advance actions to increase the province's clinical trials capacity and competitiveness. In 2025, Health Research BC convened a working group of leaders from academia, life sciences, health care, and government to develop an implementation strategy to align BC's clinical trials ecosystem around shared goals and measurable outcomes.

This strategy builds on the vision for clinical trials in BC, BC's Life Sciences and Biomanufacturing Strategy, Look West Strategy, and national initiatives to modernize clinical trials. It defines actions to strengthen BC's clinical trials ecosystem over the next three years, improving the province's ability to attract clinical trial activity and investment, and deliver health innovations to BC and the world.

Vision

Clinical trials in BC

A robust, innovative, coordinated, and person-centred clinical trials ecosystem improving health and economic outcomes for British Columbians.

Implementation strategy

Clinical Trials British Columbia, part of Health Research BC, will support implementation of a strategy, working closely with partners in government, research, life sciences, healthcare, patients, and communities to ensure unified, province-wide collaboration, accountability, and results. Collective action from multiple system partners (outlined in Appendix 1) is essential to achieving our shared vision for clinical trials. BC will leverage the complementary strengths of academic and industry-oriented trial sites across the province, recognizing that different delivery models are required for different trial types.

This approach will enable a coordinated system that supports early-phase studies involving healthy participants, as well as complex, disease-specific trials embedded within clinical care settings.

Objectives	one	two
	Position BC as a leading destination in Canada for launching clinical trials	Embed research as care through a coordinated, data-enabled environment
three	four	five
Build an agile clinical trials workforce	Align with national efforts to expand BC's clinical trials leadership and capacity	Advance person- and community-centered clinical trials

Objective one

Position BC as a leading destination in Canada for launching clinical trials

Goal

- Predictable, effective and timely trial start-up for Health Organization and industry-led trials

Actions

- Establish a centralized provincial intake service to streamline ethics, contracts, privacy, and data access for Health Organization clinical trials
- Implement a single provincial ethics review model for all trials
- Resolve bottlenecks for industry-led trials through coordinated engagement with industry sponsors and service providers

Achievements by 2029 (targets)

- The first site for an industry-sponsored trial is activated in less than eight weeks
- 90% of funded trials receive approval through single ethics review
- Industry-sponsored trial investment increases by 50%, alongside a 25% increase in trial initiations

Objective two

Embed research as care through a coordinated, data-enabled environment

Goal

- Provincial health data, digital tools, and infrastructure are being used to embed research within care

Actions

- Deploy a provincial data solution enabling interoperable, actionable, near real-time health data for hospital-based trials
- Standardize the use of core digital tools, including a single Clinical Trials Management System
- Establish shared, multi-sector resources (e.g., digital tools, biobanking, staffing) to expand clinical trial capacity

Achievements by 2029 (targets)

- A provincial data solution is being used for real-time trial design, recruitment, and conduct for hospital-based trials
- All Health Organization sites are using a single Clinical Trials Management System
- At least one new, shared, multi-sector resource for clinical research is operating

Objective three

Build an agile clinical trials work force

Goal

- A skilled, sustainable clinical trials workforce

Actions

- Deliver a provincial trials workforce action plan that identifies training, capacity, and retention priorities
- Expand credentialed career pathways and recognized training for clinical research professionals

Achievements by 2029 (targets)

- Defined clinical trials workforce indicators are established and tracked annually
- 70% of clinical research professionals hold recognized training or credentials

Objective four

Align with national efforts to expand BC's clinical trials leadership and capacity

Goal

- BC is nationally recognized for its coordinated, high-performing clinical trials system

Actions

- Advance BC's leadership and contributions across national clinical trials initiatives
- Establish a common provincial performance measurement framework for clinical trials
- Secure national partnerships and co-investments that expand BC's clinical trial capacity

Achievements by 2029 (targets)

- Active trial volume and BC's share of national clinical trial activity increases
- A provincial performance framework informs investment directions for clinical trials
- National co-investments in BC increase, expanding clinical trial capacity

Objective five

Advance person- and community-centered clinical trials

Goal

- Increase public access and participation in trials that reflect BC's diverse population

Actions

- Increase public awareness and pathways for enrolment of eligible trial participants
- Uphold Indigenous self-determination and data sovereignty through Indigenous-governed structures and processes for trials involving First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples
- Adopt common tools and standards (e.g., patient experience surveys, diversity enrolment plans) to improve trials accessibility

Achievements by 2029 (targets)

- Eligible trial participant enrollment increases in provincial recruitment platforms
- Indigenous-led structures and processes determine the design, review, and conduct of trials involving First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples
- Trial sites apply common tools that reduce barriers to study participation and improve participant experience

Implementation strategy

Three-year outcomes

Within three years, BC will have a more efficient and competitive clinical trials system that accelerates access to innovation, strengthens workforce capacity, and expands the province's ability to attract and deliver clinical research.

Access to therapies

Faster access to therapies and medical knowledge advancement through streamlined study startup, enabling integrated clinical research and studies that support regulatory decisions

Workforce capacity

Stabilized and skilled trial delivery workforce supported by clear career pathways and aligned training and credentialing

System efficiency

Reduced duplication and more consistent, coordinated provincial processes and platforms

Investment and partnership

Sustained and diversified investment that expands BC's clinical trial capacity

Competitiveness

Demonstrated growth in clinical trial activity and performance relative to other provinces

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The road ahead

Clinical Trials British Columbia will serve as the provincial convenor for the clinical trials system, enabling coordinated implementation of this strategy across partners.

Developing a detailed three-year implementation plan that defines roles and responsibilities, identifies investment needs, and supports transparent reporting on progress is an immediate priority.

Clinical Trials British Columbia will create a provincial governance structure to oversee implementation of the strategy, provide clear decision-making, and ensure alignment and accountability across interest-holders.

This implementation strategy leverages BC's strengths and aligns the province around collective actions that will position BC as a leading destination in Canada and internationally for conducting clinical trials.

Appendix 1

Primary responsibilities of actors within the clinical trials ecosystem

The clinical trials ecosystem relies on coordinated contributions across five core roles:

- Research system stewardship and investment
- Clinical trial delivery and operations
- Research talent and training development
- Indigenous governance and data sovereignty
- Patient and community partnership

The following tables consolidate primary responsibilities for interest-holders across these ecosystem roles to support clarity, alignment, and accountability.

Role: System stewardship and investment

Interest-holders	Primary responsibilities
• Clinical trials-enabling organizations • Provincial government • Pharmaceutical and life sciences companies • Research funders • Health and hospital foundations	• Authorize and require participation in centralized ethics and approval mechanisms • Align and deploy funding towards workforce development, infrastructure, and data priorities • Mandate integration of research within healthcare, including data integration and interoperability • Measure, publicly report, and course-correct based on system performance • Engage on policy and system-level solutions towards bottleneck resolution

Role: Clinical trial delivery operations

Interest-holders	Primary responsibilities
• Healthcare Organizations • Research institutions • Pharmaceutical and life sciences companies	• Operationalize harmonized ethics, standardized workflows, and centralized approval systems • Embed clinical trials into clinical service planning, staffing, and accountability structures • Provide fit-for-purpose infrastructure and coordinated bottleneck resolution across health system and industry partners • Co-invest in workforce recruitment, role clarity, and retention strategies • Deliver trials that meet defined inclusion, accessibility, and quality standards

Role: Research talent training development

Interest-holders	Primary responsibilities
• Post-secondary institutions	• Implement harmonized ethics and research administrative processes • Provide methodological, digital, and data expertise • Develop and deliver competency-based training and credentialling • Embed inclusive and culturally safe trial design standards in curricula and practice

Role: Indigenous governance and data sovereignty

Interest-holders	Primary responsibilities
• First Nations, Métis, and Inuit researchers and leaders	• Assert and exercise authority over Indigenous-governed research processes • Define data governance expectations, access protocols, and distinctions-based approaches • Guide accountability mechanisms for respectful partnership

Role: Patient and community partnership

Interest-holders	Primary responsibilities
• Patients • Care partners • Community organizations	• Contribute lived and living experience to trial design, recruitment, and delivery • Strengthen accessibility, inclusion, and public trust • Advocate for transparency and accountability in research conduct and reporting