

# Health Care Without Harm U.S. 2024-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN



March 2024



**Our North Star:**

**A zero-emissions,  
climate-resilient,  
and equitable  
health sector**

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# Introduction

For over 27 years, Health Care Without Harm has deployed its strengths as a convener, mobilizer, and systems orchestrator to build a movement inside the health care sector to advance environmental health and justice. We are transforming the health care sector globally to deliver on its core value to “first, do no harm.” We work at the intersection of climate and health: addressing both the impact of the climate crisis on human health and the health care sector’s impact on the climate crisis. We believe every person deserves the right to live in a healthy environment – while recognizing that underserved communities are disproportionately impacted by environmental degradation and disease.

Our staff includes policy experts, campaigners, clinical experts, and other health and environmental practitioners. Through our work we have built an unprecedented international network of health systems, health care leaders and clinicians, governments, policymakers, civil society organizations, activists, and grassroots leaders who are all deeply invested in climate transformation in the health sector.

There is no denying the climate crisis has arrived. 2023 was the hottest year on record, and all around us we see institutions, governments, and individuals waking up to the reality of the climate emergency and its impacts on human health. We can’t have healthy people on a sick planet. And the health care sector has a crucial role to play as a major contributor to the crisis, while also being on the frontline of its impacts. We focus our efforts on this sector because of its size and influence. With enormous economic and political power, high public trust, and as the only sector explicitly dedicated to health and healing, there is no other sector more strategically ripe for transformation and global leadership on the climate crisis.

Building on the strong foundation of our decades of expertise and extensive global network, Health Care Without Harm is meeting this pivotal moment with an ambitious three-year strategic plan for 2024-2026 to transform the health sector in this perilous time – ensuring it can balance the immediate needs for mitigation, resilience, and equity that this era demands.

## Reaffirming our vision, mission, and values

### Our vision remains the same

Health care mobilizes its ethical, economic, and political influence to create an ecologically sustainable, equitable, and healthy world.

### Our mission is clearer than ever

Health Care Without Harm seeks to transform health care worldwide so that it reduces its environmental footprint, becomes a community anchor for sustainability, and leads the global movement for environmental health and justice.

### Our values continue to guide us

- We are impactful
- We strive for justice
- We are collaborative
- We embody health
- We act with integrity

# Executive summary:

## Health Care Without Harm U.S. 2024-2026 Strategic Plan

### The health sector reimagined in the age of climate crisis

#### 3 core objectives



##### Mitigation

Transform the health sector to mitigate the climate crisis and its impacts on human health and accelerate the broader transition to a clean energy economy



##### Resilience

Ensure health systems are resilient to climate impacts and actively supporting community climate resilience as anchor institutions



##### Equity

Lead the health sector in reducing social disparities intersecting with climate mitigation and resilience, and amplify the voices of the most impacted communities

#### 5 levers for change

Lead advocacy and shape critical policy

Expand and mobilize our powerful global network

Transform supply chains and procurement practices

Deepen place-based partnerships between health care and communities

Strengthen our movement platform



#### Impact & key goals

##### Impact goals:

Our health care institution partners will:



Reduce their greenhouse gas emissions



Build climate resilience in their facilities and communities



Build deep, place-based demonstrations of climate and health equity

##### Organizational goals:

Health Care Without Harm will:



Grow our health care institution partner network



Make essential investments in our movement platform



**Climate change is humanity's biggest health threat, and we're at a tipping point.**

## **Strategic planning process & context**

At this moment of global crisis and opportunity, we see an urgent need to sharpen our strategy for the critical fight ahead.

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### **Key themes that emerged while shaping our strategic plan:**

- **Focus:** When we try to do too much, we risk doing none of it well. The scope of the challenge is enormous and the angles to affect change are infinite. But it is imperative that we make the hard choices about where to focus our efforts in order to be able to create meaningful, lasting, systemic change. Our strategy will help us narrow our focus and double down on what truly advances the most important goals.
- **Defining and measuring success:** With a challenge as all-encompassing, complex, and evolving as this multi-crisis, it can be enormously difficult to measure concrete progress. However, the future action this crisis demands hinges on our ability to define success and track our progress toward it. Our strategy defines clear outcomes that help us manage our performance, learn key lessons, constantly improve, and quickly pivot in an ever-changing context.
- **Leveraging the best of our organization:** Our planning process focused on asking the question, “Where are we most likely to succeed because we have differentiated strengths and capabilities?” Clear answers emerged. Our biggest strengths are our unparalleled international network, our convening power and ability to build critical partnerships, our highly skilled team of experts, and our track record of driving meaningful change. We will leverage these strengths going forward to maximize the impact of our strategy.
- **Investing in capacity for the long haul:** This challenge has never been more urgent and we have a monumental task ahead. With nearly 30 years already driving major progress on this issue, it's time to double down on what we've built so far and invest in strengthening our organization for the long road ahead. We've built up an infrastructure debt over time due to the vagaries of nonprofit financing, and our strategy defines how we'll invest in building capacity so we can still be here doing this critical work when it's more needed than ever.

While our core identity, values, and many of our solutions remain the same and build on our decades of experience, there are some key differences that will show up in our work going forward as a result of this new strategy.

### What's new in how we're working:

- **We're "all in" on the climate crisis:** We are doubling down on our focus on climate and now see it as the single unifying frame for all our work. If the health sector was a country, it would be the fifth largest greenhouse gas emitter globally. Climate change is the biggest threat to human health, and this reality underpins our entire strategy. Every strategy we deploy and every activity we carry out is in service of climate change mitigation, resilience, and equity.
- **We have a holistic strategy for the work led by our U.S. entity, which will inform the emerging global strategy we are creating with our international partners:** The strategy outlined in this document is specific to the Health Care Without Harm U.S. entity, which carries out work in both the U.S. and internationally. Simultaneously, we are pursuing a strategic planning process for our global network in close collaboration with our partner organizations (described on page 7). Strategic planning across such an expansive network is complex, and the U.S. strategy is an important starting point that both informs and will be informed by the forthcoming global strategy we are developing with our partners. The global strategic planning process recognizes that there are contextual and strategic differences for our partners in their different geographies, yet aligns our efforts toward shared priorities and goals, enabling us to move forward as a strategic collective.

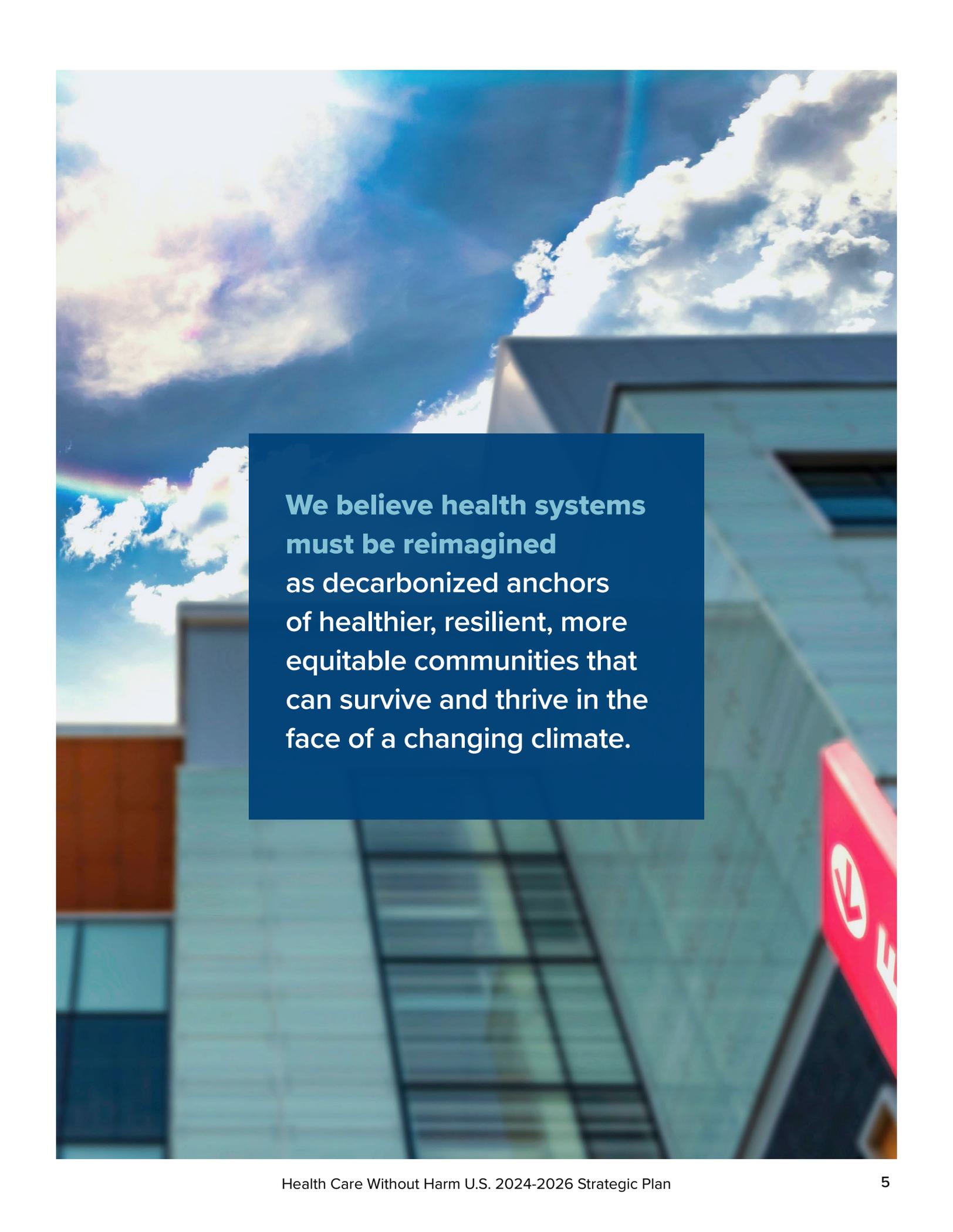
- **We are committed to equity as both a primary goal and as a cross-cutting framework for everything we do:** While equity has always been a core value of our organization, we're deepening our commitment to addressing the underlying issues that create disparities in health and environment, and elevating the voices of people in underserved communities. Our objectives and levers for change – detailed in the pages that follow – are cross-programmatic and span all of our work. For example, equity is prominently integrated in our climate change mitigation and resilience work.

### Our 2024-2026 strategy is an important step forward in a much larger journey. We remain dedicated to the following long-term outcomes (2030-2050):

- **Climate-smart health care becomes standard** throughout the world; a net-zero, resilient health sector is increasingly the norm.
- **The health care sector reduces its emissions** in line with the Paris Agreement ambition of 50% reduction by 2030 and achieving net zero by 2050.
- **Leveraging its economic, political, and ethical clout** – including its \$4.5 trillion annual spending, more than 17% of the U.S. economy – the health sector exerts leadership and helps achieve the just transition to clean, renewable energy and a low-emissions, climate-resilient economy, thereby improving health outcomes, fostering greater health equity, and contributing to environmental justice for all.

**The concept of climate-smart health care** originated in a report by the World Bank and Health Care Without Harm in 2017, establishing a new framework to bridge the divide between adaptation and mitigation in the health sector. While mitigation and resilience are often placed in separate silos in the climate world, the "[Climate-Smart Health Care](#)" approach encompasses both low-emissions and resilience strategies and appreciates their interconnectedness.





**We believe health systems  
must be reimaged**  
as decarbonized anchors  
of healthier, resilient, more  
equitable communities that  
can survive and thrive in the  
face of a changing climate.

# Health Care Without Harm’s **proven approach**

Health Care Without Harm has a unique and essential role as a **system orchestrator**, or **field catalyst**, meaning we are transforming the health system not by scaling a single solution, but rather by mobilizing and coordinating unified efforts to solve problems at scale. As the Bridgespan Group defines it, our work is a “nerve center for the matrix of activity needed to transform our inequitably designed systems” – starting with the health system.

Our theory of change is designed to inspire action across the unparalleled networks we have cultivated over three decades. We pilot and scale solutions through our network, and institutionalize change through policy, market, and health system transformation.

## Theory of change



**Innovate**  
experimental pilots, deep place-based initiatives, and other solutions



**Scale**  
solutions through tools and tailored support to our network

**Transform**  
systems by sustaining and institutionalizing solutions in policy

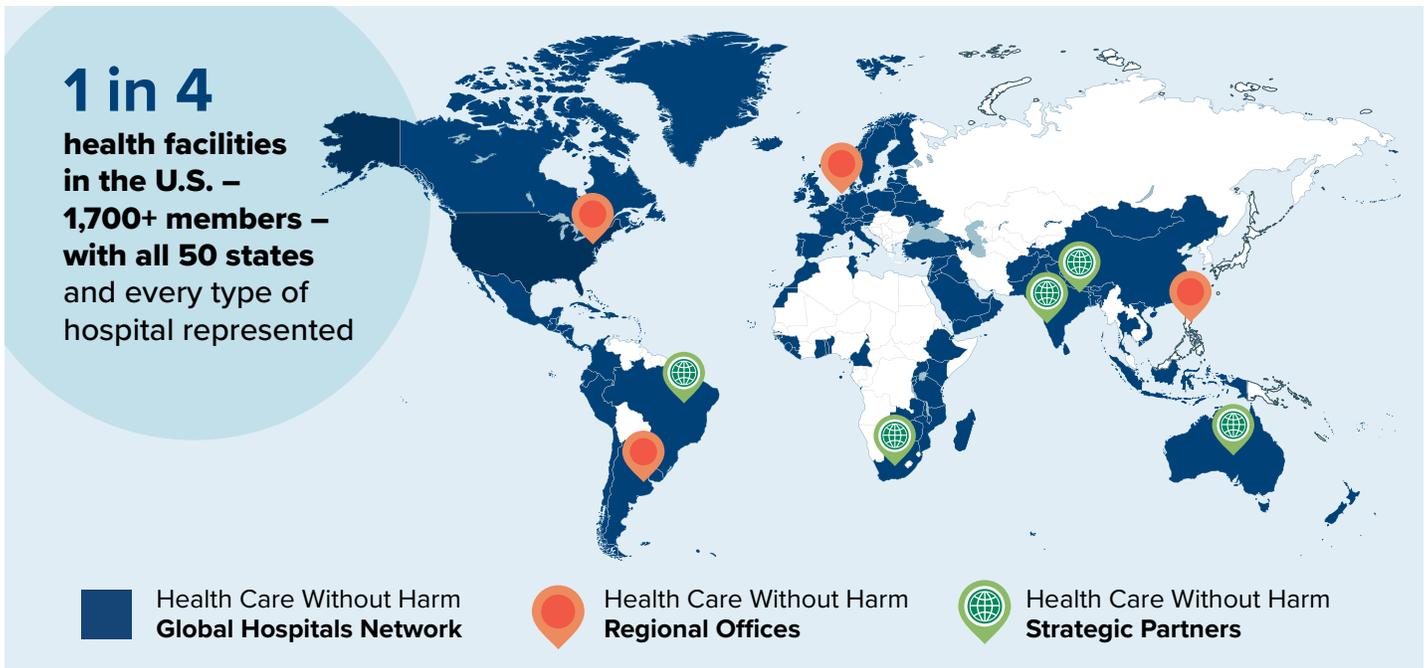


If we develop and deploy effective solutions and learnings across our networks, and if our partners adopt and act on these solutions and learnings, then we can achieve sustainable change and health sector transformation.

# Building a movement: The most extensive global network for health care transformation

The **Global Green and Healthy Hospitals network** includes **1,900+ members**, representing **70,000+ hospitals** and health centers in **86 countries**.

Over three decades, Health Care Without Harm has built the most extensive global network at the intersection of human and planetary health. This network offers our best chance for scaling and sustaining proven climate and health solutions. **Our global network includes:**



**Global Green and Healthy Hospitals (GGHH):** Our global community of practice with over 1,900 members, representing over 70,000 hospitals and health centers in 86 countries.

**Practice Greenhealth:** The U.S./Canada arm of GGHH, our over 1,700 member-strong health care network (including many rural and essential hospital members) is the U.S. health sector's go-to source for information, tools, data, and expert technical support.

**Health Care Climate Council:** Our leadership body of 18 diverse U.S.-based health systems committed to addressing climate change, representing over 500 hospitals and 9,500 health centers in 44 states, with more than 1.2 million employees serving over 76 million patients annually.

**Health professional networks:** With our partners, we lead or co-lead six health professional networks in India, Southeast Asia, the U.S., Europe, and South Africa representing thousands of health professionals. In the U.S., our **Physician Network** supports more than 1,160 medical students and clinicians.

**Government and institutional partners:** We partner with WHO, UNDP, Asian Development Bank, and national and subnational ministries of health, including the U.S. Department of HHS Office of Climate Change and Health Equity, among many others. We have a leadership role with WHO's Alliance for Transformative Action on Climate and Health (ATACH), and figure prominently in high-level global convenings such as COP and G20.

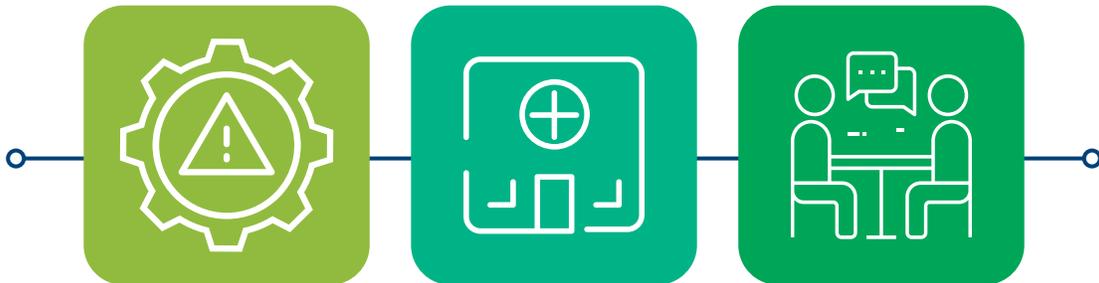
**UNFCCC-backed Race to Zero initiative:** As the initiative's health sector partner, we are working with more than 78 institutions representing over 14,400 hospitals in 28 countries that have committed to net-zero emissions by 2050.

**The Global Coordinating Council (GCC):** Comprised of independent strategic partnership organizations in Australia (Climate and Health Alliance), Brazil (Projeto Hospitais Saudáveis), India (Public Health Foundation of India, Lung Care Foundation and Healthy Energy Initiative), Nepal (Health Environment and Climate Action Foundation), and South Africa (groundWork).

# 2024-2026 U.S. Strategic Plan

## Health sector transformation for the climate crisis

### 3 core objectives



#### Mitigation

Transform the health sector to mitigate the climate crisis and its impacts on human health and accelerate the broader transition to a clean energy economy

#### Resilience

Ensure health systems are resilient to climate impacts and actively supporting community climate resilience as anchor institutions

#### Equity

Lead the health sector in reducing social disparities intersecting with climate mitigation and resilience, and amplify the voices of the most impacted communities

As a system orchestrator, there are five levers for change we are pulling to achieve these objectives over the next three years.



## 5 levers for change

### 1. Lead advocacy and shape critical policy

We prioritize advocacy because public policy change drives progress on our core objectives at the speed and scale demanded by the urgency and magnitude of the climate crisis. We leverage demonstrated successes and compelling campaigns to push for public policy changes and then use these changes to accelerate tangible impact on the ground. Policy advocacy must be nimble and responsive to changing political realities. Over the next three years, our work in the U.S. will focus on federal policy change, limiting our sub-federal policy work to the geographies where we are implementing deep place-based demonstrations (see #4 below). In particular, we will influence regulatory policy with the White House and federal agencies and engage congressional champions on legislative priorities. Globally, our policy advocacy work will focus on the international, national, and sub-national levels.

### 2. Expand and mobilize our powerful global network

We will expand and mobilize our network (comprising Global Green and Healthy Hospitals, Practice Greenhealth, health system partners and ministries of health, health professionals, academic and affiliate partners) as advocates for climate-smart health care to build climate mitigation and resilience into their operations, track and report their progress on climate actions, and collaborate equitably with their communities, lending solidarity as well as advocating for climate-smart policies that advance equity.

### 3. Transform supply chains and procurement practices

We will mitigate the adverse impact of the health care sector globally on climate, environment, and health by transforming procurement practices and supply chains, advancing a circular economy, and encouraging better product selection. In particular, we are focused on reducing single-use plastics and toxic petrochemicals. We are choosing to focus on these areas rather than other levers of economic transformation (e.g., divestment, adjustments to health care reimbursement models, changes to the overall financial structure of the health care sector) given our decades' of experience successfully shifting procurement practices.

### 4. Deepen place-based partnerships between health care and communities

We will facilitate deep, trusting partnerships among community-based organizations and health systems in select regions in order to build and test replicable models for collaborative action that advance climate mitigation, resilience, and equity. Our place-based initiatives prompt health systems to leverage their power as anchor institutions to reduce disparities exacerbated by climate impacts. Our work with community-based partners will align to the approach outlined in [Anchored by health care: Strategies for health systems](#). We will also amplify and support the place-based and community-level work done outside of the U.S. through our strategic partners.

### 5. Strengthen our movement platform

We will invest in strengthening what we call our “movement platform” – the core, underlying infrastructure that makes all our work possible. This platform includes essential operating functions like Finance, Analytics & Insights, Monitoring & Evaluation, Information Technology, People & Culture, Communications & Marketing, and Development which are critical to enable all of Health Care Without Harm's goals. We are particularly focused on investing in mission-critical capability gaps, such as improving our ability to collect, track, measure, and share key impact data from health institution partners.

# Impact & key goals

## Impact goals



**Mitigation:** Our health care institution partners in the U.S. will collectively **reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 25%** using our suite of tools and tailored support. This level of emissions reduction lays the foundation for additional mitigation efforts in line with the Paris Agreement targets of 50% reduction by 2030 and net zero by 2050. Our 2026 goal tees up mitigation progress to **dramatically mitigate the health sector’s contribution to the climate crisis.**



**Resilience:** **50% (800+) of our health care institution partners in the U.S. will develop climate resilience plans** using our guidance, enabling them to serve as essential anchors for **community resilience in the unfolding climate emergency.** This is a stretch goal, but one we feel is critical because having these plans is an equity and health imperative amidst the escalating climate disasters unfolding before us. Further, 50% of our network would represent an important “tipping point” to move the U.S. health sector overall.



**Equity:** **Build at least 3 deep, place-based initiatives** using our anchor model of health systems and communities coming together to engage in equitable planning, decision-making, and solutions-building to **directly address the disproportionate impacts the climate crisis has on underserved communities and the people who face the most risk.**

## Organizational goals



**Scale our health care network:** **Grow and deepen our Practice Greenhealth network by 25% (400+ new institutions)** and continue to steadily grow our global partner network, building the power of our movement to affect meaningful, lasting, global change.



**Strengthen our movement platform:** **Raise \$7.2M for essential investments in our organizational infrastructure** to enable us to expand and deepen our impact and deliver on this ambitious strategy, including investments in technology and data collection, monitoring and evaluation, DEIB (diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging), and more.

## Our unique strengths

Health Care Without Harm’s strategic planning process collected extensive stakeholder feedback from high-level partners and leaders in the climate and health space. Based on this feedback, the key strengths we are leveraging to carry out our new strategic plan are:

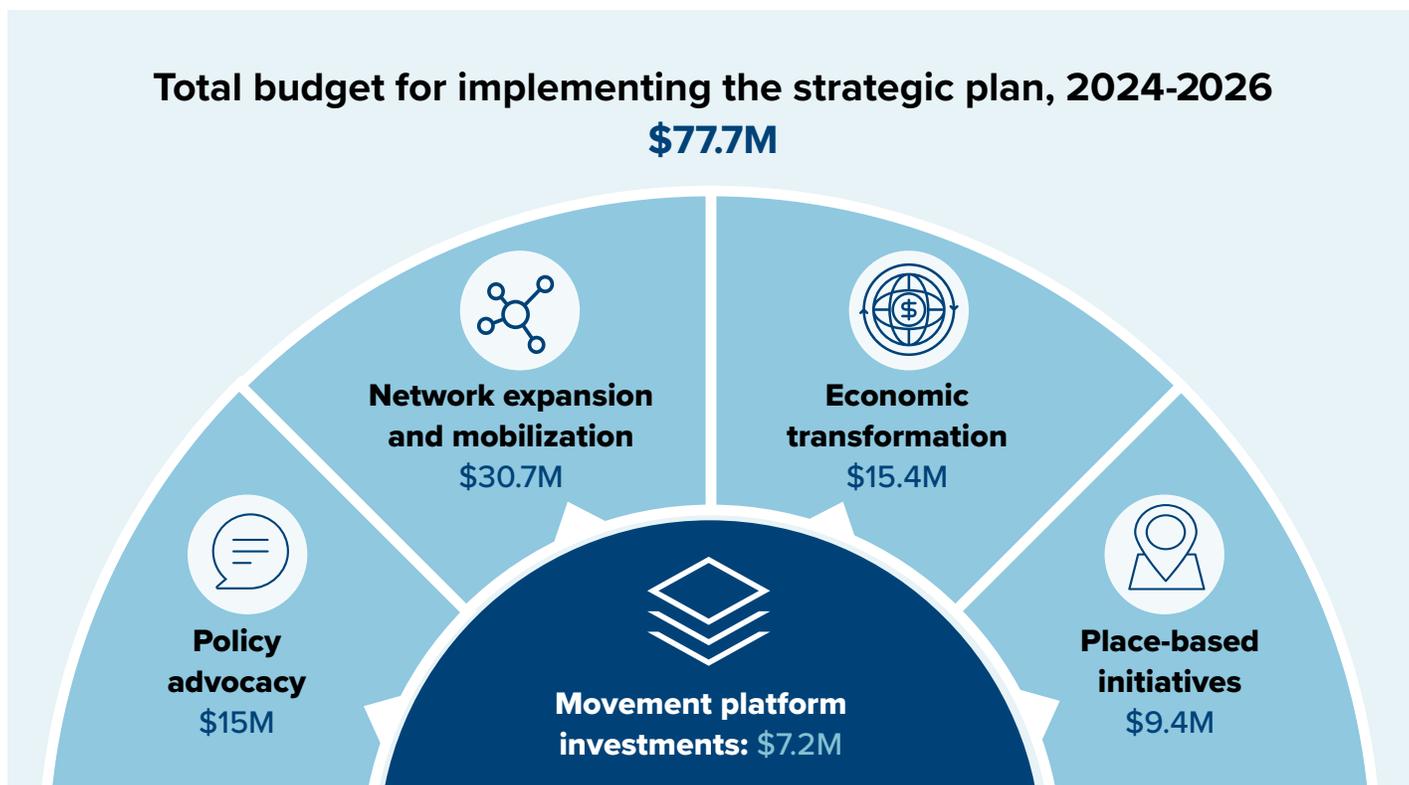
- **Passionate, committed staff** of experts and a holistically healthy organizational culture
- **Deep bench of expertise and leadership** at the intersection of climate and health, as the “first mover” in the space
- **Strong reputation and relationship capital** in the sector, including at the highest levels (the White House, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Academy of Medicine, UN, WHO, etc.), and a proven ability to convene these critical actors and motivate them to action
- **Extensive, unparalleled international network** and proven success activating this network to effectuate change

# Resourcing plan & investment needed

**To achieve the objectives and goals outlined in the preceding pages, we urgently need additional investment from values-aligned partners.** We need \$77.7M over the next three years to carry out the full extent of this ambitious plan, and currently project a budget gap of approximately \$38M.

Our highest leverage investment opportunity at this critical moment is flexible, strategic funding for our movement platform. Investments in our movement platform fuel the infrastructure that makes all our work and impact possible, and enable us to plan and act strategically, responding to the opportunities and challenges that will arise in line with our strategic plan in the coming three years.

The movement platform is also how we deepen and scale our impact – for example, through data systems and analysis, MEL (monitoring, evaluation, and learning) activities, and strategic communications to share our lessons learned. Each dollar invested in our movement platform has three to five times the impact leverage, compared to highly restricted and inflexible project-based investments. These sources of funding are still incredibly important and make much of our work possible, but we need new visionary, trust-based partners to make holistic investments in our movement and in the overall scope of our new strategy in order to achieve these aims.



We are launching this strategy from a strong foundation. Health Care Without Harm’s 2022 budget was \$14.2M and 2023 budget was \$16.6M. We are grateful to our long-term partners and champions for their support, including Skoll Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, IKEA Foundation, Kresge Foundation, Marisla Foundation, and Barr Foundation, among many other valued partners.

## **The first mover leading the space: Our unparalleled track record of impact**

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As a leader internationally recognized as originating the climate and health space, we have a wealth of experience and a strong track record of creating significant systems change and lasting impact for public health and the environment. This is becoming a crowded field, which we are happy to see, as many key actors are finally waking up to the reality of the climate crisis and its impact on human health. We've led this progress every step of the way. For example, 12 years ago we co-organized the first climate and health summit at COP17 and called for climate action from the health sector. Fast forward to COP28 in 2023: There was a full day dedicated to health for the first time. More than 140 countries signed a climate and health declaration, and over 80 national health ministries firmly committed to building climate-resilient, low-carbon health systems by joining the [Alliance for Transformative Action on Climate and Health](#) (known as ATACH, which we helped establish during COP26).

**We've come a long way, but we still have a long way to go.**

Our new strategic plan directly builds on our extensive experience, deep relationships, and strong evidence of impact in changing the health system as whole.

## Some of our proudest wins to date include:

2008

### Mercury in health care

Eliminated the market for mercury thermometers and blood pressure devices in the United States

2010

### Medical waste incineration

Catalyzed the closure of more than 4,400 carcinogenic medical waste incinerators

2013

### Minamata Treaty

Collaborated with the World Health Organization to secure a global treaty phasing out mercury measuring devices

2018

### Coolfood Pledge

As the health sector partner for this WRI-led initiative, we have mobilized 120 hospitals to pledge reducing their food-related emissions by 25% by 2030

2020

### Race to Zero

As the health sector partner for this initiative, we have catalyzed 78 health care organizations representing over 14,400 hospitals to commit to net-zero emissions by 2050

2021

### COP26 Health Programme

Co-launched with UNFCCC, WHO, and the British government, 82 countries have made historic decarbonization and resilience commitments

2021

### Sustainable Health in Procurement Project

With UNDP, launched the Sustainable Procurement Index for Health to guide low-carbon, sustainable purchasing, and produced over 100 publications/tools in support of this aim

2021

### Roadmap for the Decarbonization of the Health Care Sector

Created this resource, used worldwide to describe the composition and size of greenhouse gas emissions in the sector, and the first global carbon footprint calculation tool developed specifically for the health care sector

2022

### Alliance for Transformative Action on Climate and Health

We sit on the ATACH steering committee and co-chair the low-carbon and sustainable health systems working group, supporting countries in the implementation of their COP26 health commitments

2022

### Health Sector Climate Pledge

Recruited hospitals to commit to this U.S. Department of Health and Human Services pledge, with over 87% of committed hospitals part of our Practice Greenhealth membership network

2023

### Historic G20 Commitments

Along with our partners ARUP and the Asian Development Bank, we were instrumental in developing principles for the historic G20 New Delhi Leaders Declaration, committing to “support development of climate-resilient and low-carbon health systems” and covering 75% of global health care GHG emissions

## Looking ahead: Our vision realized

This strategic plan is ambitious, and we have a long road ahead to realize our vision for health care to mobilize its ethical, economic, and political influence to create an ecologically sustainable, equitable, and healthy world. Empowered by our extensive experience and strong track record of success, our team of experts, and our unprecedented global network of partners, champions, and activists, we are stepping into the next chapter of our organization and of the climate crisis with determination, resolve, and a steadfast commitment to hope. We can clearly picture a world where we all recognize the inextricable link between human and environmental health. Thank you for working alongside us to make this vision a reality.



[noharm.org](http://noharm.org)