The LEADS in a Caring Environment capabilities framework represents the key skills, behaviours, abilities, and knowledge required to lead in all sectors and levels of the health system. It presents a common understanding of what good leadership looks, feels, and sounds like across all levels of service provision in healthcare.

The dimensions of the framework represent the collective wisdom of the current literature on health leadership and leadership development. It describes the capabilities required by leaders dedicated to making meaningful health system change, integrating actions dedicated to patient, family, and community care, and building healthy workplaces. The framework is informed by, and extends, the work done in the creation of major, progressive leadership frameworks in the public and private health sectors around the world.

A key foundation for the LEADS framework is caring. The ethos of caring is what sets it apart from other leadership frameworks and is the common thread that unites all health leaders. The LEADS capabilities bring high quality leadership and care to patients, families, and citizens; and to building caring teams. LEADS reflects the leadership required to make the health system serve society.

The LEADS Framework Steering Group, a partnership between the Canadian College of Health Leaders, the Canadian Health Leadership Network (CHLNet), and LEADS Global, share the mission to develop, support, and sustain LEADS-based leadership capacity for health system transformation. The LEADS Framework Steering Group endorses the following principles:

- Quality leadership is fundamental to improving health system performance.
- The LEADS framework provides a common leadership language that unites leaders and organizations in building the leadership capacity needed in Canada.
- Maintaining the research and integrity of the LEADS framework is fundamental to its use, and for ensuring that appropriate standards and quality of leadership are created through its use.
- Sustained effort across the health system is required to build the leadership capacity needed in Canada.

Caring leaders maximize the potential for universal, efficient, and effective service delivery to all Canadians.

LEADS Global partners with internationally based individuals and organizations to introduce and develop health leadership capacity through the culturally sensitive application of LEADS.

The Canadian Health Leadership Network (CHLNet) is a not-for-profit coalition of 40+ organizations. CHLNet builds health leadership across Canada via three value streams: Connecting People through Dialogue and Engagement; Advancing Health Leadership Research, Knowledge and Evaluation; and Accelerating Leadership Practices and Capabilities.

“Leadership is the collective capacity of an individual or group to influence people to work together to achieve a common constructive purpose: the health and wellness of the population we serve.” - Dickson & Tholl, 2020
Successful leaders…

Demonstrate systems / critical thinking
They think analytically and conceptually, questioning and challenging the status quo, to identify issues, solve problems and design and implement effective processes across systems and stakeholders.

Contribute to the creation of healthy organizations
They create engaging environments where others have meaningful opportunities to contribute and ensure that resources are available to fulfill their expected responsibilities.

Communicate effectively
They listen well and encourage open exchange of information and ideas using appropriate communication media.

Build teams
They facilitate environments of collaboration and cooperation to achieve results.

All leaders – regardless of their role, or position in the health system – must be able to lead themselves, engage others, achieve results, develop coalitions, and lead systems transformation to create the Canadian health system of the future.

For each of the five LEADS domains, ‘leader effectiveness’ differs, depending on the unique attributes of each individual and the context in which the leader exerts influence. In different contexts, capabilities differ in expression.

LEADS creates a culture of distributed leadership, where each person in the system, regardless of position or title, has the necessary leadership skills and feels empowered to exercise leadership when it is required.