



World
Physiotherapy

STRATEGIC PLAN

2022 and beyond



Message from the president

Since its foundation in 1951, just over 70 years ago, our organisation (then the World Confederation for Physical Therapy and now World Physiotherapy) has striven to connect the global community to advance the profession. In the earlier decades that was easier – the community was smaller, we began with just 11 member organisations – and harder – no email, no virtual meetings, the papers were printed and sent by post. Now we have 125 member organisations ranging in size, from 14 to more than 105,000, and in maturity, some very new and others celebrating their centenaries.

That diversity is both a strength and a challenge. Our strategy from 2016-2021 was developed following unprecedented consultation and engagement and, as a consequence, I believe it served us well during the extraordinary global pandemic. As we emerge from that period, our world has changed immeasurably. It is timely that we have a new strategy to move us forward.

Our core values, refreshed for this new phase of activity, are true to the original spirit of our founding member organisations – to make better and closer links, to promote the interchange of professional knowledge, and to provide services to professional organisations. As an organisation we remain in the service of our member organisations. Striving with them to grow stronger in support of the people and communities who will benefit from physiotherapy.

Connecting, belonging, empowering, and collaborating bring our spirit, our actions, and our ambitions into our eighth decade as an organisation. We are grateful to everyone who contributed to the development of this strategy, as we are to all who will enact it.

July 2022

Introduction

The world is experiencing an unprecedented level of change and uncertainty. Communities around the world continue to wrestle with the impact of an evolving global pandemic, new regional conflicts are emerging, and the human and environmental impacts of climate change continue to challenge our ability to respond locally and as an international community.

In this context, organisations are more dependent than ever on building and maintaining a strong strategic foundation that supports their ability to achieve their purpose and vision in a changing environment. It provides a way of ensuring that organisations understand the conditions in which they and their members are operating, and the ability to adapt their operating approach to respond to the opportunities and challenges that these present.

The World Physiotherapy 2022 and beyond strategic plan builds on the strengths of the previous plan, drawing on the work and consultation undertaken during that process, and expanding it through an extended and detailed process of analysis, review, and consultation. The new plan has been developed in close consultation with a broad cross-section of member organisations, regions, and subgroups, as well as the board and senior staff. Where appropriate it has also drawn on the knowledge and expertise of external stakeholders.

The new plan presents an updated vision, alongside a newly developed purpose statement, as the key building blocks on which the organisation will build its operational plans and goals. The purpose statement replaces the previous mission statement, providing a more contemporary foundation to support the organisation as it moves into this next phase of work.

In developing the new plan, World Physiotherapy has set out four core values that underpin and give focus to the broader plan. These values are: Connecting, Belonging, Empowering, Collaborating. The organisation has also identified three pillars of strategic focus around which operational activities will be focused.

Strategic context

The international environment in which physiotherapists work is dynamic, challenging and innovative. As the world around us changes, so too must the profession adapt to the changing needs of the community and the changing environment in which services are delivered. The profession of physiotherapy is also highly diverse across different countries/territories and regions, the differences between local health workforces reflecting a range of factors such as the size and maturity of the local workforce, the level of recognition the profession has in a particular health system, as well as a range of other local environmental and socioeconomic factors.

COVID-19 has shifted the importance of workforce preparedness and further amplified the need for physiotherapists to build and maintain a broad set of clinical skills. The pandemic has accelerated changes that have been evolving for some time about the way consumers engage in their own health decision-making. Many consumers now expect healthcare 'on demand', alongside service driven needs to adapt models of service delivery in the face of measures to protect health.

Individual physiotherapy associations have needed to work closely with governments and health systems to advocate for the role of physiotherapists, address barriers and opportunities arising from pandemic responses, and support their members to respond to the rapidly changing pandemic environment and the new infection control and clinical processes associated with it. While this has created challenges for professions, it has also provided opportunities to improve relationships with government and health sector stakeholders and increase the visibility of the profession.

There has also been a rapid acceleration in the take-up of digital innovations. Physiotherapists across the globe have commenced providing digital services, such as telerehabilitation, on a scale and volume not previously seen. Many of these digital innovations are likely to remain a permanent part of our systems. However, deeply ingrained issues of affordability and equity of access have also been amplified, both within countries/territories and globally. Addressing these issues, in an environment of fiscal restraint and recovery is likely to be a significant challenge for all members.

The recognition of the high levels of disparity that still impact many communities have prompted a renewed focus on collaboration, partnership, and service innovation. They have also helped to further focus public interest on the social determinants of health and the important role that they play in determining health outcomes. Conditions such as the places where people live, learn, work, and play, affect a wide range of health and quality of life, risks, and outcomes. Talking about these issues is now very much considered the domain of leading health professional organisations.

World Physiotherapy is well-placed to respond to these conditions and the opportunities they present. By continuing to build on the strengths of its diverse membership, by making effective use of its regional and subgroup structures, and by continuing to build its capacity to source, develop and share knowledge and resources for the profession, the global physiotherapy community will be well-placed to meet the challenges of the next five years and beyond.

Methodology

World Physiotherapy engaged an external consulting company to lead the development of the 2022 and beyond strategic plan. The consultants were charged with undertaking a broad-based consultation process, completing a thorough landscape analysis and desktop review of the current policy environment, and working with the board and staff on the development of a contemporary, future-focused strategic plan to support World Physiotherapy through its next phase of consolidation and growth. At the request of the World Physiotherapy board, extensive organisation-wide consultation was undertaken with the goal of engaging with, and reflecting, the diverse World Physiotherapy membership. This process is outlined below.

Phase 1. Landscape analysis and review of World Physiotherapy materials

During phase one, the consulting team completed a wide-ranging landscape analysis of the international policy environment, as well as reviewing a broad range of World Physiotherapy reports, resources, and policy documents. Through this process, the team was able to develop a high-level view of World Physiotherapy directions, threats, opportunities, and challenges. Key documents reviewed during this phase included the WCPT strategic plans.

Phase 2. Discovery and consultation phase

Phase two of the project focused on consultation with key internal stakeholders, member organisations, regions, and subgroups. To support engagement, material was translated into French and Spanish. Targeted engagement was also undertaken with a small number of external stakeholders relevant to the work of World Physiotherapy. The key activities undertaken during this phase were:

- 1. Interviews:** A total of 11 interviews were undertaken to identify and explore World Physiotherapy threats, opportunities, and challenges. This included seven one-on-one interviews with the World Physiotherapy board and four interviews with senior staff. These interviews informed the development of an initial draft strategy and the questions for the focus group sessions.
- 2. Discussion paper and survey:** A discussion paper was prepared, based on the initial findings, and distributed, along with a survey, to all member organisations, regions, and subgroups. The discussion paper offered opportunity to comment on the draft strategy including the values, strategic pillars and asked a series of key questions to direct strategy development. Responses were received from 38 member organisations, four regions, and eight subgroups.
- 3. Focus groups:** In parallel to the survey a total of nine focus groups were held. These included two board and senior staff sessions and five sessions with 19 member organisations (including one each for French and Spanish speakers), plus specific sessions for regions with three present, and another for subgroups with 12 represented.

Phase 3. Development

The survey responses were collated, translated where needed, and combined with feedback from the interviews and focus group sessions to develop an updated strategic plan. This plan was then tested with the board and senior staff, in preparation for the final phase.

Phase 4. Review and approval

The final draft plan was presented to the World Physiotherapy board meeting in April 2022 for review and ratification.

Our vision

Everyone has universal access to quality physiotherapy services where and when needed.

Our purpose

To represent physiotherapy across the globe, advancing our profession and advocating access for all, to improve health and wellbeing.

Our values

Connecting - We bring our community together through our member organisations, regions, subgroups, and the wider physiotherapy profession.

Belonging - We recognise and embrace the diversity in our community and our actions create a sense of belonging.

Empowering - We support our member organisations, regions, and subgroups to work in the service of others and create lasting change and impact.

Collaborating - We partner with our member organisations, regions, subgroups, and other stakeholders who share our values and objectives.

Strategic pillars

Strategic pillar 1: Evolving and sustainable

World Physiotherapy is a mature, financially sustainable organisation, with a tailored member offering that supports and builds the capacity of member organisations and regions.

Strategic pillar 2: Influence, reach, and impact

World Physiotherapy works collaboratively with member organisations, regions, subgroups and other stakeholders to advance the profession, increase access to physiotherapy services, and improve outcomes for consumers.

Strategic pillar 3: Knowledge connector

World Physiotherapy supports effective advocacy and evidence informed best practice by connecting member organisations, regions, subgroups, and others to high quality sources of knowledge, data and insights.

Strategic pillar 1: Evolving and sustainable

World Physiotherapy is a mature, financially sustainable organisation, with a tailored member offering that supports and builds the capacity of member organisations and regions.

By 2026, World Physiotherapy will:

1. Strengthen member organisations by developing differentiated products and services, reflective of member organisations' needs, maturity, and resource availability.
2. Provide targeted support to member organisations in the domains of advocacy, education, clinical standards development, and organisational governance.
3. Continue to safeguard World Physiotherapy financial sustainability to ensure continued capacity to invest in member organisations and regional support.
4. Diversify income streams to increase organisational capacity without increasing the burden on member organisations.

Context

World Physiotherapy comprises 125 member organisations from across the globe, collectively representing around 685,000 physiotherapists. Those member organisations and workforces are highly diverse in terms of their size, resourcing, and developmental maturity. World Physiotherapy member organisations have also identified the need for targeted support in core work areas such as advocacy, education and clinical standards. World Physiotherapy is seen as a key enabler for many member organisations, providing greater credibility, an important connection to other international physiotherapy workforces, as well as access to valuable products and services.

While the membership of World Physiotherapy recognises the challenge of meeting their diverse and varying needs, there is a strong desire to see the organisation continue to build its capacity to deliver differentiated offerings for members that recognise their different needs, levels of maturity, and resourcing. While some areas of advocacy focus, such as direct access to physiotherapy services, are a priority for a large proportion of members, some will be specific to particular regions or countries/territories. Balancing capacity and need will require World Physiotherapy to use its resources carefully.

World Physiotherapy has progressed significantly in developing its capacity to offer support and services relevant to its diverse membership. Recent work such as the development of entry level education competencies, support for developmental projects, and the COVID-19 resource hub demonstrate a capacity to meet those varying needs. Building on this work through the development of nuanced, tailored approaches to product development and service delivery will ensure that the organisation is succeeding in its goal of supporting strong member organisations.

Building capacity to support both more advanced member organisations, and those at earlier stages of development, will require World Physiotherapy to focus on growing its revenue base and ensuring the financial sustainability of its programmes and projects. Member organisations have indicated their support for an increased focus on diversification of income streams, but also highlighted the importance of balancing the interests of World Physiotherapy with that of member organisations.

Strategic pillar 2: Influence, reach, and impact

World Physiotherapy works collaboratively with member organisations, regions, subgroups, and other stakeholders to advance the profession, increase access to physiotherapy services, and improve outcomes for consumers.

By 2026, World Physiotherapy will:

1. Advocate for policy and practice changes that benefit the communities in which physiotherapy operates.
2. Support and equip member organisations to advocate for local advocacy priorities including:
 - direct access to physiotherapy services
 - advanced and expanded scopes of practice
 - telehealth and digital practice
 - rehabilitation, including post-Covid rehabilitation
3. Use evidence of the economic value of physiotherapy to strengthen the case for service funding.
4. Act as a broker to further the connections between member organisations and regions and facilitate the sharing of knowledge and expertise.
5. Collaborate with international agencies to achieve affordable, equitable access to physiotherapy services.
6. Improve global health outcomes by upholding, advocating, and amplifying the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

Context

While physiotherapists are recognised in many parts of the world as essential providers of clinical services, all member organisations identified the need for strong local and international voices representing the profession and increasing its reach and impact. Despite differences in the laws and regulations that govern physiotherapy practice in individual countries/territories, World Physiotherapy has significant opportunities to leverage its own resources and those of the global physiotherapy community to advance the profession. A global advocacy agenda focused on key areas such as scope of practice, advanced practice, direct access, consistent educational standards, access to, and use of, telehealth and digital practice will benefit the whole profession.

World Physiotherapy member organisations, regions, and subgroups identified a range of ways in which the organisation can support and empower member organisations and member bodies to undertake more effective advocacy. These included facilitating access to advocacy tools and resources, contemporary research, and case studies. It also included training and support for member organisations in how to undertake advocacy and strategic planning to support country/territory-specific advocacy agendas. Improving understanding of the economic value and impact of physiotherapy was identified as a key need across the membership.

Feedback from member organisations and regions emphasised that a key World Physiotherapy role was that of connector and collaborator, drawing in regional and local knowledge and sharing that more broadly. By strengthening World Physiotherapy capacity to draw on and facilitate the work of member organisations, regions, and subgroups, the influence and reach of the profession will be improved. That connection and collaboration role applies particularly also to international organisations, such as the World Health Organization, with the capacity to support and impact local outcomes.

Strategic pillar 3: Knowledge connector

World Physiotherapy supports effective advocacy and evidence informed best practice by connecting member organisations, regions, subgroups, and others to high quality sources of knowledge, data, and insights.

By 2026, World Physiotherapy will:

1. Play a lead role in evaluating and supporting access to global physiotherapy data to enable advocacy that has influence and impact locally and globally.
2. Establish a fit for purpose knowledge hub featuring high quality sources of knowledge, data, and insights that supports the work of member organisations, regions, subgroups, and individual practitioners.
3. Reimagine congress to ensure contemporary evidence, research, and knowledge is accessed, shared, and utilised across the global physiotherapy community.
4. Connect key stakeholders in the physiotherapy community to achieve advocacy influence and impact in local markets.
5. Continue to develop World Physiotherapy engagement and communications capacity to ensure accessibility, transparency, and timely and effective messaging with our stakeholders.

Context

World Physiotherapy is uniquely placed as a knowledge connector for the global physiotherapy community. The work undertaken by World Physiotherapy during 2020 and 2021 to collect, collate and disseminate COVID-19 information, showed the value and effectiveness of this role. World Physiotherapy member organisations highlighted the value of this work and identified opportunities to further grow the organisation's capacity to act as a connector and facilitator in relation to knowledge.

The World Physiotherapy congress is a highly valued part of the World Physiotherapy offering and an important platform that enables the physiotherapy community to share knowledge about emerging research, contemporary physiotherapy practice, and advocacy activities. By building its capacity to collate, curate, and share knowledge, and making this more accessible to member organisations and their members, World Physiotherapy will become a key enabler for knowledge-sharing.

World Physiotherapy also has an important role in enabling local advocacy efforts through enhancing access to relevant physiotherapy data and insights from the profession. Gathering and repackaging knowledge from member organisations, regions, and subgroups, as well as from key stakeholders, will benefit members. It will also provide opportunities to consider the development of products and offerings such as the annual membership census, to support policymakers to better understand the needs and capacities of individual physiotherapy workforces.

To act as an effective knowledge connector, World Physiotherapy will need to develop the necessary infrastructure to support a fit for purpose knowledge hub that ensures resources are accessible to members, and account for differences in local infrastructure and communications needs, as well as language differences.

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Connecting

Belonging

OUR VALUES

Empowering

Collaborating