

Chartered Surgical Facilities Orthopedic RFP

Background

Alberta Health Services (AHS) issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) seeking an expansion of publicly-funded orthopedic surgeries with chartered surgical facilities (CSFs) that will help manage increased surgical demand, and expand capacity in particularly high-needs areas, such as hip and knee surgeries.

Why is AHS moving forward with chartered surgical facilities in Alberta?

Timely access to surgeries is important to Albertans. CSFs are one way to support added capacity for publicly-funded surgeries as part of the pandemic recovery and as part of the Alberta Surgical Initiative (ASI) being implemented to ensure all Albertans receive scheduled surgeries within clinically appropriate wait times.

What is the value of the work that is to be contracted out?

A detailed valuation has been conducted as part of developing the RFP and analysis of costs and pricing will be a significant part of the bid evaluation process. We cannot release our valuation estimates publicly at this time, as we do not want to influence the bidding process and the pricing proposals that will be put forward by proponents.

When was the RFP posted? When will it close?

The RFP for orthopedic chartered surgical facilities was posted July 22, 2021. It will close September 2021.

What is the RFP process?

Alberta Health has established a Health Contracting Secretariat (HCS) based on a recommendation from the AHS Review Report completed by Ernst and Young (EY), to provide AHS with expert advice in the development of the RFP.

This competitive process is meant to explore mutual benefits between AHS and CSFs in building out a service delivery model which meets overall objectives and wait-time targets. Although the HCS provides expert advice for the RFP process, the final decision will be made by AHS.

How do you know there will be interested and qualified parties to deliver surgeries at these facilities?

In January 2020, AHS issued a Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEOI) which concluded that there were a number of qualified providers interested in delivering surgical procedures across Alberta, supporting the move to a RFP process.

How much of surgical services are already contracted?

We already collaborate with partners to perform a number of publicly-funded surgical procedures at our CSFs. In 2020, out of 290,000 surgeries performed annually for Albertans, CSFs provided 15 per cent, or 44,000 of these surgeries.

How many CSFs operate in Alberta?

There are about 79 CSFs in Alberta.

- 43 CSFs offer insured/publicly-funded surgeries.
- 36 CSFs offer non-insured surgeries, such as cosmetic surgery.

CSFs are required to meet all safety standards to be accredited by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta (CPSA) to perform both insured and non-insured surgical services in Alberta.

These facilities are required to comply with the Chief Medical Officer of Health directed guidelines and if they have an outbreak, patient and staff safety will be prioritized.

How many more orthopedic surgeries will CSFs be able to offer under this RFP?

Volumes within existing contracts have been increased for this year. The RFPs will continue to build further capacity by the end of this fiscal year and continuing for the next number of years.

Where are these facilities going to be contracted?

These facilities will be contracted in Edmonton and Calgary.

AHS is focused on increasing and improving Albertans access to all surgeries across the province, starting with those waiting longest first. While we are expanding procedures in Edmonton and Calgary, the ASI will provide opportunities to expand surgeries in all zones in time.

As we continue to implement strategies with the ASI, other specialties and zones will be included. We will continue to share information as it is available.

Will unions be informed and involved in the RFP process?

AHS and CSFs have dedicated staff and partners working with surgeons as part of the surgical team. AHS respects and appreciates that teams are concerned about the impact these changes may have on their roles, and on the many partners and patients they work with every day.

AHS staff are critical to the safe delivery of quality surgical services, and, as we continue to increase surgical access for Albertans, CSFs and members of the surgical team are essential. AHS is dedicated to ensuring patients are not impacted, and will work closely with CSFs during this transition.

What about other regional sites outside of Calgary and Edmonton?

This RFP is one of a number of strategies to expand surgical services in Alberta. Currently, regional sites represent a smaller number of surgeries, with shorter wait times than in Calgary and Edmonton. There will be additional opportunities for regional sites in 2021/2022 as part of a surgery backlog mitigation plan, and the ASI.

Are there enough surgical staff and support staff available to increase surgeries in the province?

Ensuring there is appropriate anesthesia coverage will be a shared responsibility between AHS and CSF locations.

AHS has experienced ongoing challenges for recruiting anesthesiologists across the province, and is dedicated to ensuring anesthesia services and supports are available as we increase surgeries in Alberta. Recruiting anesthesiologists is difficult across North America, particularly in areas outside of main urban centres.

AHS is aware of these issues, and we have a dedicated team in place focused on implementing solutions to support recruitment efforts for anesthesiology. The following solutions are underway:

- Aggressively pursuing both Canadian and internationally-trained physicians;
- Closely reviewing the local workforce in areas of need;
- Providing incentives for activity;
- Reviewing retirement and succession plans with local medical leaders and anesthesiologists;
- Optimizing locum experience and recruitment, and easing administrative burdens which could be a barrier for locums;
- Increasing collaboration between Zone clinical departments, and exploring rotation models from urban zones;
- Working with anesthesiologists to support flexible roles and scope of practice within AHS, if this increases availability;
- Exploring alternate models for anesthesia care;
- Enhancing recruitment efforts through enhanced marketing efforts;
- Consulting with post-graduate medical education (PGME) programs to enable work experience in non-urban facilities, increase the number of training positions, and exploring options for funding sponsored positions in PGME for anesthesiology; and
- Exploring options to improve the international sponsorship program.

AHS' goal is always to keep sites operating optimally, and to ensure that all patients receive safe anesthesia care. AHS values the work our anesthesiologists do every day to bring care to patients across the province and we remain committed to supporting recruitment efforts.