



**SOUTHWEST  
HEALTH & HUMAN  
SERVICES**

# Public Health Strategic Plan

**2024 - 2029**

**May 2024**



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### Board Members

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### Strategic Plan Facilitators

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# MISSION AND VALUES STATEMENT

## Mission

Southwest Health and Human Services is a multi-county health and human services agency committed to strengthening individuals, families, and communities by providing quality services in a respectful, caring, and cost-effective manner.

## Guiding Principles/Values

### Respect

We treat people with dignity and consideration, and we listen openly to integrate a variety of perspectives and create environments that foster trust.

### Honesty

We are truthful and responsible in our interactions with the public and each other. We demonstrate compassion, acceptance, and will safeguard dignity and confidentiality.

### Trust

We are people of character and integrity who keep our word and honor our commitments, resulting in a safe environment for staff and clients.

### Communication

We engage in timely, responsive, effective, and open information sharing to improve our work and maintain our reputation as a trusted source for program and service delivery.

### Teamwork

We are committed to common goals based on open and honest communication while showing concern and support for each other.

### Flexibility

We are an organization willing to learn, create innovative ideas, and adapt to the ever-changing environment while striving for a healthy work-life balance.

# INTRODUCTION

In late 2023 Public Health supervisors at SWHHS approached the Southwest Regional Development Commission (SRDC) to help them scope out a strategic plan process. Public Health was experiencing a significant staff shortage while also anticipating new funding to expand services and build capacity as an organization.

SRDC facilitators met with public health supervisors on October 10th and November 14th in 2023 to assist with determining the process and deliverables for strategic planning while also helping them brainstorm initial goals and action steps to address the immediate need for more public health nurses. After determining the scope, Public Health supervisors decided the SRDC would conduct the planning process.

Since not all staff would be available to attend large planning sessions, the first step in the strategic planning process was to interview 16 frontline workers in Public Health. SRDC facilitators conducted interviews in Pipestone on February 26, 2024, Redwood Falls on February 29, 2024, and Marshall on March 5, 2024. Interview responses were included in the brainstorming sessions with the large groups and the full record of staff interviews is included in **Appendix A**.

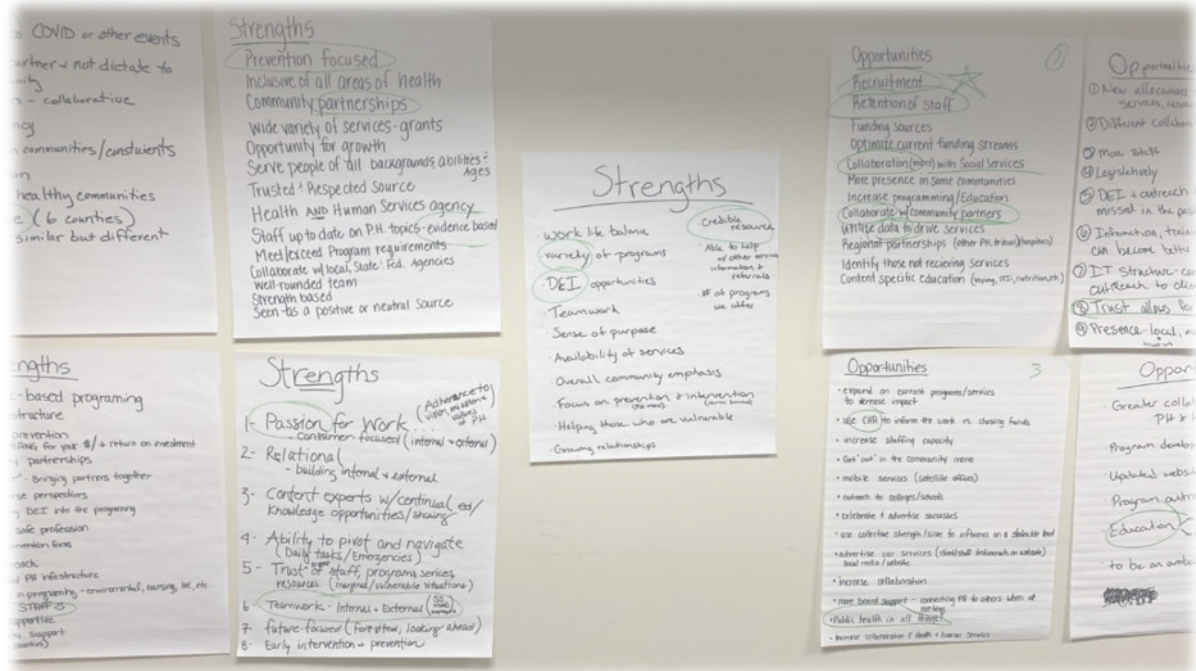
Board members, supervisors, and staff engaged in two large-group strategic planning sessions that resulted in two large goal areas with top-priority objectives under each area. Then each of those objectives has a detailed action plan for implementation.

The strategic plan includes these elements:

- Mission and Values Statements from the SWHHS Strategic Plan
- Situation assessment (Interviews and SOAR analysis)
- Detailed goals with action plans for each
- Appendix with public health staff interview responses

# SOAR ANALYSIS

In March of 2024, SWHHS staff and board members were asked to participate in a Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results (SOAR) analysis to get input on organizational strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results. Data was gathered through input sessions and staff interviews. The staff involved in the interviews were not involved in the SOAR analysis directly, but their input was used to contribute to and confirm the outcomes of this analysis. A snapshot of the SOAR brainstorm session is listed below, along with some staff interview results.



## Strengths

### Internal

- Teamwork
- Passion
- Variety
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion
- Great staff

### External

- Teamwork
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion
- Presence
- Response
- Credible resource
- Partnerships
- Prevention
- Trusted

## Opportunities

### Internal

- Recruitment/retention
- Collaboration with social services
- Information Technology and Artificial Intelligence
- Use Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan
- Utilize data to improve services

### External

- Collaboration with community partners
- Information Technology and Artificial Intelligence
- Reach more people with programs
- Education
- Expand trust
- Public health in all things

## Aspirations:

### Internal

- Increase/retain staff
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion
- Sustainable and optimized funding

### External

- Public Health is included in wider community and county planning meetings
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion
- “Healthiest People in Minnesota”
- Stronger partnerships/collaborations
- Increase in mobile services/remote presence
- Seen as experts in community – sought out

## Results

### Internal

- Fully staffed/staff retention
- Staff Diversity
- Competitive wages/benefits
- Sustainable funding

### External

- Established relationships/partnerships
- Increased physical and mental health outcomes – less preventable deaths
- Client satisfaction
- “Healthiest people in Minnesota”

## STAFF INPUT - INTERVIEWS

### Strengths:

- 1.) Internal Teamwork/good relationships
- 2.) Staff Training
- 3.) Customer Service
- 4.) Programs

### Opportunities:

- 1.) Marketing
- 2.) Communications/onboarding
- 3.) Staffing
- 4.) Partnerships
- 5.) Service expansion

### Aspirations:

- 1.) Marketing
- 2.) Service Expansion
- 3.) Software
- 4.) Partnerships
- 5.) Staffing

### Results:

- 1.) Marketing
- 2.) Partnerships
- 3.) Service Expansion
- 4.) Staffing
- 5.) Software
- 6.) Communications



# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Input from the staff interviews and two large group planning sessions informed the strategic priorities for Public Health over the next five years. Participants categorized their objectives into two goal areas with their respective objectives:

## A. Workplace Excellence

- 1A. Provide high-quality education and training opportunities for staff.
- 2A. Improve staff recruitment and retention.
- 3A. Improve coordination and collaboration with internal partners.

## B. Community Engagement and Collaboration

- 1B. Increase awareness of SWHHS Public Health work in the community.
- 2B. Identify new and enhance existing partnerships and levels of engagement.
- 3B. Increase and improve community presence.
- 4B. Enhance and expand services to best meet the needs of our communities.

## Communication and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Goals

Most participants in the planning process identified having strong internal and external communications as key to success. Rather than having communication as a goal area, communications objectives are integrated into the two major goal areas listed above (A and B). Participants agreed that they should think through the lens of DEI in all their decisions about goals, objectives, and action steps. DEI should provide the framework upon which everything else is built.



## Goal Area A: Workplace Excellence

### Objective 1A: Provide high-quality education and training opportunities for staff.

**Pressing Issue:** Public health programs are ever-changing and we want staff to feel well-trained and prepared to implement high-quality services.

**Most Accountable Person(s):** SWHHS Public Health Supervisor Team

#### What will success look like?

Staff will feel competent in their duties and will feel supported.

#### How will we know we are making progress?

Staff will report higher satisfaction levels in reviews, surveys, and conversations with peers and supervisors.

Action step/task	Person(s) responsible	Timeframe/Deadline	Status
Maintain multiple avenues for staff to receive training	PH Supervisors & Staff	Continuous	
Seek formal and informal input from staff at regular intervals about training/education needs	HR & PH Supervisors	Continuous	
Systematically document staff education and training	HR & PH Supervisors	Continuous	
Explore student loan or tuition reimbursement programs.	HR, Executive Team, and Board	1-2 years	

**Objective 2A: Improve staff recruitment and retention.**

**Pressing Issue:** Public health nursing positions are difficult to fill and retain.

**Most Accountable Person(s):** SWHHS Public Health Supervisor Team and HR

**What will success look like?**

When positions open, a diverse and well-qualified pool of applicants applies, and supervisors can hire during the first round. Staff are satisfied at work in Public Health.

**How will we know we are making progress?**

Staff will report higher satisfaction levels in reviews, surveys, and conversations with peers and supervisors. The number, quality, and diversity of applicants for open positions will increase.

Action step/task	Person(s) responsible	Timeframe/Deadline	Status
Maintain flexibility at work and highlight it in communications	HR & PH Supervisors	Continuous	Maintain flexibility at work and highlight it in communications
Explore options to cover front desk support	Executive Team	1 – 2 years	
Continue to offer competitive benefits and highlight them in external events and communications	HR, PH Supervisors and Communications Specialist	Continuous	
Increase compensation to be competitive	Board, Labor Union	Annual evaluation	
Explore offering longevity incentives	Board & Executive Team	1 – 2 years	
Customize benefits package based on priorities or needs of the employees	Board, Insurance Committee	Continuous	
Partner with regional colleges and universities to strengthen and expand educational opportunities such as the SMSU RN to BSN program	HR & PH Supervisors	1-2 years; Continuous	

**Objective 3A: Improve coordination and collaboration with internal partners.**

**Pressing Issue:** Poor collaboration within the agency leads to gaps in services with the clients/partners we serve in the community.

**Most Accountable Person(s):** Agency-wide

**What will success look like?** Staff will report feeling knowledgeable about other services offered within the agency. They will work well together to ensure “no wrong door” for clients.

**How will we know we are making progress?** Staff are familiar with all services provided within the agency and referrals would increase.

Action step/task	Person(s) responsible	Timeframe/Deadline	Status
Create presentations on the various programs offered and share through various platforms and communications	Head of each program	1-2 years	
Coordinate within the agency so that there is “no wrong door” for clients	Agency-wide	Continuous	

## Goal Area B: Community Engagement and Collaboration

### Objective 1B: Increase awareness of SWHHS Public Health work in the community.

**Pressing Issue:** “Public Health is more than just WIC.” Most of the public are unaware of the various programs that Public Health offers.

**Most Accountable Person(s):** Communications Specialist

#### What will success look like?

The public is aware of the work, sees the value, and supports it through volunteerism and advocacy to their elected officials.

#### How will we know we are making progress?

We will see an increase of referrals to Public Health programs and increased collaboration with community partners.

Action step/task	Person(s) responsible	Timeframe/Deadline	Status
Create a communications plan for social media, outreach efforts, website, elevator pitches, presentations, etc.	Communications Specialist	1 – 2 years	
Create and implement an outreach plan to include tabling at job/health fairs, community events, community presentations, etc.	Communications Specialist	1 year, then ongoing	
Utilize data such as Community Health Assessment/Community Health Improvement Plan to determine priorities	PH Supervisors, Communications Specialist and staff	Continuous	
Create accessible outreach materials	Communications Specialist	2 years, continuous	

**Objective 2B: Identify new and enhance existing partnerships and levels of engagement.**

**Pressing Issue:** Most community partners are not aware of the various programs that Public Health offers.

**Most Accountable Person(s):** Agency-wide

**What will success look like?** Staff will work with a variety of partners at the appropriate level of engagement based on the roles that they play.

**How will we know we are making progress?** Community collaboration and engagement will increase.

Action step/task	Person(s) responsible	Timeframe/Deadline	Status
Identify both current and potential partnerships and their level of engagement	PH Supervisors and staff	1 year	
Explore ways to enhance and improve partnerships	All staff	Continuous	
Schedule outside agencies and partners to present to Public Health staff	Head of each program	Continuous	

**Objective 3B: Increase and improve community presence.**

**Pressing Issue:** Public Health is not as accessible as it could be in the community.

**Most Accountable Person(s):** SWHHS Supervisor Team

**What will success look like?** Staff are embedded in partner organizations, and they work from additional office or mobile locations.

**How will we know we are making progress?** All communications follow branding design, and staff are seen regularly in public for outreach events and to provide services.

Action step/task	Person(s) responsible	Timeframe/Deadline	Status
Create and maintain a Public Health brand	Communications Specialist	Ongoing	
Explore need to embed staff with community partners	PH Supervisor Team	2 – 3 years	
Attend community events such as health fairs and career days	Communications Specialist	Ongoing	
Perform a needs assessment of office locations and/or satellite mobile units and hours of service	PH Supervisor Team	2 - 3 years	

**Objective 4B: Enhance and expand services to best meet the needs of our communities.**

**Pressing Issue:** There are gaps in services in the service region.

**Most Accountable Person(s):** SWHHS Public Health Management

**What will success look like?** Services will be tailored to the needs of the community.

**How will we know we are making progress?** We are utilizing the Community Health Assessment to drive services.

Action step/task	Person(s) responsible	Timeframe/Deadline	Status
Use Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan to prioritize services	PH Supervisor Team and staff	Continuous	
Explore funding opportunities to address rising issues and address top Public Health needs	PH Supervisor Team and Communications Specialist	Continuous	
Explore opportunities to integrate Public Health and Social Services from a consumer lens	PH Supervisor Team and Executive Team	Continuous	



## Implementation and Communication of Plan

The 2024-2029 strategic plan is a living document. Embedding regular review of the goals, objectives, and action steps into regular unit, supervisor, and board meetings will ensure that this document helps the organization continue to make progress toward its mission. Time and resources are limited. This strategic plan will help make the best use of both.

## Linkages

SRDC staff borrowed some of the formatting, along with the mission and values statement from the SWHHS Strategic Plan. This Public Health Strategic Plan complements and sometimes repeats goals and actions from the SWHHS plan, but it maintains a strong focus on what staff in Public Health can control. During strategic planning sessions, participants were asked to look at everything through the Public Health lens, while acknowledging that they were part of a larger organization. Since the Public Health Plan is linked to the SWHHS Strategic Plan, it is also linked with the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) and the Performance Management Plan.



## Appendix A – Interview Responses

What is SWHHS Public Health doing well?
Programming – WIC program is great. They have good outreach, speed and outcomes. The vaccine program works well. They work with schools and other key partners and are good at reaching those without a lot of resources.
We serve our clients really well. Good at connecting clients and answering their questions.
People get along well and have good teamwork. Staff have a good rapport with clients and provide high-quality customer service.
Everyone is really friendly and tries to help everyone that comes in. We try to meet their needs where we can and help them find other resources if we can't.
Feels like they have a good variety of programs. There's good training for the staff.
The programs operate well and provide awesome services to our community.
DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion) trainings are great because they help us be better about meeting clients where they're at. We get to know our biases and how to put them aside to better serve people in our community. Public health is also doing a new community survey to assess community needs. It's great that they're thinking ahead into the future and taking into consideration the changing needs of the community.
SWHHS public health has lots of programs and does all of them well.
They have the DEI programs that have been good, identifying the issues that have been going on. They are required, which is beneficial for everyone. The Marshall facility is nice, and we have regular meetings with each other. People bring many different viewpoints and ideas.
Customer service is good at meeting needs. Making sure there's always someone available. Communication amongst employees is good overall. Very organized with planning during the pandemic.
Our environmental health and inspection programs are done on time and we all work well together as a team. Good about getting information and licenses to people in a timely manner. Good about answering questions.
Providing a variety of programs in the communities we serve.
We work well as a team. While we are short-staffed, we are covering everything the best we can so there's no interruption in services.
Doing well with working on community engagement. Focused on the CLT teams. Received good training on Public Health when she first started.

I'm impressed with how well they communicate with staff. I feel I'm informed about exactly what I need to know. I'm given all the tools to be successful.

We continue to fulfill program needs despite not being fully staffed. Good customer service and responsiveness to community needs. We support our employees and are good at leveraging the services of our partners.

### What aspects of your work do you like the most?

Enjoys the positive work environment and the public health team. Everyone gets along well and the staff are a wealth of knowledge. Great working with people who are passionate about public health. People here smile and it's nice to see happy faces.

Enjoys working with the families. A key reason to work for public health is getting to engage in communities and stay with families over a long-term period of time. Getting to watch kids grow and develop. A lot of programs so the work stays "fresh." Gets to do something different every day.

Likes being trained in on coordinating services and case management with the nursing home. Enjoys being a resource to people. Likes the good benefits and the flexibility of the job.

Being able to go out and meet members. Helping them find the answers that would help them best meet their needs.

Works with a great group of people, and the opportunity for trainings is great. One of the best parts is getting to work with the clients.

Likes doing preventative work vs reactive. Likes helping people and providing services for them.

Likes working with people and being more hands-on. Gets to work with the refugee population, immunizations, tuberculosis, disease prevention and control, and case management for health plans in nursing homes.

Likes being able to help people. Does lots of CTC (child and teen check-ups) calling, and it's a really good feeling when those make a difference.

Works a lot with WIC and MNChoices. Loves to hear about the families and their lives and being able to help with food, clothing, and education. We are not only helping clients, but helping them be successful in the community.

"I love working with families. A lot of them have a great need for education, resources and I get to direct families to those resources. "Happy that she gets continuous training and educational opportunities.

"I like the variety. I have days where I'm doing lab work. Other days I'm doing inspections or out in the field in other ways." The flexibility is great.

"I love educating clients. There's so much gratification in that so they can live healthier lifestyles."

"I am big into the education piece of it." I love the lactation consultations. I love the longevity of the clients that you see.

Enjoys the opportunities for professional development and engagement with community partners.

Loves connecting with people about programs and working with kids. Meets people she normally wouldn't.

Likes being proactive vs reactive. Likes positive local interactions. Likes being a champion for plans and strategies that promote public health and likes working with data that supports the work.

### What would you improve about the organization concerning Public Health work?

Market the programs better. Didn't know much about public health programs before beginning work with PH. Example: Advertise the car seat program better. Get resources out into the community better.

Need to improve staffing numbers, especially in nursing. "We can't keep people." Lack of structure in the programs we run. There's not a set procedure or policy for many of the programs we run. Just doing what the last person said to do. It would be nice to have a common set of guidelines/procedures in the Sharepoint.

More public services announcements and community education. People only think of WIC. We are not just for "income eligible" clients.

Getting the word out on what programs are available to people in the community. All programs should be addressed and advertised better. There's information about some but others don't have as much information.

More community outreach should be done, so more people know about us and about the programs we offer – maybe doing booths at events, being in parades, etc. Getting out there and making ourselves known.

We should make all of our services available throughout the six counties. Everyone should have access to immunizations in all counties, to cut down on issues that arise such as transportation. SWHHS public health can also improve on being more visible and more noticed in our communities. Many people don't know about the car seat program.

Restrengthen community partnerships. SWHHS public health really had a good handle on that pre-Covid and had partnerships with different clinics, hospitals, schools, and businesses. These partnerships are now weak. Staff turnovers are also increasing, whereas it used to be people stayed at jobs for longer, so it was easier to keep up partnerships. The website could also be improved, with more resource links. Social media should focus more on other services – not just WIC, and just in general have more information about our programs.

Public health should have more of the programs that are needed, such as mental health and dental health – those are big needs in the community that SWHHS public health doesn't focus on as much and doesn't have much funding for. Communication between the counties could be improved. Not all counties are always in the know about what's happening in other counties. The services provided should be the same in all counties.

A lot of programs have changed, but it's driven by needs in the community. We used to write more grants to help clients and it would be nice to do more of that again. Excited about a new communications person that will be hired. Alleviate the staff shortage.

A lot of the retention issues surround low pay. A nurse with 10 years of experience who is NOT in public health will come in and have to start at the beginning. Is there a way to credit their experience?

Happy in the EH environment. Not much to improve from his perspective.
Advertisement. So many programs that the community doesn't know about that we offer. When I started, all I knew about was WIC."
Being fully staffed would be nice. Increase pay to increase staff retention. Lactation for the population that we serve does not get a lot of attention. When families have issues, not a lot of services for those uninsured. Has to be out of pocket. Have classes for lactation, and childcare, not just during WIC consultations.
Need to raise more awareness about our programs. Need to improve communications with all stakeholders, internally and externally.
The SharePoint page is a "cluster." Onboarding was a little rough and could be streamlined -- especially with systems that everybody uses.
"I wish that we could have more clout." Need better ways to serve and connect with non-English speakers.

<b>How can Public Health better serve its communities?</b>
Market available programs better such as about dental resources and car seats. Increase awareness about income guidelines
Provide pregnancy and STD testing services and explore other potential services. Get the word out better to families. "They only know us for WIC." Also, better referrals to partners and vice versa. Another item to note—Rock County is struggling a lot with suicides and mental health. Mentioned several suicides in the last couple of years.
Offer the flu shot to everyone, not just those without insurance.
Offer patients the option to sign things electronically. Also having a texting option would make communication easier for many patients. Additionally offering remote care options – like telehealth. Has heard requests for all these things from the community.
By being more involved in the community – finding out the community’s needs and advertising the services that SWHHHS public health offers.
Should provide all services in all counties or provide transportation for them to get there.
Public Health needs to see what the community needs and wants. They also need to have a navigator for MA (Medical Assistance), because it’s overwhelming for people to navigate on their own.
Public health can help more in the mental health and dental health areas.
Sometimes public health nurses are doing tasks that could be done by someone with less education. Improve the referral process for dental care. We need to be out in the communities educating about vaping, diabetes, blood pressure, car seats, etc. "Get our feet out in the dirt and out in the community."
Need to do more outreach on what we do. Get into the clinics and the hospitals.
With environmental health, did not see many needs for improvements.
Get out in the community and form partnerships. Have event days, however, that may be defined. Tabling, booths, etc.

The non-English speakers need a dedicated health interpreter, especially for Spanish and Karen. Offer current staff the ability to become an interpreter.
Send the message that we are accessible and we won't judge you.
Marketing would be good. Everyone should know what the "Public Health Brand" is that needs it. Facebook posts are "clunky" looking.
Find a way to offer mental health services. Need to find a way to address transportation needs in the region. Work on the social determinants of health.

<b>What goals or action steps should be included in the five-year strategic plan?</b>
Increase funding and resources for marketing efforts. Create a measurable goal to increase presentations to the local senior center, the clinic, and other groups.
Have an in-person interpreter for some events or home visits. Create an awareness-raising campaign.
Change the winter weather policy that requires people to use vacation time if they cannot drive into work due to weather. Need more outreach with MinnWest as a partner, "it's right across the street." Educate the local clinics about the programs we offer.
Find a way to get the word out on what's available, and how to access it. Also, to educate other staff on all of the programs available, so they can help refer people if needed.
Mental health is a major issue. There are programs, but maybe there should be more programs, or they should be more well-known in the community. SWHHS public health should work more on making these services known in the community.
Focusing on education and prevention services surrounding mental health, and marijuana, tobacco, and vaping programs. Improving communication with all of our communities and within public health – so the employees know what to do with different information and policies as they arise.
Plans for keeping up with technology, like using texting for appt reminders. Video DOT (Direct Observation Therapy) has finally been established and has made it easier and more efficient for the employees. Public health needs to do more of this – using technology as much as possible to save money and time. There should also be a focus on Staff retention to be able to keep all of the public health programs.
Finding out what the clients and community needs and making a plan to follow through. Also to make sure all employees feel valued.
Hire bilingual staff. Utilize PH Nurses for their skills and have others handle the tasks that don't need their qualifications. Get an aide to do other tasks, for example, when the nurse is doing the WIC appointment.
More Outreach activities such as job fairs, county fairs, clinics, hospitals, and human services.
Create a plan to engage the community around legalized cannabis.
More events in the community. Be realistic about expectations.

Hire and/or train interpreters or bilingual nurses. Increase compensation for nurses.
Evaluate the public perceptions of public health and find what the community wants to hear about, have, or learn. Improve health literacy -- assess and improve, which feeds into health equity.
Create an instructional design for step-by-step onboarding processes to the organization and to different programs. Organize the Sharepoint dashboard.
Recruit staff that are bilingual or offer language training to current staff.