



Public Health Council
of the Upper Valley

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

Strategic Vision

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Public Health Council of the Upper Valley (PHC)

is recognized by the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services as one of the state's 13 regional public health advisory councils, and it is the only entity in the Upper Valley dedicated to bridging public health systems across New Hampshire and Vermont. PHC fosters partnerships among municipal leaders, health and human service agencies, schools, businesses, and community advocates. Its network now includes more than 200 partners working together to identify regional needs, share resources, and improve our collective ability to provide adequate and appropriate services.

In January 2025, the PHC initiated a comprehensive strategic planning process. In developing the strategic plan, PHC and its partners focused on setting clear priorities for the next three years while also considering a longer-term horizon (7-10 years) during which they aim to strengthen the region's public health infrastructure. Over 10 months, PHC engaged a wide range of partners, community organizations, municipal officials, board members, public health professionals, and regional leaders – to gather insights and assess evolving public health challenges and opportunities. Through surveys, interviews, and facilitated discussions, PHC connected with our diverse partners across the Upper Valley to create a comprehensive plan to respond to both current and future public health challenges.

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PHC BY THE NUMBERS

PHC connected with more than

200

individuals across the Upper Valley to create a comprehensive plan to respond to both current and future public health challenges.



Mission:

To improve the health of Upper Valley residents through shared public health initiatives and services within a network of community stakeholders.



Vision:

Working together, our Upper Valley community will be healthy, safe, supportive, and vital.



Key Decisions Made in the Strategic Planning Process

Over the course of the strategic planning process, the board and staff made several pivotal decisions to sharpen PHC's focus, strengthen organizational sustainability, and respond more effectively to community needs.

Strategic Priorities for FY2026-2028:

1. Expand Community Education and Engagement
2. Advance Health Equity
3. Strengthen Local Governance and Municipal Public Health Capacity
4. Advance Innovation and Integration through the Public Health Program Incubator
5. Strengthen Organizational Infrastructure

PHC's Priorities and Strategies

FOCUS AREA 1: Expand Community Education and Engagement

By improving health literacy and supporting residents with clear, trustworthy resources, PHC can help bridge gaps in understanding, build trust, and strengthen the community's capacity to respond to emerging health challenges.

Approach: To expand and strengthen community health education and engagement, PHC will:

- ▶ **Build and maintain a trusted information hub** with user-friendly, evidence-based resources and tools tailored to the Upper Valley.
- ▶ **Establish relationships with stakeholders in new sectors and deepen those with existing coalition partners** (e.g., business, education, municipal leaders) to expand reach and influence.
- ▶ **Hire a dedicated .5 FTE community engagement/health education staff member** by the end of 2026 to coordinate efforts, support partners, and implement strategies consistently.

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Key Outcomes:

- ▶ Improved health literacy and increased community capacity to make informed decisions during both everyday health situations and public health emergencies.
- ▶ A more resilient, connected region where residents feel empowered and supported in making healthy choices.

FOCUS AREA 2: Advance Health Equity

Persistent disparities in access, outcomes, and representation continue to impact BIPOC, LGBTQ+, low-income, and other historically marginalized communities across the region. PHC is positioned to help ensure that every individual has a fair and just opportunity to live a healthy life.

Approach: To advance equity, PHC will:

- ▶ **Hire a Health Equity Program Director (1 FTE)** by the end of 2026 to support UVEAR and implement health equity program strategies.
- ▶ **Mobilize community leadership and power** by investing in BIPOC leadership development and capacity building, and by incubating initiatives from historically excluded communities.
- ▶ **Advance systems-level change** by facilitating connections between historically marginalized communities, particularly isolated rural residents, and institutional partners – such as local hospitals and social service organizations – to create policy and practice shifts that reduce inequities and strengthen conditions for health across the region.
- ▶ **Build accountability and transparency systems** for PHC and partner organizations by ensuring that the needs and barriers of underserved and oppressed groups are central to every step of our planning and decision-making.

Expected Outcomes:

- ▶ Increased visibility, leadership, and influence of BIPOC and other marginalized community members in shaping public health initiatives.
- ▶ Stronger partnerships across sectors leading to collective action on the root causes of inequity, including transportation, housing, and healthcare access.
- ▶ A more inclusive, representative, and resilient regional public health system.

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Guiding Principles:

- ▶ We operate to build a strong and effective public health system that serves the needs of the residents of the Upper Valley.
- ▶ We partner with community members and organizations who share our commitment to community health.
- ▶ We build upon our past experience and the strengths existing within our organization.
- ▶ We seek to address health disparities in our communities.
- ▶ We challenge ourselves and our partners to increase diversity and inclusion within our network and in the services available to our communities.
- ▶ We are ready to support emerging public health needs in our communities and respond to new opportunities.

FOCUS AREA 3:

Strengthen Local Governance and Municipal Public Health Capacity

Local officials—often serving in multiple roles with limited resources—play a critical role in emergency preparedness, housing safety, elder care, and other interconnected priorities. By equipping municipalities with practical tools, clear guidance, and opportunities to collaborate across town and state lines, PHC can help build the skills and systems needed to protect and promote public health.

Our Approach: To build local governance and public health capacity, we will:

- ▶ **Build practical capacity for local officials** by offering tools, training, and opportunities for cross-municipal collaboration, information sharing, and consistent engagement.
- ▶ **Align support with local priorities** by helping municipalities define their role in addressing local health needs and strengthening collaboration with nonprofits and service partners.
- ▶ **Advance regional preparedness and coordination** by convening regular cross-town discussions to strengthen public health emergency readiness and ensure plans and systems are in place for coordinated response.
- ▶ **Hire 1 FTE Municipal Public Health Program Manager** by the end of 2028 to oversee implementation, provide technical assistance, and sustain municipal engagement.

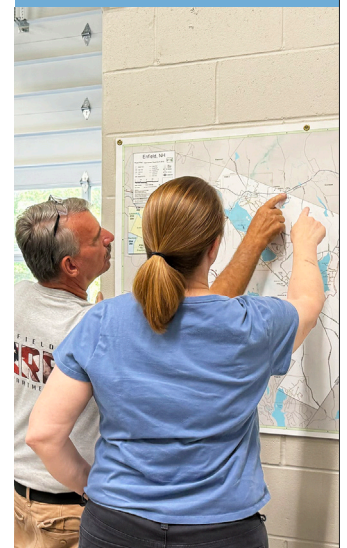
Expected Outcomes:

- ▶ Clear, practical tools and training are available to towns, leading to measurable improvements in implementation of public health functions.
- ▶ Early-adopter towns demonstrate collaborative models that can be replicated across the region.
- ▶ Stronger referral networks connect municipal officials with public health and human service partners, reducing service gaps, and regular cross-town convenings create a culture of collaboration and improve readiness for emergencies.
- ▶ A stronger, more resilient local public health infrastructure capable of addressing both routine and emergent challenges.

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By equipping municipalities with practical tools, clear guidance, and opportunities to collaborate across town and state lines, PHC can help build the skills and systems needed to protect and promote public health.





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By creating an incubator that serves both grassroots initiatives and established organizations, PHC will position the region to move beyond fragmented public health efforts toward a culture of collaboration, innovation, and accountability that benefits both organizations and the communities they serve.



FOCUS AREA 4: Advance Innovation and Integration Through the Public Health Program Incubator

The Upper Valley’s public health landscape is marked by limited resources, fragmented systems, and increasing community needs. Grassroots initiatives often face barriers such as limited funding and administrative burdens, while established organizations struggle with siloed service delivery and system inefficiencies. By creating an incubator that serves both ends of this spectrum, PHC will position the region to move beyond fragmented public health efforts toward a culture of collaboration, innovation, and accountability that benefits both organizations and the communities they serve.

Approach: To expand innovation and integration through the incubator, we will:

- ▶ **Formalize the Public Health Program Incubator** as a core PHC program and expand our current efforts to provide fiscal sponsorship, technical assistance, and administrative infrastructure for emerging, community-led initiatives.
- ▶ **Integrate the GUVIST initiative** as a core PHC program in 2026, with continued focus on guiding partners through network development, sustainability planning, and evaluation.
- ▶ **Expand administrative capacity by hiring a full-time Business Administrator** by 2028 to lead the Incubator and support PHC’s financial and operational sustainability.

Expected Outcomes:

- ▶ Increased sustainability for emerging public health initiatives through diversified funding and shared services.
- ▶ Residents who access multiple services experience more seamless, consistent, and effective support.
- ▶ A stronger regional culture of collaboration and integration that improves both organizational effectiveness and community health outcomes.

FOCUS AREA 5: Strengthen Organizational Infrastructure

As PHC takes on more complex initiatives, it must be supported not only by a well-informed, engaged, and strategically focused board, but also by sufficient staff capacity to implement the leadership’s vision and sustain key functions. Building this capacity now will help ensure that PHC’s leadership—board and staff alike—are equipped to effectively meet future challenges.

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Our Approach: To strengthen governance and capacity, we will:

- ▶ **Strengthen governance structures and practices** by clarifying roles, updating policies, and embedding DEI in board structures and practices.
- ▶ **Embed accountability by assessing board effectiveness and tracking progress** on governance and sustainability goals.
- ▶ **Expand development and communications capacity by investing in dedicated staff** to strengthen fundraising, outreach, and visibility.
- ▶ **Bolster staff recruitment and retention** by reviewing compensation packages and implementing succession planning for the next Executive Director.

Expected Outcomes:

- ▶ A strategically focused, engaged, and diverse board providing strong organizational leadership.
- ▶ Expanded capacity in development, communications, and administration to sustain growth.
- ▶ A stronger organizational backbone that enables PHC to deepen its impact and respond confidently to future challenges.

Accountability & Monitoring Plan

The Executive Director has overall accountability for plan implementation and is responsible for ensuring that resources, staffing, and partnerships remain aligned with the strategic goals.

Within the Board of Directors, a Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee will review quarterly progress reports prepared by staff, monitor key performance indicators, and bring forward recommendations to the full board regarding course corrections or resource allocation. At board meetings, updates on strategic plan implementation will be included as a regular agenda item, with at least one meeting each year dedicated to a deeper review of progress and potential course corrections.

Each year, staff will prepare annual work plans tied directly to the strategic plan's goals, activities, and intended outcomes. A dashboard will be maintained to track key performance indicators for each strategic goal, such as community engagement numbers, funds raised, and equity metrics. This dashboard will be updated quarterly by staff and reviewed by the board.

PARTNER TESTIMONIAL



“The PHC is our go-to health expert in the region when we are working on various projects, and as we continue to navigate the housing crisis... we need the voice of the PHC at the table to ensure we are looking at this issue in respect to all people, all sectors, and all solutions.”



Contact Information:

Alice R. Ely, MPH
Executive Director
Public Health Council
of the Upper Valley

Alice.ely@uvpublichealth.org

603-523-7100

Uvpublichealth.org

