



PUBLIC
HEALTH

Strategic Plan

2023-2025

Cerro Gordo County
Department of Public Health

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Strategic Planning is an opportunity for the representatives of an organization to develop a customized trajectory into the future and define the priorities to focus on to get there. The Strategic Planning process is comprised of the analysis of the current state and emerging issues, brainstorming of innovative initiatives and providing the steppingstones on how to march boldly into the future.

CG Public Health's greatest resource is the passionate staff who were the driving force of creating this strategic plan. Employees have exhibited great resiliency over the past three years while continuing to champion public health through unimaginable disruptions to both professional and personal life. The department experienced emergency relocation, a global pandemic, a significant data loss and unprecedented workforce turnover including a changeover of leadership twice. While the previous strategic planning cycle was difficult, staff were ready, willing and as passionate as ever to reimagine the direction of our department for the next three years.

We are eager and motivated to begin this 3-year cycle to meet the needs of our community, improve our impact on public health practice and share our passion for improving health with an emerging workforce. We are excited to share the outcomes of our strategic planning process with you.

After the extensive analysis of survey results; interview and workshop notes; and documents developed by participants during the workshops, four main themes arose and were identified as our overarching priorities.

These priorities are:

- 1. Workforce and Culture**
- 2. Efficiencies**
- 3. Interactive Public Health**
- 4. Leading through Population Health**

For additional information on how these priorities came to be and details on our plan to implement this Strategic Plan please continue reading. The work completed during the 3-year strategic plan cycle is accomplished through a drive to meet the needs of our community and a passion and pride our staff have in providing support to our communities to live their healthiest lives.

BACKGROUND

CG Public Health has implemented strategic planning cycles for over 25 years and utilizes brainstorming and prioritization to revolutionize their approach to the future and hone in on the direction the department will take to meet health needs head on.

The strategic planning process was facilitated by an external facilitator from Bluebird Sky Solutions, who specializes in organizational strategic planning, using decision-making frameworks to bring future into focus and is a certified Strategic Doing workshop leader. She guided the department through the 2019-2022 planning cycle and brought great insight and experience to this current strategic planning cycle.

The department operates through an integrated system of planning to ensure the needs of the community are met and it is functioning at the highest standards possible. This system is built on a network of the Strategic Plan, Integrated Management Plan, Quality Improvement Plan and the

Community Health Improvement Plan. The Strategic Plan outlines the direction and priorities of the department and feeds into the Integrated Management Plan through the development of measures to keep us accountable and active in these priorities. Each measure in the Integrated Management Plan has a Quality Improvement metric or trigger which determines when a process needs to be analyzed through a Quality Improvement evaluation. All Quality Improvement project outcomes are aligned with where the department has positioned itself through the Strategic Plan. This entire cycle is saturated by our Community Health Improvement Plan which uses data to identify where in the community we need to be directing our external focus to drive North lowans towards living their healthiest lives (see figure 1).

Figure 1: Community and Health Department Plan interaction



PLANNING PROCESS

Going into the planning process required the recruitment of a high-level and experienced facilitator to lead the department through the many months of planning and provide an external assessment and approach to work with staff, sift through input and discussions and develop an expert report on the overarching priorities of the department.

With the help of Bluebird Sky Solutions, employees deployed an extensive information collection effort through a current state analysis, staff surveys, one-on-one interviews and two half day workshops.

CURRENT-STATE ANALYSIS

Specific activities during this phase included:

- Reviewing the status of efforts related to the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan
- Reviewing available documentation, including the most recent Community Health Assessment and any other relevant annual reporting
- Holding one-on-one conversations with seven staff
- Identifying areas of work that may be furthered in the new plan and those that are complete or may be set aside due to changes in circumstances or priorities
- Exploring relevant current trends and future signals that may affect planning

A comprehensive view of CG Public Health was developed through documentation review and one-on-one conversations with seven staff. The main themes and ideas that emerged from the documentation review and the one-on-one conversations were used to develop a survey offered to all staff and board members, via an online survey engine. Survey topics included a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats/challenges), current trends, future signals, and ideas for the future of the department. The survey invited respondents to provide input on the organization and on regional health issues.

The staff survey was completed by 67% of staff and Board members. This information, noted in Table 1, guided workshop discussion and strategic brainstorming.

Table 1: Survey results for top 6 department strengths and weaknesses.

Strengths (internal)	Weaknesses (internal)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff • Marketing • Leadership • Financial Management (tie) • Advocacy (tie) • Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board participation and engagement • Financial resources • Leadership • Staff • Career Opportunities • Other: Technology, staff turnover, new leadership uncertainty

ENVISIONING THE FUTURE

In this phase, two half-day strategic planning workshops were held two weeks apart. Approximately 25 individual staff and board members participated in the workshops. The two workshops were designed to build upon one another. A variety of techniques were employed to elicit input from all participants, including the following:

- Pre-workshop assignments
- Full-group discussion
- Small-group activities and discussion
- Written input
- The opportunity to submit follow-up comments and ideas after the workshops

Developing a framing question help guided discussion and kept the team oriented while collectively and vividly imagining the future they wanted to create together. It helped develop specific ideas about how to tackle big challenges without being prescriptive. To prepare for the strategic planning workshops, the planning team (RIE staff and facilitator) thoughtfully drafted and developed the following framing question to act as a guardrail for all activities within the workshops:

What would it look like if CG Public Health were a household name and a primary trusted partner in helping the people of North Iowa live their healthiest lives?

Workshop 1 was held on March 23, 2022 with the focus of creating a shared vision for the future.

Workshop 2 was held April 6, 2022 with a focus of creating plans for bringing that shared vision to life.

It was agreed upon to maintain the current mission, vision and values throughout the 2023-2025 strategic planning cycle and these core elements were used to guide the thinking and discussion throughout the workshops.

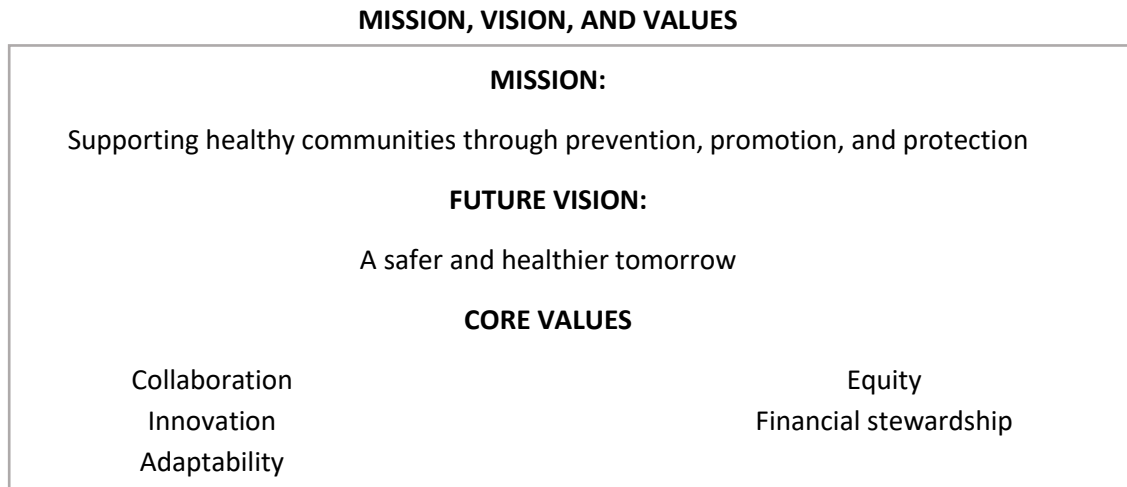
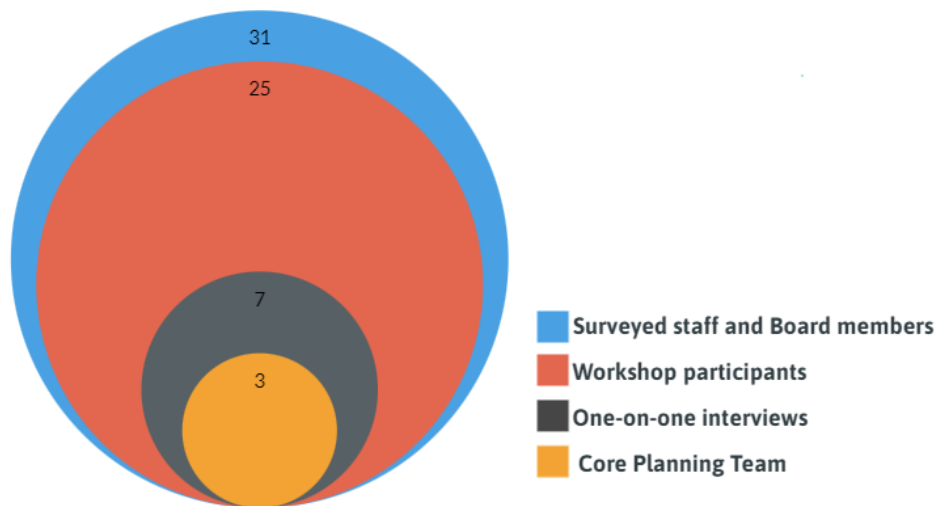


Figure 2: Participant involvement



DEVELOPING & PREPARING TO IMPLEMENT THE PLAN

After the extensive data collection and staff engagement processes were complete, all the notes, brainstorming posters, surveys and information collected were analyzed, categorized and interpreted by Bluebird Sky Solutions and used to further define the strategic priorities chosen by workshop participants. The core strategic planning team used this information to create this Strategic Plan and develop the process to implement the identified priorities.

Organizations tend to be more familiar—and successful—with the process of implementing plans designed to address technical challenges than they are with implementing plans to address the complex challenges many health departments face. To help set up the department for success in addressing the complex challenges identified for the new strategic plan, two key CGPH staff members participated in a

2.5-day training course in Strategic Doing in late March 2022. These staff members will guide the rest of the CG Public Health team in the process of implementing the new plan.

EXTERNAL FACTORS

The past three years have proven we cannot predict what's around the corner that may threaten our trajectory and wobble our organization's balance, but it has also highlighted and elevated our resiliency. Public health impacts all facets of people's lives, which also means it is impacted by social, political, economic and behavioral changes in our community.

We are committed to address these challenges head on and in the best interest of our staff and our community. During the current state analysis phase of strategic planning, survey respondents identified the top external threats to the health of our community and the health of our department. This information was used during the facilitated workshop conversations, helped build our strategic priorities and will continue to be revisited to inform our decision-making.

Table 2: Survey results for top 5 external threats.

Threats (external)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Political (e.g., current/future policies and legislation; government change; funding)• Economic (e.g., local/regional economy trends; taxation; funding; industry trends; competition)• Social (e.g., demographics; lifestyle trends; media; behavior patterns)• Technological (e.g., information and communication; information sources; communication channels)• Environmental (e.g., climate change; weather issues; air and water quality)

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Of all of the ideas the group considered for moving CG Public Health in the direction of the framing question and future vision, four areas emerged as the most likely to be effective: Workforce and Culture, Efficiencies, Interactive Public Health, and Leading through Population Health.

1. Workforce and Culture

The employees of CG Public Health (CGPH) are the essential network of what make the health department one of the best in the state. We recognize what staff have experienced over the past three years and yearn to honor their role within our department by ensuring a fully staffed workforce, inclusive and positive culture and the foresight to engage the future generation of public health champions to ensure the delivery of public health services.

Goal 1: CGPH is fully staffed and staffing is stable

Goal 2: Public Health careers are increasingly attractive to the regional workforce

Goal 3: CGPH sustains and expands a positive and inclusive culture

2. Efficiencies

CG Public Health prides itself on being careful stewards of community resources and embraces new processes and technologies to streamline tasks that can decrease workloads. By analyzing opportunities to increase efficiencies, we will be able to take on new and exciting initiatives, balance workloads, improve capacity and better measure the impact of the department.

Goal 1: Opportunities for enhancing efficiencies are identified through evaluation of programs and services

Goal 2: Internal CGPH workflows are streamlined

3. Interactive Public Health

We are living and operating in an everchanging world where technologies and access to services are continually changing at a pace many of our vulnerable populations cannot keep up with. We are committed to provide equitable access to information and services and ensure our programs are available for those who need them, when they need them, to live their healthiest lives.

Goal 1: CGPH ensures that services and communication are accessible and equitable

Goal 2: CGPH is highly visible out in the community

Goal 3: The public views CGPH as a primary, trusted resource for public health information

4. Leading Trough Population Health

Public health is achieved best through a focus on population health. Population health initiatives look at a community as a whole and works to develop and integrate processes and policies that affect the entire population. These efforts cannot be accomplished alone and require a multi-sectoral approach to bring many partners together to make real, long-term, and sustainable change. We are able to champion population health priorities through convening regional coalitions, providing a public health lens on non-health focused projects, ensuring services offered in the region are complementing not competing and engaging our Board of Health to elevate initiatives and make policy-level changes to protect and improve health in North Iowa.

Goal 1: CGPH Provides leadership in convening regional health services and program providers

Goal 2: CGPH services are aligned and coordinated with partners

Goal 3: There is a strong and mutually supportive relationship between CGPH and the Board of Health

IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGIC PLAN THROUGH STRATEGIC DOING

Throughout the strategic planning process there is the planning and then there is the doing. The process of using the Strategic Doing framework is a new approach we are taking this cycle to implement the Strategic Plan. Two CGPH staff were trained in early 2022 as Strategic Doing practitioners and are excited to implement this decision-making framework to help guide the Strategic Plan.

Strategic Doing was designed to bring together teams, form strategies efficiently, move them toward measurable outcomes and make adjustments along the way. We will kickoff each strategic goal with a team workshop built around mutual respect; safe space to innovate and brainstorm; the identification of personal assets; and focused and caring collaboration to create a path to accomplishing clear, valuable, and shared outcomes.

Strategic Doing is grounded in four main questions:

1. What **could** we do?
 - Large brainstorming and innovative thinking
2. What **should** we do?
 - Prioritize ideas based on impact and difficulty
3. What **will** we do?

- Define at least one project to pilot (pathfinder project)
- 4. What is our plan to get there?
 - Draft a short-term action plan with everyone taking a small step

Teams have been established and are comprised of staff who volunteered to guide strategic priority work. Each team will begin with a single goal of the overarching priority and will bring this goal through the Strategic Doing process and implement a pathfinder project before progressing through the next goal of the priority, allowing for ample time to plan, implement and measure the pathfinder project(s).

MONITORING THE PLAN

Overall ownership of the Strategic Plan, including monitoring and oversight of progress, will be housed within the Research, Innovation and Education Division. To ensure commitment and capacity is available to oversee the Plan, strategic planning is built in as core functions of job descriptions within this team. They are dedicated to bringing the plan to life and guiding it through the 3-year cycle.

The Strategic Plan will be updated and monitored through an annual tracking document where teams will record the progress they are making through Strategic Doing pathfinder projects and outline activities that will establish and sustain the projects beyond the strategic planning cycle.

Tracking will be focused on measurable outcomes, success metrics, alignment with established guideposts and short-term and time-bound action plans. Strategic Doing facilitates an efficient and actionable process that engages all participants. After the initial priority workshop is complete for each team, the group will reconvene every 30 days to discuss what has been accomplished in the past 30 days and identify activities for each team member to complete in the next 30 days. The 30/30 approach allows the group to take large, complex initiatives and break it into small segments of equitable action, allowing for increased accountability and manageable tasks. These 30/30 meetings will be documented within the tracking document and updated with each new action plan.

SUSTAINING THE PLAN

DEPARTMENT INTEGRATION AND ALIGNMENT

Strategic Plan priorities are identified during strategic planning, brought to life through Strategic Doing and then sustained through integration throughout the department. We are committed to planning our direction, learning about what works and implementing those successes into action far beyond the end of the strategic plan cycle. As mentioned earlier, the department uses the Integrated Management (IM) Plan to measure organizational performance and establish ownership of departmental initiatives. By incorporating strategic plan-based metrics into our IM Plan we are able to evaluate new processes and grow initiatives. Examples from our current IM Plan that connect directly to the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan include engaging in two new formal academic partnerships (Integrated Academic Health Department priority); 100% of new grant applications will incorporate population health design (Chief Health Strategist priority); and 95% of staff will state they feel they have the support they need to perform their job (Staff Development priority). Successful initiatives will also be reviewed for long-term implementation and incorporated into departmental grant priorities for future funding or, if applicable, built into upcoming annual division budgets for sustained support.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank our staff and Board of Health members who participated in surveys, one-on-one interviews and strategic planning workshops and to those passionate staff who have volunteered to be a part of our Strategic Doing teams to guide us into the future of public health in Cerro Gordo County.