

VDH Strategic Plan: Annual Update

March 2025

The Vermont Department of Health Strategic Plan is a five-year roadmap for improving internal systems and processes to promote the health and well-being of people in Vermont. This report is the first annual update about progress towards meeting the goals of the Strategic Plan. You can also track our progress towards meeting our objectives in the Strategic Plan [Performance Scorecard](#).

If you need help accessing or understanding this information, contact katie.stetler@vermont.gov.

Vision

All people and communities in Vermont have equitable opportunities to achieve their highest level of health and well-being.



Mission

Promote the physical, mental, and social well-being of people in Vermont by advancing equity, protecting against disease and injury, and preparing for health emergencies.



Values

Equity • Collaboration • Inclusion • Harmony • Data



Strategic Goals



Foster an inclusive workplace culture that promotes employee well-being and satisfaction.

Ensure the capacity to build, restore and sustain trusting relationships with communities and partners.

Increase data accessibility, equitable data collection, and meaningful analysis.



Increase capacity of the department to adapt and respond to the threat of climate change.



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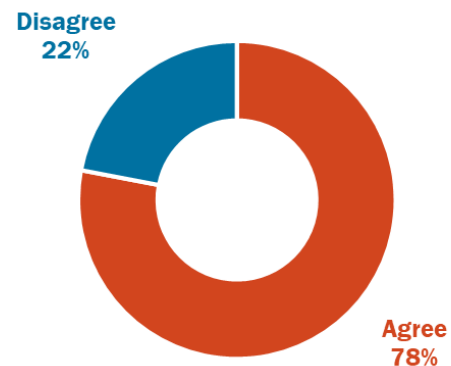


Goal: Foster an inclusive workplace culture that promotes employee well-being and satisfaction.

Successes

- Expanded access to Employee Resource Groups (ERG), collectives of individuals who share a common identity or experience, such as LGBTQIA+ employees and employees in recovery. ERGs provide resources and support to succeed in the workplace and foster a sense of community that advocates for members' unique needs.
- Launched a Lunch & Learn for Supervisors and Managers and Supervision Community of Practice to share best practices for supervising staff, discuss common challenges that supervisors face, and support supervisors to grow their practice.
- Created guidance and tools for writing performance evaluations and implemented an automated system to remind supervisors of due dates for upcoming performance evaluations.
- Hosted community-building events at the Waterbury State Office Complex, such as a plant swap, craft swap, and seasonally themed staff potlucks.

More than three quarters of VDH staff agree that their agency/department has an inclusive work environment.



Source: Employee Engagement Survey, 2024

Plans for the Coming Year

- Develop and implement a "stay interview" protocol and measure its efficacy.
- Clarify the steps involved in recruitment, hiring and onboarding to support staff to navigate these processes and identify ways to improve efficiency of the processes.
- Establish a VDH peer support team to provide emotional support to staff experiencing emotional distress at work due to stress, burnout, or traumatic experiences.
- Create crowdsourced lists to help staff new to Vermont connect with community organizations, health care providers, and other services in their communities.
- The Office of Workforce Development will visit all district offices to build community with local health staff and elevate workforce issues and successes unique to their locations.

Goal: Ensure the capacity to build, restore and sustain trusting relationships with communities and partners.

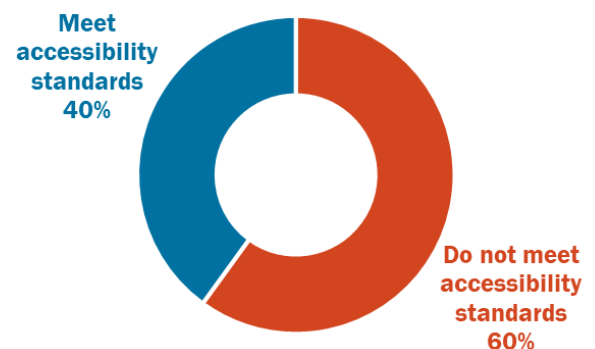
Successes

- Revised Department templates and tools to help staff create accessible documents and presentations. Accessibility updates include enhanced color contrast, improved readability, and optimization for screen readers.
- Released the [Community Engagement Guide](#) to support staff in building mutually beneficial partnerships with community members and partners.
- Developed a Community Compensation Procedure outlining policies and processes for compensating people who contribute their time and expertise to Department initiatives.
- Piloted a survey in Local Health to understand community partners' satisfaction with the Department and how we can improve our partnerships and the services we provide.

Plans for the Coming Year

- Host roundtable discussions with community partners to review, discuss, and advise on specific strategies and objectives of this strategic goal.
- A newly formed Language Access Committee will oversee the process by which the Department manages language assistance, such as staff training, data collection practices, and communicating requirements to contractors and grantees.
- Pursue opportunities to improve equity in the grant management process, such as clearly communicating the requirements to receive funding from the Department to potential grantees.
- Develop an inventory of organizations that receive grants from the Department to support internal coordination when there are multiple programs or divisions with the same grantee.

Fewer than half of audited documents uploaded to HealthVermont.gov in the past year meet accessibility standards.



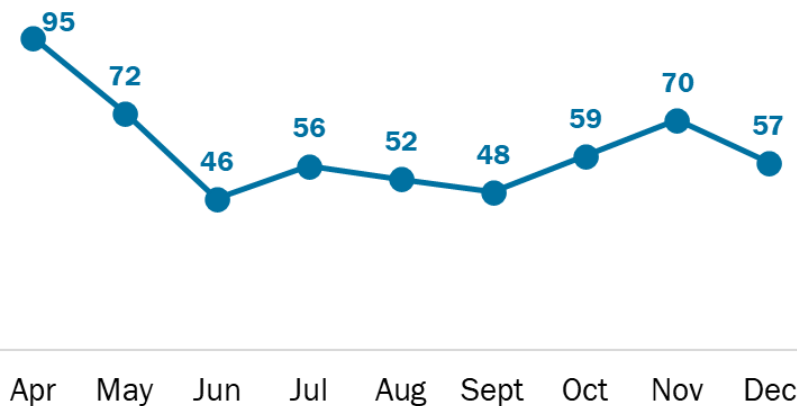
Source: Accessibility Workgroup, 2023

Goal: Increase data accessibility, equitable data collection, and meaningful analysis.

Successes

- Launched the [Health Equity Data webpage](#) as a centralized location to find data on populations in Vermont that experience inequities.
- Updated data visualization templates with built-in accessibility features and instructions on how to write and add alt text for charts and tables.
- Released recommendations for respectful and inclusive ways of asking someone’s race and ethnicity and sexual orientation and gender identity via surveys.

Number of users per month in 2024 viewing the health equity webpage.



Source: Google Analytics

Plans for the Coming Year

- Develop a tool to assess staff needs related to equitable data methodology, interpretation, and communication to inform the design of staff training.
- Understand the data needs of local health offices and community partners to better provide technical and analytic support.
- Update the Health Department Data Encyclopedia to list the sociodemographic variables available in each data source available at the Department.
- Collaborate with the Department of Corrections to enhance data collection and reporting about the health of people who are or were formerly incarcerated, such as adding a question about incarceration history to the 2025 BRFSS survey.

Goal: Increase the capacity of the department to adapt and respond to the threat of climate change.

Successes

- Established a governance structure to guide implementation of the Health Department's strategic goal for climate change. The work will be overseen by the Climate Health Action Team Steering Committee.
- Identified examples of work already happening related to climate and health across the department, including:
 - The school health liaisons' *Climate Change and Schools Learning Group* is collaborating with the Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program to support the [Climate Smart Schoolyards](#) project.
 - The Rutland District Office led development of the Rutland/Addison Emergency Preparedness Community Needs Assessment to gauge the public's awareness of emergency preparedness, including perceptions of climate change risks, access and functional needs, and awareness of extreme temperature centers.
 - The Division of Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Injury Prevention organized an extreme heat tabletop exercise with a focus on assessing the disproportionate impacts of heat on certain groups and how we incorporate this knowledge into our response.

Plans for the Coming Year

- Offer training to all Health Department staff to build baseline understanding of the intersection of climate, health, and health equity.
- Offer training to all Health Department staff on how to conduct a climate impact assessment and adaptation action planning.
- Make a recommendation to Department leadership about how to integrate this body of work into our organizational structure. This will ensure a sustained commitment to adapting and responding to the threat of climate change beyond the period of the Strategic Plan.