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In 2018 when I penned the original message for the Denver Department of Public Health & Environment (DDPHE) Strategic Plan (2018-2022), I never imagined the challenges ahead of us as a city, a public health department, or as human beings battling a deadly virus. Fortunately, we’ve persevered, and we continue to move forward, staying the course by focusing on sound public health and prevention principles.

COVID-19 has shown the world the importance of public health. Rebuilding the systems that keep us healthy and safe means that we must be flexible, proactive, and able to adjust our priorities to meet the needs of the community. I want to acknowledge that our employees have modeled excellence, commitment, and resilience as they willingly undertook new roles and accepted expanded capacity to respond to ever-changing and increasing community needs during the pandemic.

Like many cities and counties, we are aware of profound health inequities in our community and we are committed to build on efforts to shift the narrative and redirect resources to reflect the principles of racial justice and inclusion as part of our workplace culture.

As public health professionals, we believe everyone deserves to achieve their optimum level of health, recognizing that mental health is an essential part of overall health. To ensure that we address bias, inequity, and access, we must work together to build the public health system of the future.

The Denver Department of Public Health & Environment Strategic Plan 2022-2024 provides a renewed look at our strategic priorities and lays out objectives for our department over the next three years.

An important part of this update is to ensure that it aligns our mission and our people to the opportunities to address public health issues existing right now in our city, while also planning for future public health needs. We must challenge ourselves to think differently, listen to each other, and communicate honestly about what it takes to get the work done; all DDPHE team members were given the opportunity to provide feedback on this update to the strategic plan.

As Denver’s public health authority, our actions save lives and advance work that supports an equitable distribution of resources essential for health and well-being. This plan will guide us as we continue to embody our mission of “Empowering Denver’s Communities to Live Better, Longer.”

Sincerely,

Robert McDonald  
Executive Director | Public Health Administrator  
Denver Department of Public Health & Environment
Mission

Empowering Denver’s Communities to Live Better, Longer
We do this by providing people with opportunities that support their well-being and by improving services that enrich our community.

Vision

To be the best public health department in the country
We must address bias, inequity, and access by working together to build the public health system of the future.

Culture

We foster an inclusive culture by respecting the values, customs, and authenticity of everyone and by implementing equitable public health strategies so Denver communities can thrive.

What is a mission statement?
A mission statement describes the current state of the organization, focusing on primary goals or objectives.

What is a vision statement?
A vision statement describes the future state of the organization, an aspirational goal.

What is a culture statement?
A culture statement is a compilation of the organization’s shared beliefs, values, attitudes, and practices and how they are visioned in the operations and throughout the communities it serves.
Strategic Priorities

Denver is experiencing a time of tremendous growth and progress; it is essential for our department to be innovative, flexible, and nimble while continuously promoting our core mission of “Empowering Denver’s Communities to Live Better, Longer.”

As such, DDPHE has updated our strategic priorities to reflect relevance to current times and provide clarity, direction, and focus for the department. To complement and provide context to the priorities, objectives and metrics were also updated.

DDPHE’s strategic priorities are:

- Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion
- Customer Experience
- Operational Excellence
- Workforce Well-being & Development
Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion

DDPHE is committed to hiring a workforce reflective of the community we serve and creating an inclusive workplace where employees’ voices matter and there is a clear connection to how they contribute to the mission of the department. DDPHE will collaborate with the Denver Office of Social Equity & Innovation and the Office of Human Resources as valued partners in achieving these goals.

STRATEGY

Create an inclusive workplace that prioritizes building internal relationships based on trust, shared commitment, and solution-seeking through diversity.¹

OBJECTIVES

• DDPHE full time employees with over one year of employment with the department completed foundational training in the principles of equity, helping to incorporate an equity lens across DDPHE. (Revised 12/1/22)²
• Increase organizational gender and ethnic diversity within DDPHE to better represent and engage with the communities we serve.

METRICS

1. 90% of DDPHE full-time employees with over a year of employment with the department have fully completed the Race and Social Justice (RSJ) Academy. (Revised 12/1/22)³

Informed by: Office of Social Equity & Innovation (OSEI)  Lead team: Division Directors

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<tr>
<td>90%</td>
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2. Organizational gender and ethnic diversity within DDPHE fall within 5%* of the US Census for Denver County. *US Census for Denver County (2019): 49.9% female; 51.1% male; 48.4% non-white

Informed by: Denver census (2019), DDPHE staff audit  Lead team: Performance Management & Quality Improvement (PMQI), Office of Human Resources (OHR)

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<tr>
<td>45-55% female 46-56% male</td>
<td>67% female 32% male (2.0% decline to identify)</td>
<td>67% female 32% male (2.0% decline to identify)</td>
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<tr>
<td>43-53% non-white</td>
<td>34% non-white (2.0% decline to identify)</td>
<td>36% non-white (2.0% decline to identify)</td>
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1. As defined here, diversity is the range of human differences, including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, socioeconomic status, physical ability or attributes, education, marital status, language, religious or ethical values systems, and national origin, as well as diversity of thought: ideas, perspectives, and values.

2. Revised 2/1/23 to adjust the timeline for training to better reflect true completion rates. Previous objective: All DDPHE staff receive foundational training in the principles of equity within one year of their hire, helping to incorporate an equity lens across DDPHE.

3. Revised 2/1/23 to reflect adjusted timeline: Previous metric: 100% of DDPHE staff have completed foundational training in principles of equity within one year of their hire. Training became available in Q4 2021; employees with >1 year of service must complete training by E0Y 2022.
Customer Experience

DDPHE serves residents at all stages of life, from maternal childhood health to death investigations. Our work touches where Denver eats, lives, works, and plays, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or economic status. We know the customer’s experience is best when they are engaged, providing input, and feeling that their voices are valued.

**STRATEGY**

Elevate the customer experience by fostering community engagement and being uniquely responsive to all we serve.

**OBJECTIVES**

- Increase the percentage of customer survey responses indicating that the customer is “satisfied” or “strongly satisfied” with our services.
- All public health service requests will receive a response within three business days.

**METRICS**

1. 90% of DDPHE customer satisfaction survey responses indicate “satisfied” or “strongly satisfied” with the services provided by the Department.
   
   **Informed by:** External customer satisfaction survey  
   **Lead team:** PMQI

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2. 100% of public health service requests responded to within three business days.

   **Informed by:** DDPHE Divisions  
   **Lead team:** PMQI

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<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>92%</td>
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Operational Excellence

DDPHE is committed to efficient, customer-centric operations. DDPHE continues to maintain existing accreditations while pursuing new accreditations to hold ourselves to the highest industry standards.

**STRATEGY**

Achieve operational excellence through lean process improvement, performance management, and responsible, transparent, and sustainable fiscal management.

**OBJECTIVES**

- Increase DDPHE staff use of process improvement tools to enhance current internal processes and improve quality of services to our customers.
- Achieve and maintain accreditation with:
  - ISO 14001 EMS standard
  - Public Health Accreditation Board
  - National Association of Medical Examiners
  - American Animal Hospital Association

**METRICS**

1. At least 75% of DDPHE staff (full-time unlimited and limited) are Green Belt trained.
   
   **Informed by:** Division reporting, PEAK Academy  
   **Lead team:** PMQI

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<td>75%</td>
<td>72.5%</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
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2. Accreditation achieved and maintained in 100% of available opportunities.

   **Informed by:** Division reporting  
   **Lead team:** PMQI

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<td>100%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>75%</td>
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Workforce Well-being & Development

DDPHE believes a happy and productive workforce is foundational to achieving excellence in public and environmental health. DDPHE leadership prioritizes engagement, building of trust, continuous learning and growth, and work-life satisfaction.

**STRATEGY**

*Align, empower, and establish:* Align DDPHE’s workforce with the department’s mission, strategic plan, and goals; Empower employees to gain knowledge, skills, and experience; Establish a solid culture of development, appreciation, and kindness.

**OBJECTIVES**

- Employee Retention: DDPHE workforce retention rates will meet or exceed the citywide average.
- DDPHE will continue to improve employee well-being to enhance employee engagement.

**The Well-being Index** is reflective of employee responses to six statements focused on employee well-being found in the Employee Engagement Survey and the DDPHE Pulse Survey. The index is calculated by averaging the percent of employees who responded “agree” or “strongly agree” to those statements.

*We are utilizing two surveys because they occur in alternating years.*

**Employee Engagement Survey**

1. My supervisor is sincerely interested in my well-being
2. The city provides sufficient flexibility in my work schedule options to help me balance the demands of work and personal life
3. My department/agency promotes a culture/environment of appreciation

**DDPHE Pulse Survey**

1. My department practices a safe work environment
2. My department provides the needed tools, equipment, and training to do my job safely
3. I am encouraged and expected to speak up about any agency practices and policies that are ethically questionable

**METRICS**

1. DDPHE workforce retention rates meet or exceed the citywide average.

   *Informed by:* OHR  
   **Lead team:** Worforce Engagement & Development Team (WEDT)

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<tr>
<td>95%</td>
<td>97.4%</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>![Upward Arrow]</td>
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2. Percent of employees who “agree” and “strongly agree” with statements comprising the Well-being Index will exceed the 2019 Employee Engagement Survey and 2021 Pulse Survey well-being index by at least 5% each

   *Informed by:* Employee Engagement Survey responses  
   **Lead team:** WEDT, PMQI, OHR

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<td>83%</td>
<td>78%</td>
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   *Informed by:* DDPHE Pulse Survey responses  
   **Lead team:** WEDT, PMQI, OHR

   | 79%         | 83%                                   | 83%                                 | ![Right Arrow] |
Division Overview

The Division of **DENVER ANIMAL PROTECTION (DAP)** empowers Denver’s communities to live better, longer by protecting the safety, health, and welfare of Denver’s animals and people, providing humane care to companion animals, reuniting lost pets with their owners, connecting pets to loving homes, and enforcing Denver County animal ordinances. DAP operates the Denver Animal Shelter, providing care to 12,500+ animals each year.

**PROGRAM AREAS INCLUDE:** Adoptions, reunifications, education and compliance, foster and volunteer programs, animal care, community engagement, and more

The Division of **COMMUNITY & BEHAVIORAL HEALTH (CBH)** empowers Denver’s communities to live better, longer by informing, educating, and empowering the community to live a healthy lifestyle, to reduce chronic disease through awareness and prevention programs, and to implement population-based strategies that address social determinants of health. CBH also works to reduce barriers to accessing mental and physical health care. CBH is committed to creating and advocating for equal opportunities for all to grow, develop, and live life to its fullest potential.

**PROGRAM AREAS INCLUDE:** Health Promotion, HIV Resources and Sexual Health, Behavioral Health Strategies

The Division of **ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY (EQ)** empowers Denver’s communities to live better, longer by ensuring a healthy environment through science, service, and policy. EQ protects the environment by conducting scientific assessments, regulatory compliance, technical assistance and training, and environmental education for both private sector and city operations. EQ advocates for federal, state, tribal, and local government’s environmental policies that protect the environment and public health. EQ prepares the city to mitigate and adapt to environmental public health emergencies.

**PROGRAM AREAS INCLUDE:** Air quality, water quality, site assessment and cleanup, solid/hazardous waste management and remediation

The Division of the **OFFICE OF THE MEDICAL EXAMINER (OME)** empowers Denver’s communities to live better, longer by conducting independent medicolegal death investigations using advanced forensic science practices and techniques in the service of families, communities, and the criminal justice system, and by providing answers to those affected by sudden and traumatic loss. OME contributes to the public health of Denver by providing medical surveillance, education, and research, as well as insight into trends that create and inform effective public health policies and programs in our communities.

**PROGRAM AREAS INCLUDE:** Medicolegal Death Investigations, Forensic Pathology, Vital Records (birth and death certificates), and the Family Advocacy & Support Team (FAST)

The Division of **PUBLIC HEALTH INVESTIGATIONS (PHI)** empowers Denver’s communities to live better, longer through education, public health investigations, and controls to minimize public health risks. PHI supports equitable outcomes by providing resources using a population-based approach, with a focus on culturally responsive, person-first, and trauma-informed practice. PHI prioritizes customer responsiveness, equity, industry and community partnerships, operational excellence, public education, fair and effective enforcement, and continuous improvement.

**PROGRAM AREAS INCLUDE:** Epidemiology, Communicable Disease Control, Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention, Child Care, Food Safety, Residential Health, Cannabis Consumer Protection, Swimming Pools, Body Art, Syringe Access Programs, Emergent Public and Environmental Hazards

The Division of **SHARED SERVICES AND BUSINESS OPERATIONS (SSBO)** empowers Denver’s communities to live better, longer by providing leadership, support, data, and resources to all Divisions as they develop equitable and innovative solutions to challenges, serve our customers and engage our partners, respond to public health emergencies, and deliver quality outcomes through learning and performance improvement. SSBO promotes effective, safe, and secure operations; race and social justice; workforce development; and open and transparent government.

**SERVICE AREAS INCLUDE:** Board of Public Health & Environment operations, communications and marketing, equity and engagement, emergency preparedness & response, strategic planning, data management, performance management and quality improvement, accreditation, contract, grant, and budget administration, and legislative services