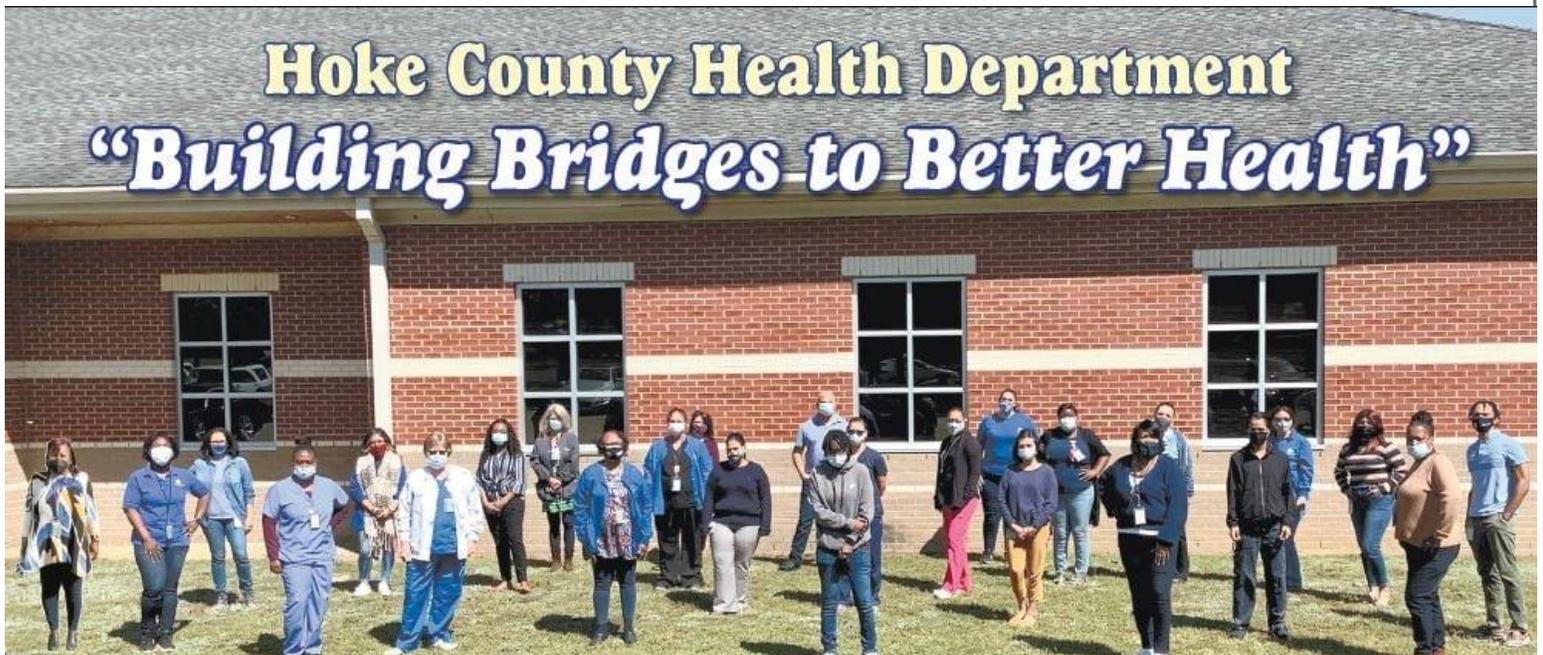




# STRATEGIC PLAN

## 2023-2026



**Hoke County Health Department**  
**683 East Palmer Road**  
**Raeford, NC 28376**  
**910-875-3717**

## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



It is with great pleasure to release the updated Hoke County Health Department (HCHD) Strategic Plan for 2023-2026. This plan establishes the department's current and future priorities. It also provides a road map to assure our community that the HCHD is committed to continuously improving the internal processes within the department, as well as the way we provide public health programs and services.

We have utilized the input from key community leaders and public health partners, along with the Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan to provide the necessary direction for this plan. This Strategic Plan represents a shared vision for an integrated, culturally appropriate public health system that is person-centered and advances health equity with strategies for achieving system outcomes and population health improvements.

Much has changed in the landscape of public health since the last strategic plan was developed in 2019. The current COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the vulnerability of public health and other systems here and across the country and tested leadership and workforce capacity at all levels. We have reinforced our partnerships with community organizations to strengthen our response systems. However, an even more urgent need exists to invest in the public health system and address the needs and inequalities of community members.

The Strategic Plan will serve as a functional, living document that will set the direction for HCHD by organizing around four strategic priorities. The plan ties our mission and vision to our strengths and weaknesses, creating a clear path for greater effectiveness, efficiency, and positive health outcomes. The identified priorities will strengthen our capacity to serve the community over the next three years while continuing to support a culture of quality improvement. The plan provides a guide for addressing social determinants of health in making decisions and allocating resources within Hoke County. Thank you for being part of such a wonderful community.

Sincerely,

Helene Edwards

Public Health Director

## HOKE COUNTY COMMUNITY PROFILE



According to the 2021 Census, Hoke County has an estimated population of 53,114

Mortality rates within Hoke County signify a potential to improve the public's health through close monitoring, continued prevention, and intervention of specific conditions.

Health Status Indicator	Total Deaths 2017	Death Rate	Total Deaths 2018	Death Rate	Total Deaths 2019	Death Rate
All causes	384	709.6	367	670.1	376	680.7
Homicide	5	9.2	5	9.1	10	18.1
Motor vehicle traffic crashes	15	27.7	9	16.4	11	19.9
Coronary heart disease	80	147.8	79	144.3	71	128.5
Chronic liver disease and cirrhosis	5	9.2	8	14.6	5	9.1
Suicide	7	12.9	8	14.6	5	9.1
Accidents (unintentional injuries)	10	18.5	12	21.9	18	32.6
Female breast cancer	12	43.8	3	10.8	9	32.1
Prostate cancer	5	18.7	3	11.1	3	11
Lung cancer	19	35.1	19	34.7	14	25.3
All cancers	84	155.2	70	127.8	69	124.9

## OVERVIEW OF HOKE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT



The Hoke County Health Department and its 41 employees serve Hoke County's residents with an operating budget of 3.3 million. The HCHD is committed to providing high-quality services to the community. As this plan is being written, the department is in its 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle of becoming accredited while still responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and conducting infection control activities such as public health communication and vaccination. These activities are all being undertaken in addition to the department's normal operations. HCHD provides a wide range of services designed to promote and protect the health of all county residents and visitors. The department strives to address core public health functions with a focus on prevention as much as possible.

**Business Management**-The Clerical and Business staff manages vital records, billing and coding, appointment scheduling, registration, financial screening for sliding fee scale eligibility, and medical records management. The business management staff protects the community's health by efficiently managing funds to ensure that resources are available through innovative strategies to maintain and increase the number of clients seen and decrease the no-show rates.

**Clinical Services**-The Health Services Department focuses on the health of individuals through services of targeted Public Health Concerns, Immunizations, Communicable Disease Surveillance and Prevention, Public Health Emergency Preparedness, Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program, Family Planning, Maternal Health Services, Child Health, and Primary Care Service.

**Environmental Health Services**-Environmental Health Services focuses on environment and sanitation issues by providing public health protection; offering educational and training opportunities; supplying beneficial information; and enforcing health protection standards as outlined by the State of North Carolina or federal government guidelines. Primary responsibilities include assistance to citizens for regulatory compliance; inspections and reviews of food service establishments, public accommodations, pools and spas, campgrounds, daycares, schools, hospitals, long-term care facilities, trailer parks, and body art facilities; investigations of food-borne illnesses; on-site wastewater treatment system inspection and permitting; and floodplain administration.

**Health Promotion and Wellness**-The Health Promotion team facilitates community health improvement initiatives designed to support healthy choices in Hoke County. The group provides the information and resources needed to promote and protect the health of everyone in our community, and health Promotion also coordinates Public Health's participation in community events. The HCHD offers many wellness, testing, and education programs to improve your health and that of our community.

**Nutrition Services**-WIC is an essential part of the nutritional services provided by the HCHD. Services provide essential nutritious foods to eligible pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women and infants and children. Breastfeeding promotion and support are integral parts of the WIC Program. Medical Nutrition Therapy is intensive nutrition education provided by a Registered Dietitian when referred by a medical provider.

**Care Management**-Our program aims to promote healthy mothers and babies from birth to five years of age. This program provides care management services for high-risk women during pregnancy and two months after delivery by a social worker or nurse. Referrals are made to our program to provide additional support during pregnancy.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



A robust and adequately funded public health system is necessary to protect the public's health. Public health interventions have reduced the disease burden among some populations, but other groups are at increased risk and require different disease prevention and control approaches. This strategic planning process allows one to reflect on achievements, examine relevant data, assess current services and outcomes, and identify strategic priorities. The resulting strategic priorities were thoughtfully selected using a lens of equity.

Input from key community partners and leaders corroborated a number of the issues and priorities identified to develop goals and objectives. Internal and external Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analyses helped provide a clear view of the organization's strengths, highlighted weaknesses, identified opportunities with the potential to help HCHD achieve its vision, and singled out specific threats that could reduce the department's effectiveness.



## BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW



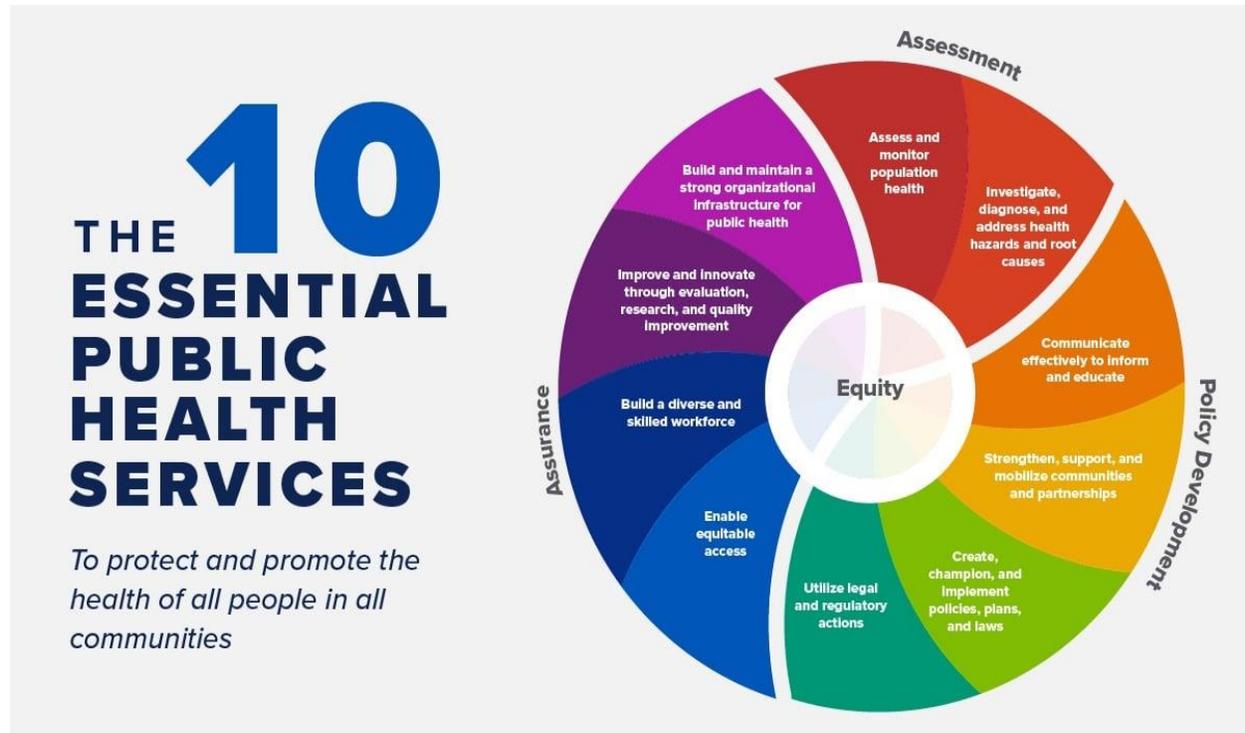
**Public health touches every aspect of our daily lives.** Public health aims to provide the maximum benefit for the most significant number of people. It is what we do collectively to ensure conditions in which people can be healthy. Public health is a well-established science practiced for hundreds of years, and it is based on social, behavioral, environmental, biological, and socioeconomic factors that impact population-wide health.

**The over-arching goal of public health** is to protect and improve communities' health through education, promoting healthy lifestyles, and research for disease and injury prevention. Through research, surveillance, and data analysis, we develop programs and policies that protect the entire community's health. The department will focus its efforts on the following goals and objectives:

## THE 10 ESSENTIAL PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES

The 10 Essential Public Health Services provide a framework for protecting and promoting the health of Hoke County residents. They describe public health activities, and HCHD undertakes to carry out the department’s mission. Organized around three core functions of public health—assessment, policy development, and assurance—the Essential Services provide a set of concepts that collectively define what the department does and how that work differs from other roles in the health field.

To achieve equity, as illustrated below, these services actively promote policies, systems, and overall community conditions that enable optimal health for all and seek to remove systemic and structural barriers resulting in health inequities.



## INTRODUCTION



Strategic planning is used to set priorities, help focus energy and resources, strengthen operations, and ensure that staff and stakeholders work toward common goals around intended outcomes/results. A public health strategic plan guides decisions, allocate human and financial resources, and pursues objectives. The plan is internal to the organization and informed by priorities noted during the planning process.

Changes brought on by a global pandemic provide unprecedented opportunities to raise the profile and importance of disease prevention and health promotion, to substantially increase investment in best practices and innovative approaches to health protection, and to expand the range and implementation of evidence-based prevention interventions. For Hoke County, the extraordinary disasters resulting in loss of life and property and damage to the environment experienced since 2016—compounded by the continuing pandemic—have affected the community across a myriad of aspects, with the long-range impact on the public’s health not yet fully evident.

The HCHD Strategic Plan for 2023-2026 will guide the department's strategic direction and priorities over the next three years. It highlights key areas where HCHD seeks to make significant improvements to our internal processes and the health and well-being of all Hoke County residents. The plan sets forth what we will strive to achieve and provides a road map for how we plan to achieve it.

Priorities have been set within a rapidly changing public health environment. As public health professionals and decision-makers, we are poised to reaffirm our core services and prioritize our focus areas. Our department works to develop policy, systems, and programmatic initiatives that bring local policymakers, community members, and health partners (hospitals, medical providers, social service agencies, municipalities, school districts, and others) together to achieve community health goals. The plan emphasizes improving our core activities, including protecting the public from health threats, implementing strategies to support healthy lifestyles, and maintaining focus on vulnerable populations.

Our department protects and benefits the public's health in countless ways, from free communicable disease testing and restaurant inspections to early intervention childhood programs. Our scope has been and will remain broad. This plan does not offer a comprehensive list of all the essential activities HCHD conducts. Instead, it highlights key areas where we plan to affect significant change in the coming three years and identifies four strategic priority areas that organize these directed efforts.

## THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS



According to the Public Health Accreditation Board, strategic planning sets forth an organization's goals and how it will achieve them. It also provides a means to identify achievements once they have been completed. Strategic planning also provides a flexible guide for the entire department as it decides on resource allocation and operational choices. HCHD used the National Association of City and County Health Officials' six critical components of strategic planning to guide its planning process, detailed below:

### Key Components in the Strategic Plan Development Process

#### **Laying the Groundwork for Strategic Planning**

*During this step, the LHD explores what is involved when embarking on strategic planning, decides to go forward, and prepares for the work ahead. Specific actions may include identifying and defining stakeholders; determining available data to inform the strategic plan; determining process and timeline needs; and developing a project plan for completing the strategic plan.*

#### **Developing Mission, Vision, and Values**

*Organizational mandates and the type and level of stakeholders needed to be engaged are often identified before developing a mission, vision, and values. Once an understanding of formal and informal mandates and various types of stakeholders is clear, the LHD proceeds. The LHD and designated stakeholders develop statements to describe what the LHD does and why it exists (mission), decide upon principles and beliefs that will guide the continued work of the LHD (values), and a statement of the ideal future state based on the work the LHD intends to do (vision). The LHD and the governing body adopt the mission, vision, and value statements.*

#### **Compiling Relevant Information: Environmental Scan**

*Information and data identified in the groundwork phase are compiled and assessed, and any additional data needs are identified, collected, and summarized. Internal organizational strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats (SWOT) are identified.*

#### **Analyzing Results and Selecting Strategic Priorities**

*Data is gathered to complete a SWOT analysis. Data are thoroughly reviewed and analyzed by the LHD to identify strategic issues. The issues are prioritized for inclusion in the strategic plan.*

#### **Developing the Strategic Plan and Implementation Plan**

*Full action plans to address the priorities are developed, and strategies that impact the priorities are determined. Broad goals and corresponding measurable objectives are defined with timelines and assigned to staff/departments.*

#### **Implementing, Monitoring, and Revising as Needed**

*Once the plan is developed, the LHD and its governing body must hold the LHD accountable for the implementation of the strategic plan. Ongoing measurement and monitoring of both process and outcome data are necessary to ensure the plan is on track for making an impact and identifying opportunities for quality improvement.*

## **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis**

The strategic plan's alignment with other high-level objectives begins with the data revealed by an environmental scan. This data provides the foundation for the strategic planning process to address areas of concern, items to be worked toward in the future, and the strengths the department can build on. An online and paper survey was sent to internal and external partners, asking for feedback on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats impacting HCHD and its service to the community. Seventy-six responded to the survey; 34 of them were internal (HCHD staff), and 42 external participants. Four informational sessions were held with, two being internal and two external, to gather additional feedback. The results are indicated in the following table and utilized to ensure strategic plan alignment.

<b>Strengths (Internal)</b>	<b>Weaknesses (Internal)</b>
<p>We want to maintain and leverage strengths.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bilingual staff</li> <li>• Baby Think it Over Program</li> <li>• Tia Hart partnership</li> <li>• Mental health services</li> <li>• Hoke Syringe Service Program (HSSP)</li> <li>• Family Planning and childbirth classes</li> <li>• Partnering with schools</li> <li>• Health education classes</li> <li>• Case management for pregnant and young children (&lt;5yo)</li> </ul>	<p>We want to minimize weaknesses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-media and social media outreach</li> <li>• Lack of physical fitness options</li> <li>• Limited time slots for services</li> <li>• Limited health education class options</li> <li>• Better promote offered services</li> <li>• Some staff resistant to change</li> <li>• Staff turnover</li> <li>• More IT tools</li> <li>• Internal communication is not always clear</li> <li>• Need to expand stakeholders</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approachable</li> <li>• Serves as a social safety net</li> <li>• Health Promotion</li> <li>• WIC and nutrition services</li> <li>• Sliding fee scale</li> <li>• Small town=knowing one another</li> <li>• Quality customer service</li> <li>• Good community linkages and partnerships</li> <li>• Diabetes Self-Management Program</li> <li>• Contract Staff/Community Health Worker</li> <li>• Offers BCCCP services</li> <li>• Suicide Prevention Program</li> <li>• Eat Smart, Move More Partner</li> <li>• Small-town relationship</li> <li>• Easily accessible healthcare</li> <li>• Registered Dietician (Medical Nutrition Therapy)</li> <li>• Staff members who are assets by being engaged in events/programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff involvement with events and programs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities (External)</b></p>	<p><b>Threats (External)</b></p>
<p>We want to invest in opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase community education outreach</li> <li>• Take advantage of newer technology and software</li> <li>• Better use of social media</li> <li>• Being present at more community events</li> <li>• Additional advertising</li> <li>• Lamaze classes offered by Social Workers</li> <li>• Oral health care focus</li> <li>• Increased collaboration with First Health</li> <li>• University/college as a recruiting tool</li> <li>• Collaboration with fitness centers</li> <li>• Establish a community garden</li> <li>• Become a WISEWOMAN service provider</li> <li>• Partner with Maggie's Outreach</li> </ul>	<p>We want to identify threats or challenges that need to be addressed and understand their impact.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding—loss grants/covid-19 and opioid</li> <li>• Staff retention</li> <li>• Emerging diseases/variants</li> <li>• Decline of trust in Public Health due to COVID mandates/compliance</li> <li>• Underperformance by some employees</li> <li>• Cybersecurity</li> <li>• Less funding for contract staff, advertising, and community outreach</li> <li>• Assuring social and health equity</li> <li>• Rise in gang activity</li> </ul>

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



Selecting strategic priorities is the core of the strategic planning cycle. Based on what is identified as strategic importance for the health department, it is possible to construct a plan for the coming three years through a process rooted in the opportunities at hand. Strategic issues are directly linked to the organization’s vision, and they must reflect the shared agreement of the stakeholders and the community served by them (NACCHO, n.d.)

A list of key issues identified during the SWOT analysis was comprised, thoroughly reviewed, and analyzed against a set of criteria that included:

- Alignment with HCHD’s mission and vision
- Alignment with other HCHD plans (CHIP, QI)
- Degree of action needed
- Degree of consequence if no action is taken

The list with the final strategic priorities is defined as follows:

<b>Advance Health Equity</b>	Identify barriers and implement a diversity and inclusion plan with opportunities for ongoing training.
<b>Communication</b>	Enhance internal and external communication through multiple approaches.
<b>Quality Improvement</b>	Implement an integrated performance management system into all levels of department operations.
<b>Workforce Development and Performance</b>	Recruit and retain well-qualified candidates, and develop growth, advancement, and succession planning procedures.

## PRIORITIES, GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES



### STRATEGIC PRIORITY I. Advance Health Equity

**Goal A. Offer equitable access to programs and services to assure the optimal health of Hoke County residents.**

Objectives	Strategies
------------	------------

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>1. Identify barriers to all HCHD processes by December 2026.</p>   | <p>1a. Examine hiring processes to identify barriers to</p> <p>1b. Redesign hiring processes to eliminate institutional barriers to diversity and inclusion.</p>                         |
| <p>2. Provide ongoing education and training opportunities for HCHD staff to incorporate a health equity framework into programs and services by December 2026.</p> | <p>2a. Promote the availability of cultural and linguistic competency training for staff that aligns with the cultural and language variations of Hoke County’s diverse communities.</p> |

**PRIORITIES, GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES**

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY I. Advance Health Equity**

**Goal B. Enhance community capacity to increase health equity.**

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Strategies</b>
-------------------	-------------------

1. Expand equitable access to high-quality services, programs, and information by December 2026.
  - 1a. Expand communication to include multiple languages, increase accessibility to updated online resources (webpage, social media, and increased paid media), and make platforms more interactive.
  
2. Integrate the voices of underrepresented communities into all policy, program, and resource decisions by December 2026.
  - 2a. Expand outreach and promotion events to underserved populations and geographic areas.
  - 2b. Use a lens of equity and incorporate diversity in developing grant scopes of work.
  
3. Promote opportunities for community partners to learn more about health equity by December 2026.
  - 3a. Provide technical assistance to community partners concerning policies, systems, and environmental changes and data analysis to enhance health equity.
  - 3b. Identify community champions to engage in health-related initiatives.
  
4. Facilitate collaborative efforts to reduce the impact of the social determinants of health by December 2026.
  - 4a. Maintain continuous partnerships with other County departments, providers, and community stakeholders to create policies, systems, and environments to enhance health equity.

**PRIORITIES, GOALS, OBJECTIVES**



**STRATEGIC PRIORITY II. Communication**

**Goal A. Maximize utilization of available resources, services, and information.**

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Strategies</b>
-------------------	-------------------

1. Develop an outreach plan to increase community and provider awareness of HCHD brand, programs and services as applicable by December 2026.
  - 1a. Share specific outcomes, with data when possible, from HCHD programs to communicate public health results and achievements.
  - 1b. Employ a variety of media outlets to keep the general public informed about trending health issues.
2. Increase HCHD staff awareness of department programs, services, and outreach efforts by December 2026.
  - 2a. Hold regularly scheduled discussions and/or trainings on department programs and services.
  - 2b. Create multiple communication approaches to message policy priorities, emerging issues, opportunities for learning, and specific team roles.
3. Update HCHD web pages to enhance sharing public health stories, providing information for the public and offering a place for the public to “ask a public health expert” a question by December 2026.
  - 3a. Consistently include HCHD branding in all internal and external communications.
  - 3b. Identify and use appropriate visual images that can improve message recall, create emotional responses, and contribute to sustained changes in beliefs about and attitudes toward public health issues.
  - 3c. Frame messages to acknowledge a role in individual decisions about behavior but emphasize the impact of the social determinants of health.

## PRIORITIES, GOALS,

### OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY II. Communication

### Goal B. Improve internal health department communications.

## Objectives

1. By December 2026, develop an internal communication action plan with evaluation component.

## Strategies

- 1a. Conduct a survey of all HCHD employees to establish baseline satisfaction, identify preferred communication methods and content, and determine existing efforts.
- 1b. Conduct evaluation activities to assess the satisfaction of HCHD employees.
- 1c. Utilize evaluation results to make adjustments to the internal communication plan.

## PRIORITIES, GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

### STRATEGIC PRIORITY III. Quality Improvement

Goal A. Promote an effective and efficient quality improvement system.

Objectives	Strategies
<p>1. Continue to build and implement a Quality Improvement (QI) program, ensuring it is integrated into all aspects of the department by December 2026.</p>	<p>1a. Educate leadership and staff on QI tools and techniques.</p> <p>1b. Continue to develop the department’s QI structure, including organization, roles and responsibilities, membership, staffing, administrative support, and budget and resource allocation.</p> <p>1c. Encourage QI communication, engagement, and participation for all divisions, programs, and staff.</p> <p>1d. Schedule and implement periodic department-wide internal QI audits and assessments.</p> <p>1e. Review the HCHD QI Plan annually and update it as needed.</p>
<p>2. Optimize information technology investments to improve process efficiency and enable innovation by December 2026.</p>	<p>2a. Enhance current modernization investments such as cloud computing, data input and reporting improvements, shared services, and a digital strategy to make it easier to access information using HCHD websites and tools.</p> <p>2b. Create inclusion for program/management staff meeting agendas to feature Quality Improvement topics at least quarterly</p>

## PRIORITIES, GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

### STRATEGIC PRIORITY IV. Workforce Development and Performance

**Goal A. Build and inspire a diverse team to take effective action around public health priorities.**

Objectives	Strategies
<p>1. Recruit well-qualified candidates who reflect the diversity of Hoke County by December 2026.</p>	<p>1a. Identify and work to mitigate barriers to recruiting and retaining staff and to understand employees.</p> <p>1b. Collaborate with high schools, community colleges, and schools of medicine, nursing, and public health to strengthen and diversify the public health workforce pipeline.</p>
<p>2. Provide tools and training opportunities to retain and develop staff to grow and advance professionally by December 2026.</p>	<p>2a. Continue to grow a comprehensive system of professional development for staff that will promote continuous learning around the 10 essential public health services.</p> <p>2b. Support internal cross-training and/or job shadowing plan.</p> <p>2c. Create and implement an onboarding standard operating procedure connecting staff to multiple divisions and the overall flow of the department.</p>

**PRIORITIES, GOALS,**

**OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES**

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY IV. Workforce Development and Performance**

**Goal B. Build and sustain a work culture that supports all staff and their maximum productivity.**

Objectives	Strategies
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. By December 2026, increase opportunities for HCHD staff to participate and be recognized for their contribution to the department.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1a. Solicit ideas and insights from staff and apply input whenever possible.</li><li>1b. Identify and increase opportunities for giving team members permission to take action and make decisions.</li></ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>2. By December 2026, all HCHD employees will demonstrate continuous commitment to professional development and public health competencies.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>2a. Provide HCHD employees with an annual individual performance evaluation and Individual Performance Cascading Performance Goal plan.</li></ol>

## WHAT'S NEXT



The HCHD is committed to advancing this plan's strategic priorities and goals. Environmental factors will influence the pace of the work, the strategies to increase the work, and the scope of change achieved. The health healthcare and political landscape will undoubtedly shift over the next three years.

The long-term public health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic remain uncertain. Change is a constant in health care, and HCHD anticipates the need to monitor the effects of future changes and adjust the execution of this plan accordingly. Periodically, HCHD will assess the results of this plan and any significant changes to the environment and may make necessary adjustments. HCHD will announce progress and any substantial changes through updates to the board and the HCHD website.

In summary, this plan provides a foundation for designing and implementing the department's activities to ensure a healthier Hoke County and sets forth strategic priorities that will ultimately drive organizational structure, program design, and resource allocation.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Leadership staff will subsequently develop an implementation plan to outline further specific goals, objectives, and measurable time-framed targets. Additionally, any plans that potentially have a department-wide impact, such as a community health improvement plan or an HCHD quality improvement plan, must demonstrate how they advance the priorities identified in the HCHD Strategic Plan.

The approved Hoke County Health Department Strategic Plan 2023-2026 will be available on the county website ([www.hokecounty.net](http://www.hokecounty.net)) for community awareness. Paper copies of the Strategic Plan will be available at the Hoke County Health Department upon request. This information will be communicated via the local media.