



Public Health Infrastructure Grant Year 3 in Review

The CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) awarded the Strengthening U.S. Public Health Infrastructure, Workforce, and Data Systems Grant (PHI Grant) to the Division of Public Health (DPH) in late 2022. This resource details the accomplishments of PHI Grant implementation to date and forecasts what’s coming next—all thanks to staff from across DPH who serve as subject matter experts and strategic advisors for the broad range of work supported by this funding.

Grant vision

Wisconsin’s governmental public health funding has ranked among the lowest of all states for many years,¹ which contributes to gaps in our system’s infrastructure. DPH’s vision for the PHI Grant has been to identify, quantify, and implement strategies to address those infrastructure gaps. Data collection from the baseline assessments were completed early in year 2. Since then, DPH has continued working with governmental public health partners to analyze, synthesize, and strategize with these critical data sources. With less than two years remaining of the PHI Grant, DPH will continue leaning into its partnerships to build on the progress made and seek sustainable, infrastructure-strengthening solutions to persist beyond the PHI Grant.



Read about accomplishments in pursuit of DPH’s vision for the PHI Grant on pages 2-4.

Year 4 forecast

- The majority of our efforts in year 3 were focused on the “strategize and strengthen” stage, as shown in the previous graphic. In year 4, we’ll continue many of those efforts and begin new ones. We’ll also implement new and repeat assessment and evaluation efforts to learn from our progress to date and guide decisions for work to come.
- We’ll be conducting the next iterations of both the Costing and Capacity Assessment (CCA) and Wisconsin Public Health Workforce Assessment (first completed in 2023). These assessments help us understand our collective ability to provide core public health services; determine areas that would benefit from concerted statewide effort; and highlight areas where we perform quite well.
- For data modernization, we’ll focus our efforts on planning and implementing new technologies, including data interoperability and the replacement of the Wisconsin Immunization Registry.

¹ America’s Health Rankings, “Public Health Funding by State.” https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/measures/PH_funding

Accomplishments: Strategizing and strengthening

Following are highlights of our efforts as we worked to strategize and strengthen our public health infrastructure. These three sections cover innovative initiatives launched in late 2025; efforts to increase the capacity and expertise of our governmental public health workforce; and work to strengthen Foundational Capabilities implementation across Wisconsin.

280 LTHD staff + 28 DPH staff

were at least partially supported by PHI Grant funds in the second half of year 3 alone

Launching innovative initiatives

DPH launched the “Innovative Ideas for Strengthening the Public Health System in Wisconsin Survey” in January 2025 to collaboratively identify and fund new initiatives to strengthen our public health system. Local health department, Tribal public health, and DPH staff submitted more than 100 ideas which were reviewed and prioritized by a group representing all of governmental public health. Equipped with the prioritized ideas and subject-matter expertise of reviewers, DPH developed a budget supporting the following three initiatives.



Contract for statewide communications strategy, deliverables, and trainings

DPH and partners finalized a scope of work with a communications vendor in late 2025. This supports developing a statewide communications strategy to create a unified statewide communications framework; develop and implement new resources and training opportunities; and foster statewide engagement and messaging strategies.

System design consultation

Experts from the CDC Foundation—in partnership with the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute (UWPHI)—joined statewide system strengthening efforts to develop a plan for the future of Wisconsin’s governmental public health system. They’ll create an implementation plan. The goal is equitable, efficient, and effective access to public health services that support prioritized health outcomes statewide.



Regional Service and Resource Sharing (SRS) Grants

DPH has awarded \$2 million across the five regions of local health departments (\$400,000 per region) to support two-year SRS pilot projects. The SRS grants are focused primarily on assessment and surveillance, as well as access to and linkage with clinical care. One agency in each region serves as fiscal host—receiving the funds and being accountable for the requirements and expectations for their innovative and collaborative regional project.

Increasing workforce capacity and expertise

Following are highlights from local and Tribal health department (LTHD) semiannual reporting, followed by summaries of PHI Grant-funded initiatives that support workforce development among LTHDs and within DPH.



“We have been able to recruit promising young staff with a desire to work in public health and who are excited to join our team.” **Kewaunee County Public Health**

“Our selected trainings have been a big boost to staff knowledge and ability to provide high quality services.” **Waupaca County Department of Public Health**

“Because we are limited on staffing and public health work is so very important, all nursing staff are offered continuing education opportunities through PHI Grant dollars. Nurses play a crucial role in community health by bridging the gap between clinical care and everyday life.” **St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin**

New LTHD leadership training programs

We know that effective, high-functioning health departments require a well-prepared workforce. Through a contract with the Wisconsin Association of Local Health Departments and Boards (WALHDAB), two LTHD leadership training programs are being developed. One program expands senior leadership capacity-building beyond the existing New Health Officer Orientation program (funded through the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant) to develop a similar **orientation for Deputy Health Officers** and other senior leaders considering progressing to become a health officer. The other training supports **orienting LTHD staff new to management roles**.

DPH workforce development

DPH efforts to support the governmental public health workforce included:

- Coordinating **monthly “All Leaders” meetings** to provide professional development and connection opportunities to managers from across DPH.
- **Enhancing recruitment and hiring** through improved tracking and the development of resources to support DPH managers.
- **Centralizing processes for engaging, orienting, and tracking learners** placed within DPH to ensure consistent experiences and expand pathways to public health.

Technical assistance (TA)

DPH staff and partners provided a wide range of TA responsive to LTHD needs.

- UWPHI staff provided two **community partnership development** trainings to a county-based substance abuse coalition.
- DPH and UWPHI staff partnered to train several local health departments on **ways to use and communicate data**.
- DPH staff conducted **one-on-one training** on data sourcing and dashboard development; quality improvement and performance management; strategic and workforce development planning; and more.

Virtual learning and networking opportunities

DPH staff and partners continued to host a variety of virtual events and learning communities.

- UWPHI hosted more than **20 events**, including **Spotlights and Wisconsin Discusses**. Review their [previous and upcoming events](#).
- OPPA staff partnered with the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) to offer an **Accreditation Learning Community**—open to all LTHDs regardless of accreditation status.
- DPH began hosting the **Shared Data Space** (open to DPH and LTHD staff), which provides presentations and offers discussions on a range of data-related topics.

Strengthening Foundational Capabilities

are highlights from LTHD semiannual reporting on PHI Grant work plans, followed by brief summaries of some of the PHI Grant-funded initiatives that continue to support Foundational Capabilities (FCs) statewide.

“Creating workplans for each of our community health improvement plan (CHIP) health focus areas will help guide our workload and keep local coalitions informed, as well as help reiterate that the CHIP is for the entire county and isn’t led by the health department alone.” **Forest County Public Health Department**

“The PHI Grant has allowed us to support community outreach and education in areas for which we do not have direct funding—injury prevention, chronic disease prevention, and mental health promotion.” **Monroe County Public Health**



FC: Emergency preparedness and response

The State Medical Director for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and Trauma is responsible for consultation and medical oversight of the Wisconsin EMS and Trauma sections on all medically-related matters; the position is supported by an agreement with the Medical College of Wisconsin.

FC: Accountability and performance management

Through an innovative contract with PHAB, funds continue to support accreditation among LTHDs by paying annual fees for accredited LTHDs along with fees for non-accredited LTHDs to complete PHAB’s Accreditation Readiness Assessment and participate in the Pathways Recognition Program.

FC: Assessment and surveillance

With the help of WALHDAB as fiscal agent, PHI Grant funds enabled the one-year Academy of Science (AoS) pilot to cover membership costs for 22 LTHDs. AoS supports data collection through a library of survey questions shared among LTHDs across the country— including community health assessments.

FC: Community partnership development

Narrative 101 training—co-developed by DPH and LTHD staff in 2024—is a practice-based training rooted in local context. It gives participants skills to engage their communities and build relationships that support public health work. In 2025, Narrative 101 was provided nearly 30 times to LTHD staff across the state.

FC: Organizational competencies

The DPH Application and Reporting Tool (DART) was developed because the Grants and Contracts (GAC) system no longer met user needs. DPH’s goal is to fully implement DART by the end of 2026. DART will enable automated reminders and streamline reporting across all DPH granting programs with which LTHDs interact.

FC: Communications

The communications strategist in OPPA supports the Public Health Communications and Public Information Officer (PIO) Network—a statewide group with both LTHD and DPH representatives. The PIO Network enables transparent communication and sharing of best practices among peers to support the communications needs of respective communities.

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