HEALTH EQUITY STRATEGY & INNOVATION DIVISION

2025 YEAR IN REVIEW

Last year brought significant change for the Health Equity Strategy and Innovation Division. Throughout 2025, we navigated unexpected challenges that required perseverance, creativity, and deep commitment to our mission. Yet even amid disruption, our team and partners continued to make meaningful progress toward advancing health equity across our state.

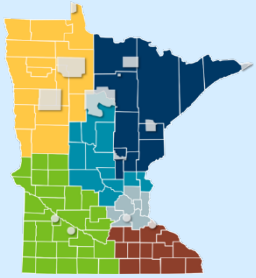
The efforts captured here did not end with the calendar year—they have carried forward, shaping and strengthening our ongoing work. Over the course of 2025, we deepened trust with long-standing partners, built new collaborations, and advanced efforts aimed at meaningful systems change. These accomplishments were made possible through the resilience of our staff and the steadfast partnership of communities, organizations, and colleagues across Minnesota.

That foundation continues to guide us in 2026. Looking ahead, we remain committed to deepening the relationships that make this work possible and to building on the progress highlighted here.

In this spirit, we invite you to connect with us. There is no wrong door for engaging with our division, but if you are not sure where to begin, please reach out to us at health.equity@state.mn.us.

Thank you for your partnership, your persistence, and your shared commitment to advancing health equity.

Community Engagement and Partnership



Our community engagement efforts this year focused on two primary programs: the Minnesota Health Equity Networks and the COVID-19 Community Coordinators Initiative.

The **Health Equity Networks** team moved to our division at the beginning of the year and have integrated their regional and relational approach into our broader engagement efforts. The team continues to provide technical assistance and a community of support for local public health, Tribal public health, and community organizations addressing inequities across the state.

The **COVID-19 Community Coordinators Initiative** entered its sixth and final year of operation, with funding for the projects ending in June 2026. Despite significant disruptions in federal funding, the program and our more than 40 community partners continue to provide critical services and outreach to their communities.

26 technical assistance engagements with network partners

2,800 partners engaged in network

27,000 people reached with health recovery work

446 vaccination & testing pop-up clinics

"Our community members really felt important and felt that MDH cares about them."

– IGBO Women's League of Minnesota, a CCC partner

Equitable Grantmaking and Capacity Strengthening

We continued to provide comprehensive support and oversight for our 31 **Eliminating Health Disparities Initiative** grantees and our 21 **Community Solutions for Healthy Child Development** grantees. We also supported 7 of these grantees in taking on **new mental health grant initiatives**.

Externally, our **Capacity Strengthening Initiative** supported dozens of community-based organizations to be better equipped to apply for and receive state grants and contracts.

Internally, we **provided consultation and capacity-building** across many MDH programs to strengthen equity-centered grantmaking and compliance practices.

55
site visits to grantees across the state

114
grant technical assistance events

Policy and Systems Change

Our policy and systems change work spans a range of functions and areas – both within MDH and with community partners.

This year, we strengthened our coordination of the **Health Equity Advisory and Leadership Council**, continued to lead implementation of the **Minnesota Olmstead Plan** to advance disability equity, and laid the foundation for an improved process for conducting an equity review of agency policies and practices.

In August, we hosted the first-ever **joint council event** bringing together members of three equity-focused councils in the Health Equity Bureau, setting the stage for deeper collaboration in the years to come.

We also led the design and implementation of a new process for the Health Equity Bureau to **review agency legislative policy and budget proposals** to ensure equity is woven throughout.

39
legislative proposals reviewed through an equity lens

Health Equity Communications

Our communications aim to connect, strengthen, and amplify our staff, work, and partnerships through both internal and external communications – via our website, newsletters, social media, and more.

10
newsletters to community partners

In addition to our ongoing communications this year, we led the writing and project management of the **10-year update to the Advancing Health Equity Report**, which examines a decade of MDH work to advance equity – highlighting achievements, offering insights, and identifying areas that still need attention. We're looking forward to sharing the report with you in 2026.

As part of this work, we hosted a half-day retreat that **engaged more than 50 leaders across the agency** to review progress toward health equity goals, reflect honestly on gaps and challenges, and identify what's needed to continue advancing equity in today's environment. This set the stage for a more intentional path forward, including co-creating actionable and sustainable strategies across our agency in 2026.

WE HOPE TO PARTNER WITH YOU SOON!

Minnesota Department of Health | Health Equity Strategy and Innovation Division
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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH