

Healthy Minnesota Partnership meeting summary:

September 22, 2026

Meeting overview

The Healthy Minnesota Partnership (Partnership) co-chairs opened the meeting and introduced guest speaker Catherine Harrison with Health and Democracy MN Partnership for a presentation on Democracy Work is Health Work. The presentation highlighted the connections between democracy and public health. The meeting also included a discussion on developing and measuring cross-sectoral relationships.

Meeting summary

Healthy Minnesota Partnership co-chairs, Sarah Grosshuesch (Local Public Health Association) and Assistant Commissioner Halkeno Tura (Minnesota Department of Health) opened the meeting.

Democracy work is Health Work

Assistant Commissioner Tura introduced Catherine Harrison, the guest speaker from Health and Democracy Minnesota Partnership, and referred to the civic participation section of the 2024 Statewide Health Assessment in his remarks.

Catherine Harrison discussed the connection between civic participation and public health. A few highlights include:

- Health and democracy are interdependent: when democracy is healthy, people are healthy. Higher civic and voter participation lead to more power to influence policy and better health outcomes.
- The [Health and Democracy Index](#) compares 12 public health indicators and voter turnout in each state. States with more voting access and greater civic participation have better health outcomes
- Voter suppression disproportionately impacts communities most impacted by health inequities
- The public health sector are trusted messengers in their communities and with policymakers and represent about 14% of all workers in the U.S.
- System change is important at every level
 - Organization level: adopting policies to change the narrative and provide context for advocacy
 - State and local level: promote policies to expand voting access and include measures of civic participation into setting health goals
 - National level: use administrative levers to promote voter registration and participation
- Shift organization policies by promoting civic participation with workforce and members

- Promote civic participation to support communities. An example of this at the national level includes the Healthy People 2030 measure (Increase the proportion of voting-age citizens who vote). At a state level, the 2024 Statewide Health Assessment included a section on civic participation.

For a PDF of the PowerPoint slides, contact health.healthymnpartnership@state.mn.us

Developing and measuring cross-sector relationship

Attendees engaged in small group discussions about relationships with other organizations and networks. The Statewide Health Improvement Framework includes a shared strategy for building relationships with other cross-sectoral groups working on issues related to the three health priorities (Belonging, wellbeing and substance use prevention; health and housing; and equitable access and care). The Partnership also learned about the Water for Systems Change model that includes six conditions for systems change, including relationship building.

Attendees discussed three questions in small groups:

- How do you/your organization leverage relationships in your work?
- What activities or practices support relationships with other groups? And
- How do you measure the impact of relationships with other groups/networks/organizations?

Some takeaways from the conversation included: relationship building is important and takes time, there is a need to create shared definitions and language between partners/groups, and groups are trying different methods of engagement. Several attends shared they are interested in better measuring the impact of relationships. Some resources were shared, including Citizen Solution by Harry Voigt and the Partnership Playbook from Michigan State University.

Updates

Membership: A short new member application was added to the [Partnership membership webpage](#) in June. Partnership staff have been reaching out to member organizations to update the current roster. There were 13 attendees at the September Partnership orientation.

Statewide Health Improvement Framework: Health Priority workgroups continue to meet quarterly and are making progress on determining and starting initial action steps for the objectives and strategies. The Advisory continues to meet bi-monthly and is aiming to adopt process measures for the health priorities this fall.

Next meeting: Tuesday, 12/8/26 from 1:00pm to 3:00pm. This will be a virtual Webex meeting

Attendance

A total of 66 people attended the September 22, 2026 meeting

Attendees (alphabetized by last name)

Co-chairs: Sarah Grosshuesch (Local Public Health Association) and Assistant Commissioner Halkeno Tura (Minnesota Department of Health)

Meeting attendees: Katie Albert (St Louis County), Patti Anderson (Pennington), Lisa Behr (MDH), Kenneth Bence (ARRM), Sylwia Bujak (125 LIVE), Marna Canterbury (HealthPartners), Molly Carmody (Alzheimer's Association), Megan Carter (MN Dept of Education), Jill Collins Mattson (City of Bloomington Public Health Department), Alexandra De Kesel (ADKL Consulting), Lisa Dean (Sanford Worthington Clinic), Andrea Demmer (Ottertail County), Missy Dresch (MAHUBE-OTWA Community Action Partnership), Endurance Ehimen Eichie (MDH), Derrick F (Dodge County), Felicia Fisk (Chisago County), Claire Fleming (American Heart Association), Matt Flory (Minnesota Public Health Association), Johanna Flowers (Horizon Public Health), Kelly Fluharty (SMI Foundation), Caleb Frauendienst, Mariah Geiger-Williams (MDH), Kristen Godfrey Walters (MDH), Bella Green (Ramsey County), Kelley Heifort (Dept of Corrections), Kerry Henke, Minister Dr. Ni Ora Hokes, Diane Holmgren (Ramsey County), Shelagh Kalland (Blue Cross Blue Shield of MN), Foua Khang, Stephanie Kovarik (HealthPartners), Allison Larson (MDH), Lisa Mattson MD (MMA), Carrie Mclachlan (North Memorial Health), Eric Mens (American Heart Association), Kim Milbrath (MDH), Rachael Mills (Carver County Public Health), Andrew Morris (Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans), Debbie Nyakaru (Medica), Tracy Onchwari (St Louis County), Sarah Peterson (Second Harvest), Susan Quast, Lexi Reinarts (Second Harvest), Chad Rhoads (United Ways), Haley Schofield (Fairview), Danielle Smith (Nobles County Community Services), Melinda Spike, Patrick Stieg (Health and Democracy MN Partnership), Rachel Stoll (Minnesota Community Health Worker Alliance), Sarah Strawbridge (Merck), Jill Sweiven (DHS), Tracy Terlinde (Chisago County), Elena Tran (Scott County), Kellie Turner (Dept of Corrections), Michelle Wall, Danushka Wanduragala (Health Partners), Barb Salmela-Lind (Watonwan County), Jenna Weiss (Advocates for Reproductive education), Casey Williams (DVHHS), Dasharatha Yata (SEWA-AIFW)

Meeting support staff: Tara Carmean, Deanna White, and Melissa Michels (notetaker)