

# Funding public health in Minnesota: Strengthening our public health infrastructure

## A historic moment and a unique opportunity

In its 2021 session, the Minnesota Legislature recognized the important role of public health. In addition to other investments, the legislature provided a \$6 million annual appropriation for community health boards<sup>1</sup> and tribal governments to build public health capacity.

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) convened a group of State Community Health Advisory Committee (SCHSAC) Executive Committee members and public health leaders to determine the best use of these funds. This group developed three guiding principles:

1. Funds should be focused on foundational capabilities in communications; data and epidemiology; community partnerships; and/or health equity.<sup>2</sup> Funds should not supplant existing work. How applicants build capacity will not be prescribed.
2. Funds should be used to improve, pilot, or strengthen approaches that will advance these capabilities in deep rural, rural, suburban and/or metro settings.
3. Funds should be used to advance health equity while building these capabilities.

**This is an opportunity like Minnesota’s public health system has never had before: an opportunity to build new relationships, try new things, and turn back-of-the-napkin dreams into reality.**

## Everyone in Minnesota deserves the opportunity to live in a healthy community

Health is the foundation for thriving communities, and governmental public health experts have a unique responsibility to diagnose, prevent, and respond to the health needs of their communities. But Minnesota’s public health system was built to address the health problems of the 1970s and those that came before; it is not well equipped to meet the pressing health challenges we face today—or the ones we know will emerge in the years to come.

Minnesota’s public health leaders are committed to taking action to transform the way we do business in public health: we must make sure Minnesota’s governmental public health system has the leadership, workforce, and capacity necessary to promote the health of communities and protect against health threats, now and into the future. **One way that we will get there is by trying new ways of building capacity and carrying out public health responsibilities.**<sup>3</sup>

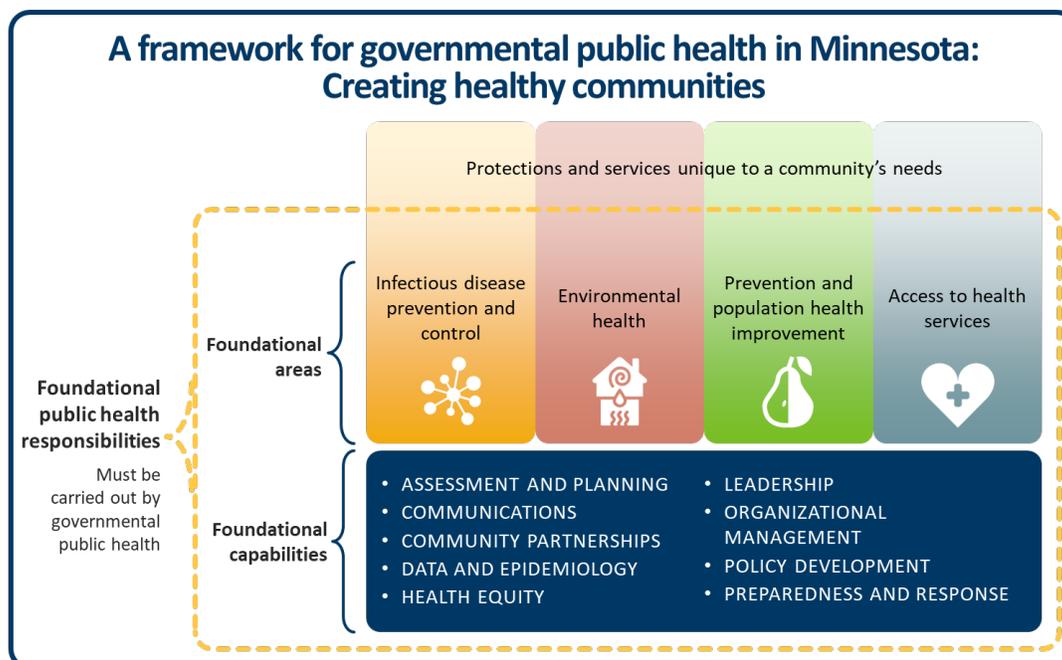
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<sup>1</sup> In this document we refer to community health boards (CHBs) rather than local health departments. A CHB or tribal nation must be the fiscal host for the funds, but the funding can be used to support work in individual health departments working in new or different partnerships within or beyond a CHB’s jurisdiction.

<sup>2</sup> These areas are not listed in order of priority. Presented here in alphabetical order, they reflect the key areas local public health leaders have identified as their most pressing infrastructure needs.

<sup>3</sup> For more information, see: [A New framework for governmental public health in Minnesota \(2019\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/practice/schsac/workgroups/docs/201906StrengtheningANewFramework.pdf) ([www.health.state.mn.us/communities/practice/schsac/workgroups/docs/201906StrengtheningANewFramework.pdf](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/practice/schsac/workgroups/docs/201906StrengtheningANewFramework.pdf)).

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## Anticipated timeline

Our goal is to distribute these funds by April 2022, following a period of training, technical assistance, and other support. Key milestones are outlined below.

- **January 2022:** Brief application and guidance released; webinars and office hours to support application development
- **February 2022:** Develop review process in collaboration with the Infrastructure Fund Workgroup; application review; finalize workplans and budgets
- **March 2022:** Finalize grant agreements

## More information

- **Local Public Health Association (LPHA)**  
Kari Oldfield, Director ([koldfield@mncounties.org](mailto:koldfield@mncounties.org))  
Sarah Grosshuesch (Wright), 2022 Chair ([sarah.grosshuesch@co.wright.mn.us](mailto:sarah.grosshuesch@co.wright.mn.us))  
Sarah Reese (Polk, Norman, and Mahnomen), 2021 Chair ([sarah.reese@co.polk.mn.us](mailto:sarah.reese@co.polk.mn.us))  
Maggie Rothstein (Aitkin, Itasca, Koochiching), 2022 Chair-Elect ([Maggie.Rothstein@AIKCHSB.onmicrosoft.com](mailto:Maggie.Rothstein@AIKCHSB.onmicrosoft.com))
- **Minnesota Department of Health (MDH)**  
Chelsie Huntley, Community Health Division Director ([chelsie.huntley@state.mn.us](mailto:chelsie.huntley@state.mn.us))  
Kim Milbrath, Center for Public Health Practice Section Manager ([kim.milbrath@state.mn.us](mailto:kim.milbrath@state.mn.us))
- **State Community Health Services Advisory Committee (SCHSAC)**  
Sheila Kiscaden (Olmsted), Chair ([kiscaden.sheila@co.olmsted.mn.us](mailto:kiscaden.sheila@co.olmsted.mn.us))  
Tarryl Clark (Stearns), Incoming Chair ([tarryl.clark@co.stearns.mn.us](mailto:tarryl.clark@co.stearns.mn.us))

MDH Center for Public Health Practice  
651-201-3880 [health.ophp@state.mn.us](mailto:health.ophp@state.mn.us)  
[www.health.state.mn.us](http://www.health.state.mn.us)

December 2021. To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-3880.