

Environmental Health Services Strategic & Operational Plan 2010- 2015

Public Health 
Seattle & King County



Environmental Health Services Strategic & Operational Plan



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Executive Summary

There are new challenges in environmental health, new initiatives and research findings that drive policy changes, and new leadership at the King County Executive office. Our strategic and operational plan incorporates these, the King County Strategic Plan, and Public Health's Operational Master Plan. Our intent is a visioning into the future so we can achieve sustainably healthy environments for all residents on King County, passing historic barriers of race and economics.

THE ROLE OF ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH

The field of Environmental Public Health transects numerous areas of interest beyond traditional public health. As stated by the National Centers for Disease Control, "The environment is everything around us - the air we breathe, the water we drink and use, and the food we consume. It's also the chemicals, radiation, microbes, and physical forces with which we come into contact. Our interactions with the environment are complex and are not always healthy."



Environmental Public Health is also embedded in the built environment, the social environment, and the impacts of our physical and social world on community health. The environment that one lives in can greatly determine outcomes in health; one can predict life expectancies based on zip code across the United States, as well as by race and socioeconomic status. Environment precludes access to opportunity as well as less stressful life conditions, and healthy environments can mitigate the quality of life due to other health indicators.

HOW DO WE CARRY OUT OUR WORK?

The Environmental Health Division works to prevent illness and disability, and increase healthy years lived, from interactions between people and their encompassing environment, and promote policy and systems changes and community education. Framed by professional definitions of Environmental Health as well as the County's Equity and Social Justice Ordinance, we are especially committed to addressing issues inherent in protecting

the health of populations that are particularly vulnerable to certain environmental hazards. This is reflected in our Division's Vision Statement, "Healthy, safe, and vibrant communities; making it a reality for everyone!"

Though the scope of our daily work focuses on King County, as professional experts we also participate in policy development and improvement at the State and National levels. We bring our knowledge of the science, social equity, and public service to the field, and are committed to participating in ongoing research to improve the community impact of our services and address emerging environmental issues.

DID YOU KNOW?

Thirteen million deaths annually and nearly a quarter of all disease worldwide—including 33 percent of illnesses in children under age five—are due to environmental causes that could be avoided or prevented, according to a report by the World Health Organization (WHO), Preventing disease through healthy environments: Towards an estimate of the environmental burden of disease.



Environmental Health Services Strategic & Operational Plan



THE CHALLENGING ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

King County Government services, in general, are dependent on a good economy; when it falters, revenue for services falters. For the past few years Environmental Health has been charged with developing a fee-based funding structure for the work we conduct, so that these important regulatory functions in protecting the public's health have more stability. While this has been possible for some of our programs, ensuring the public's health is often more related to planning and prevention, and cannot always be reliably fee-based or fee supported.

This Strategic Plan addresses those challenges, not only in securing funding, but improving system efficiencies, leveraging funds, and growing partnerships. Seeking sustainability in our program support will help us to maintain key roles in community health in all economic conditions.

Though the recent years have driven some difficult decisions to cut key services, these difficulties also provide us with an opportunity to seek new ways of achieving our community health objectives.

WHAT ARE OUR SPECIFIC GOALS?

To further our work, EH has identified the following major Goals in this Strategic Plan:

- **Conduct Assessment and Evaluation**
- **Bolster Community Engagement**
- **Foster Internal Collaboration**
- **Take Leadership on Emerging Issues**
- **Secure Funding**

Within these major goals, we have also identified specific strategies that will help us accomplish those goals. A summary table is provided on the next page.

In conclusion, this Strategic Plan has been developed at a time of great challenges. The process has brought issues and strategies to the forefront that will help us to improve the public's health for the long-term. We intend this to be a living document, guiding our response to emerging issues and priorities over the next several years.

Summary Table of Goals and Strategies

GOAL #	GOAL TITLE	STRATEGY #	STRATEGY TITLE
1	Conduct Assessment and Evaluation	1	Conduct periodic community health assessments to assess population health status related to environmental conditions.
		2	Assess environmental conditions that pose threats to public health
		3	Evaluate environmental health services and practices
		4	Communicate findings to diverse audiences
		5	Provide assessment data to be incorporated into public health policy development (see Goal 3)
		6	Ensure staff capacity and resources to support the goal (data, technology, equipment)
2	Bolster Community Engagement	1	Build internal capacity to effectively engage with diverse audiences
		2	Provide community outreach to raise environmental health awareness and visibility
		3	Establish partnerships with the community to assess and improve environmental health conditions
3	Be a Learning Organization	1	Build and maintain an organization that values and supports a culture of constant learning
		2	Assure a competent workforce
		3	Provide staff tools and resources to do the best work possible
		4	Ensure internal processes support goals, including policies and planning
		5	Provide comprehensive environmental health services
4	Foster Internal Collaboration	1	Promote and support internal collaboration throughout Public Health - Seattle & King County
		2	Develop staff competency to support and conduct internal collaboration
		3	Provide staff resources and tools that are needed to support internal collaboration
		4	Ensure policy/procedures maximize operational efficiency
		5	Establish high-quality effective collegial partnerships
5	Take Leadership on Emerging Issues	1	Stay current with emerging environmental health issues
		2	Gather and develop information on best practices
		3	Provide resources and structure necessary to implement best practices
		4	Foster a culture of innovation within the Environmental Health Services Division in identifying emerging issues and best practices
		5	Communicate throughout the Environmental Health Services Division on emerging issues and best practices
6	Secure Funding	1	Use strict accountability standards and marketing to ensure adequate resources are sought and applied to projects/work
		2	Ensure a robust, secure, and diversified funding system

1.0 INTRODUCTION INTENT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL PLAN

King County has recently adopted various strategic and operational plans that identify goals and priorities to meet emerging challenges. Environmental health touches each facet of the County's work through physical infrastructure impacts on the community, services required to keep the public safe and thriving, and policies and regulations that address new opportunities and new problems. There is a growing realization that community relationships, access to healthy infrastructure, and other social determinants of health play a crucial role in community health and the sustainability of all health improvements. The intent of this document is to provide a guide and framework for the Environmental Health Services Division that aligns with the broader King County Strategic Plan¹, the Public Health Operational Master Plan (PHOMP)², and provides a structure for the Division to prioritize, monitor, and conduct our work in a field of emerging challenges, increased public health needs and demands, and declining revenues.

While focused on local public health, the Division plays a leadership role in the national environmental health field and also aligns this document with the standards and strategies of the National Center of Environmental Health at the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Connected to this alignment and leadership in the environmental health field, this strategic and operational plan is intended to address the importance of capacity building and continual improvement to maintain and improve our professional leadership.

Each Division within PUBLIC HEALTH is expected to produce a Strategic and Operational Plan, following the framework of the PHOMP which was developed through a collaborative process with the King County Council, King County Board of Health and the King County Executive. It establishes the mission, goals, guiding principles and strategic direction for public health in King County. The PHOMP also defines a solid vision and foundation for the future of public health in King County through four guiding principles on which to base future policies and strategies, a set of long term and four year goals, as well as a set of four year strategies to accomplish those goals.

The operational plans that are part of this document are intended to provide a baseline for the implementation of identified goals and strategies, and are intended to be dynamic documents that frame the annual objectives and accomplishments of the Division.

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/exec/PSB/StrategicPlan/CountyStratPlan.aspx> • <http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/publichealthmasterplan.aspx>



2.0 BACKGROUND OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES DIVISION

There are new challenges in environmental health, new initiatives and research findings that drive policy changes, and new leadership at the King County Executive office. Our strategic and operational plan incorporates these, the King County Strategic Plan, and Public Health's Operational Master Plan. Our intent is a visioning into the future so we can achieve sustainably healthy environments for all residents on King County, passing historic barriers of race and economics.

The public's health depends on basic environment fundamentals that ensure safe places to live, work and play – food, water, and sanitation.



THE ROLE OF ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH

The field of Environmental Public Health transects numerous areas of interest beyond traditional public health. As stated by the National Centers for Disease Control, "The environment is everything around us - the air we breathe, the water we drink and use, and the food we consume. It's also the chemicals, radiation, microbes, and physical forces with which we come into contact. Our interactions with the environment are complex and are not always healthy."

Environmental Public Health is also embedded in the built environment, the social environment, and the impacts of our physical and social world on community health. The environment that one lives in can greatly determine outcomes in health; one can predict life expectancies based on zip code across the United States, as well as by race and socioeconomic status. Environment precludes access to opportunity as well as less stressful life conditions, and healthy environments can mitigate the quality of life due to other health indicators.

2.1 VISION:

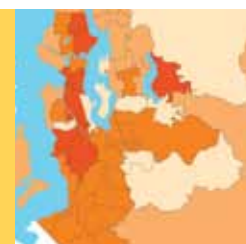
The Vision statement for the division was developed through several deep discussions among members of the strategic planning steering committee with input from stakeholders. In its simplicity it reflects the values that the Division works from and our passion for protecting the public's health so that everyone can achieve their potential.

2.2 MISSION:

Our mission is to identify and sustain environmental conditions that promote healthy people and healthy communities in Seattle and King County. Environmental Health Services focuses on prevention of disease through planning healthy built environments, ensuring proper sanitation, safe food, and proper disposal of waste and toxics, and management of disease-carrying pests. We employ strategies, policies and interventions to promote and protect environmental health conditions that increase health equity and maximize healthy years lived. Environmental Health is an integral part of the public health infrastructure in King County. Our professional technical and clerical staffs work in teams to ensure that residents live in a clean and health-promoting environment.

DID YOU KNOW?

People who live in south Seattle and south King County bear a disproportionate burden of poor health and socioeconomic deprivation. The suburbs are now home to more people living in poverty than the central cities: Approximately 72,000 people are living in poverty in Seattle and Bellevue, whereas 97,000 people live in poverty in the rest of the County.



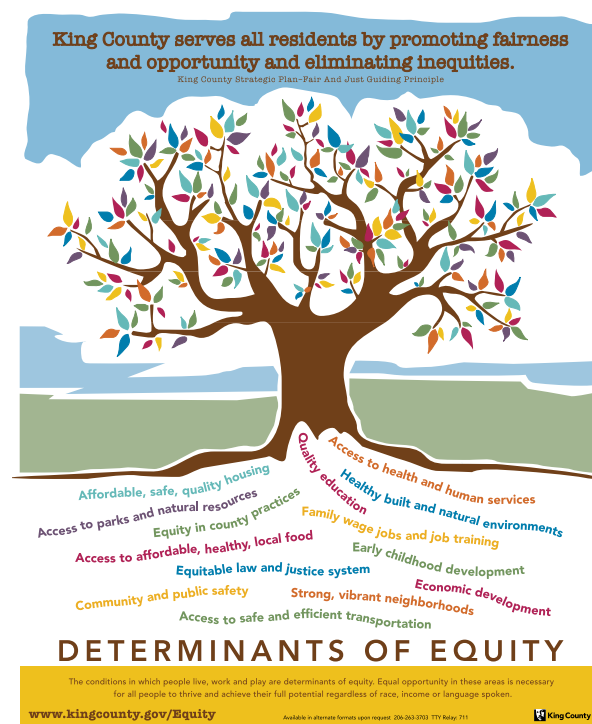


2.3 FUNDAMENTALS OF ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH:

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The public’s health depends on basic environment fundamentals that ensure safe places to live, work and play:

- **FOOD:** wholesome food and hygienic eating establishments
- **WATER:** clean water and soils,
- **SANITATION:** adequate waste disposal and safe, and pest-free environments



2.3.1 OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

Each year we provide tens of thousands of inspections and consultations to individuals and businesses throughout King County. In disaster preparedness efforts, proper planning and education around environmental concerns are integral to emergency response as well as hazard prevention, safe food, sanitation, and containment of toxic spills.

The King County Equity and Social Justice Ordinance³ establishes fundamental principles for providing services to all residents of King County. Adopted in 2010, this legislation directs all county agencies including Environmental Health to incorporate equity practices in all programs.

Social determinants of health are a key driver in environmental health and sustainability of healthy communities and therefore drive fundamental assumptions and priorities in our programs and services.

Additionally, underlying principles of community engagement that are identified in the King County Community Engagement Guide⁴ frame the direction of our goals and strategies.

To protect the public from disease and promote health, Environmental Health programs and services focus on three holistic strategies:

- **educate and inform the community about healthy environmental practices,**
- **use rules and regulations to safeguard the health of our community,**
- **conduct planning and policy development to address preventable health hazards.**

³<http://www.kingcounty.gov/exec/~/.media/exec/equity/documents/ESJordinance2010.ashx>

⁴www.kingcounty.gov/~.equity/~/.media/exec/equity/documents/CommunityEngagementGuideContinuum2011.ashx

2.3.2

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Also overarching our programs, emergency preparedness activities help the community to reduce potential critical problems during a disaster, and help the Division to respond to environmental health needs that arise from a disaster.

Environmental Health Division therefore plays an important role in the County's Health & Medical Area Command. This team is comprised of various personnel with disaster planning and response expertise, including Public Health emergency preparedness staff, local government staff, liaisons to local emergency management, emergency medical reserve corps, and healthcare providers with expertise in logistics, planning and emergency response.

As members of this team, we support the direction, coordination and mobilization of health and medical resources, information and personnel during emergencies and disasters. This includes disease surveillance and lab analysis, medical resource management, morgue operations, medical surge, isolation and quarantine, emergency medical services (EMS) and environmental health.



Of the emergency activations that have occurred over the last several years, 70% have been due to environmental health risks from weather or natural disaster.



DID YOU KNOW?

Rodent Control information on the Environmental Health website receives about 150,000 page views per year!



3.0 OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES DIVISION

Environmental Health Services Division is organized into three program areas:



**Community
Environmental Health**



**Healthy Community
Planning**



**Food and
Facilities Protection**

3.1 COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

The public's health depends on clean drinking water supplies, adequate sewage management and disposal, and protection from exposure to waste, disease vectors, and hazardous materials. Environmental Health specialists protect the community's health through monitoring, inspecting, and enforcing regulations pertaining to sewage, plumbing, water, and septic systems in King County.

The proper management of environmental hazards is also an essential component of public health. Working in cooperation with state and other local and national agencies, the Environmental Hazards team manages chemical wastes, educates about toxic exposures such as lead and arsenic, supervises solid waste disposal, controls rodent infestations, coordinates responses to vector-borne illnesses such as West Nile virus, responds to indoor air quality and noise pollution problems, and investigates illegal drug laboratories. Though a large part of our work is regulatory, our programs include a focus on planning and assessment, education and outreach, and developing new approaches to managing indoor toxics exposure. Conducting reviews of project plans, regulatory documents, and environmental toxics research comprise the team's prevention efforts.

Approximately 24,000 plumbing and gas piping inspections have been conducted in the last year by the Plumbing and Gas Piping inspection team.

3.1.1 Sewage Disposal/Platting and Land Development

The staff in this program review sewage disposal and septic system plans. Hundreds of sewage systems and septic tanks installations are inspected each year, since faulty tanks and systems may result in the leakage of raw sewage into the ground and surface water systems. The staff educate installers and sludge haulers, investigate complaints about sewage leaks, and conduct surveys of areas with high rates of failing systems. In unincorporated King County, EH evaluates land development projects to assure adequate water supply and sewage disposal systems. The Washington Marine Recovery Area requires intensive monitoring and reviews in an effort to restore Puget Sound water quality and reopen shellfish harvesting.

3.1.2 Water Quality

Numerous small public water systems provide water to people living in King County. Inspectors work with these smaller systems on proper well site locations, planning, and system installation. They also evaluate and test individual water systems, provide about 3,500 consultations and perform about 300 inspections per year.

3.1.3 Plumbing and Gas Piping

Plumbing installations, including waste drains, vent piping, and gas piping systems are inspected each year for compliance with local regulations and the uniform plumbing code. Approximately 32,000 plumbing and gas piping inspections are conducted each year by the Plumbing and Gas Piping team.

3.1.4 Policy Development

Our plumbing professionals serve on state and national boards and committees that oversee and set code standards for the nation. Keeping up with the region's reputation for trend-setting legislation in green building, Environmental Health Division's staff develop innovative code revisions that meet public health and safety standards and at the same time allow new technologies in green building and environmental sustainability, such as rainwater harvesting systems for drinking water supplies for remote locations, and large systems for Seattle's office building campuses.

3.1.5 Solid Waste & Rodent Control

Staff review plans for waste handling facilities, and monitor and inspect solid waste treatment sites, transfer stations, and landfill disposal sites to ensure that state and local solid waste codes are being followed. Solid Waste staff also investigate unlawful dumping complaints – about 800 per year.

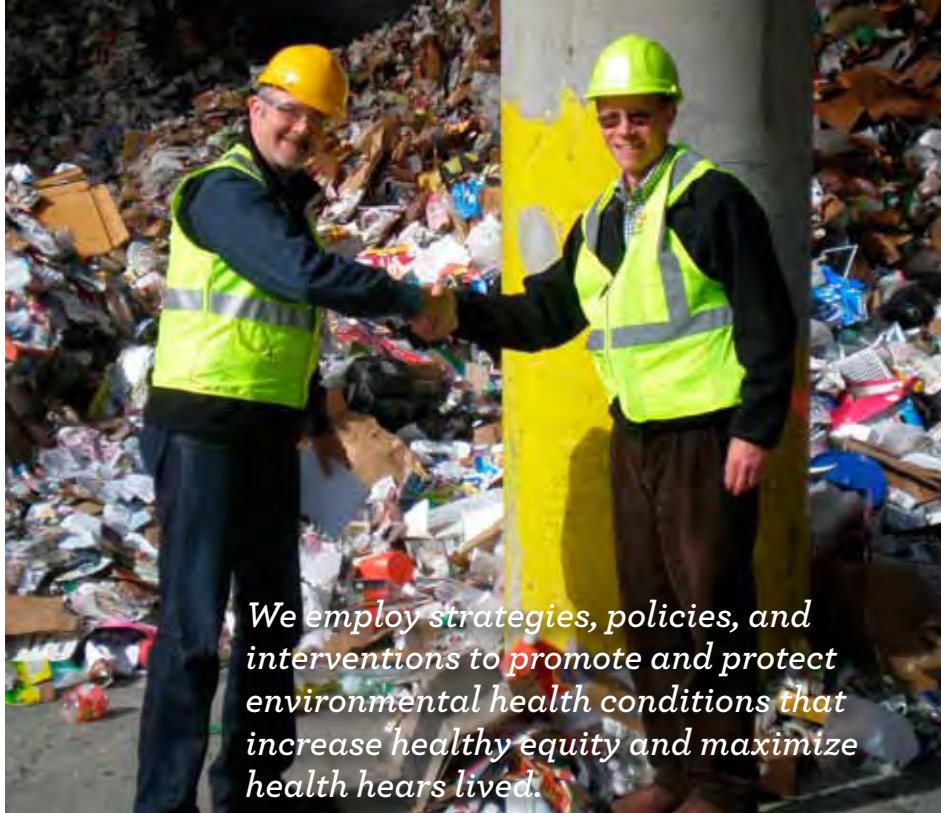
Rodent Control Program staff investigate complaints about rodent and insect infestations of public health significance, provide information and education to prevent and reduce rodent populations, and enforce state and local regulations for managing these disease carriers.

3.1.6 Zoonotic Diseases

The Public Health Veterinarian provides advice regarding rabies and other zoonotic diseases, and fields phone calls from physicians and the general public. Within the City of Seattle, inspectors conduct routine surveillance of sewer mains and place rodent bait to control the sewer rodent population.

Zoonotic diseases have increased over the years due to travel and trade expansion. Well known examples are bed bug infestations, the spread of West Nile virus, and avian flu. As climate change impacts increase, there is also an increasing importance in environmental monitoring of zoonotic diseases in our region and the need to develop policies and procedures in response to public health incidences involving sub-tropical insects and plants.

Beginning in 2010 staff provide inspection, investigation, and education for pet stores, breeders, and grooming facilities required to be permitted and meet basic health and safety standards for humans and for pets.



DID YOU KNOW?

Good Plumbing and Septic design are the foundational elements of the field of Public Health, dating back to findings of John Snow's investigations in the cause of the cholera epidemics in 1858 London.



3.1.7 Local Hazardous Waste Management Program

This is a unique collaborative program across agencies and government jurisdictions. Funded through solid waste programs across the County, the program is administered through Environmental Health Services but is governed by a collaborative board, the Management Coordinating Committee. Representing King County agencies and the 39 incorporated cities in King County, the Local Hazardous Waste Management Program conducts hazardous waste contamination prevention and response efforts across several levels of the spectrum; from individual community members to small businesses and neighborhoods to reduce hazardous wastes and to provide long-term planning.

Small businesses such as dry cleaners and autobody shops produce large quantities of hazardous waste each year, all of which need to be identified, handled and disposed of correctly. Households can also be burdened with hazardous waste – old paints and insecticides, for example. The Waste Characterization team helps individuals and businesses identify the toxicity of chemical wastes and the appropriate disposal site for the wastes. In addition, Industrial Materials Exchange (IMEX) connects businesses that have waste materials that other businesses can use.

The Hazards Line and Business Waste Line staff answer 20,000-plus telephone calls each year from consumers with questions – everything from what to do with a pesticide spill to concerns about health risks from household mold.

Community Toxics

A number of special activities are conducted in the Hazards section. Some of these hazard assessment teams operate under grants from the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology), while others operate on contracts from Ecology and other agencies.

- o The Site Hazard Assessment team evaluates over 100 contaminated sites each year for potential health hazards and site clean-up.
- o The Local Source Control staffs visit small quantity generators of hazardous waste to provide assistance in keeping hazardous waste out of the surface waters.
- o The Tacoma-Smelter Plume team focuses activities on communicating of health risks associated with the heavy metal contamination of King County soils due to the historic operation of the ASARCO copper and arsenic plant located near Tacoma, Washington.
- o The Illegal Drug Lab Abatement staffs oversee the decontamination of properties that have been used for the manufacturing of illegal drugs such as methamphetamines. This program ended in 2011 due to a shift in need and reductions in funding.
- o The Healthy Homes Project conducts work that shifts public health responses from employing only a medical model to a more holistic home-centred public's health. Respiratory illness and toxic exposure to lead, molds and chemicals are addressed at the housing level which removes triggers of disease from the environment and ensures that future residents are not also exposed.



Environmental Health staff work to prevent childhood lead poisonings and to help families who have been exposed – approximately 75 children each year in King County are reported with high blood lead levels, which can permanently damage their mental and physical development.



3.2 HEALTHY COMMUNITY PLANNING

The Healthy Community Planning Program (HCP) focuses on health promotion strategies to support healthy community development in King County by promoting environmental conditions that help all people achieve and sustain optimum health. HCP brings social, economic, and environmental factors that impact health into planning decisions about the land, transportation, and housing on which people depend.

Land use planning and public health have been linked for nearly a century, starting from the need to prevent infectious disease outbreaks in the early 1900's. More recently public health agencies have returned to a focus on land use planning and design as it becomes more apparent that the leading causes of death and injury are linked to the environments where we live, work, learn, and play. The program's goal is to reduce health impacts and prevent health inequities by including information from the community and science-based research in land and resource decisions. The integration of public health into planning decisions is an important strategy to ensure that all people and communities have the opportunity to make healthy choices regardless of their income, education or ethnic background. HCP staff collaborate with the community members and groups, other agencies, educational institutions, and professionals in related fields to meet its goal to reduce health impacts and prevent health inequities.

Three focus areas of HCP are:

3.2.1 Community Planning and Health Assessment

The HCP team works to expand support for and use of healthy community planning principles and resources by planners of land use, transportation, and economic development and policies to develop healthy, equitable communities.

In order to do this a myriad of resources are available to ensure that the best services can be provided to our partner agencies and the communities that we serve. HCP along with the King County Board of Health developed the King County's Planning for Healthy Communities Guidelines to be integrated with the update of jurisdictions' Comprehensive Plan and any other planning efforts. HCP staff collaborates with other PHSKC divisions and King County departments to develop and use existing health and equity tools to inform local planning efforts (e.g. GIS maps, Equity Impact Review Tool, Community Engagement tool, Health Impact Assessments, Transit Oriented Development and Health Principles, and Planning for Healthy Community Guidelines) and effectively present strong, cohesive, messages and recommendations.

In specific cases, HCP has directly conducted health impact assessments and advised on other assessments to ensure healthy community planning principles are incorporated.

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In specific cases, HCP has directly conducted health impact assessments and advised on other assessments to ensure healthy community planning principles are incorporated.

3.2.3 Policy Development

At the federal and state level, HCP supports collaborative efforts between agencies that ensure more comprehensive community development, inclusion of federal and state legislative policies, and funding criteria that increases equitable access to walking, bicycling and transit services.

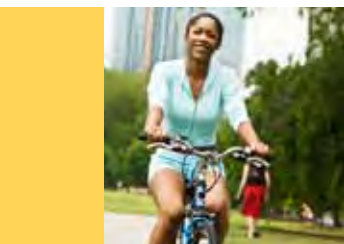
At the regional level, we support health integration into regional transportation and land use planning decision making, especially through involvement and collaboration with the Puget Sound Regional Council. Additionally, HCP directly supports King County cities in updating and adopting healthy community planning policies in their land use and comprehensive plans.

HCP also partners with academia and other practice/professional institutions to ensure development of HCP practitioners and resources that effectively integrate health issues into planning processes and policy.

3.2.4 Community Engagement

This work aligns closely with the King County's Strategic Plan goals for Health and Human Potential (providing equitable opportunities for all individuals to realize their full potential) and Economic Growth and Built Environment (encouraging a growing and diverse King County economy and vibrant, thriving and sustainable communities). HCP takes a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach to advancing research and knowledge and improving population health by collaborating with the community, other agencies, educational institutions, and professionals in related fields. HCP embraces the approach to working with community as a liaison to planning and decision-making processes that will impact the lives of families. Our aim is to support community members' engagement in local planning processes so their knowledge and experience is effectively used in the creation of healthy environments.

Land use planning and public health have been linked for nearly a century, starting from the need to prevent infections and disease outbreaks in the early 1900's.



DID YOU KNOW?

The Board of Health adopted Healthy Community Planning Guideline in 2011 to be incorporated into the County's Comprehensive Planning processes.

3.3 FOOD AND FACILITIES HEALTH PROTECTION

To ensure the public's health, food establishments, swimming pools and other public facilities that can spread disease must be kept sanitary and healthy. The food and facilities protection program's environmental health professionals work to ensure that these public businesses are operating with the public's health in mind.

3.3.1 Food Protection

Food-borne illnesses from causes such as e-coli and salmonella have the potential to affect thousands of people, sometimes with life-or-death impacts. Restaurants and other food establishments can be the source of these illnesses if they are not operated using health-protecting principles. The program staff issues permits, inspect permitted establishments, provide education to food workers, and review plans for proposed food establishments.

Plan Review and Permitting

Starting a food establishment business begins with a good concept and a plan which incorporates code requirements pertaining to the safe and healthy operation of the food business. Construction plan review is completed for every food establishment before operation can begin. Approximately 800 food establishment plan reviews are conducted annually by food program staff.

Foodworker Cards

Food workers in Washington State are required to obtain and maintain current, a food worker card certification from a local health jurisdiction in the state. King County issues approximately 60,000 food worker cards annually through courses offered in a classroom format or through an online training and certification system. In some instances, private classes may also be scheduled.

Health Inspections

Most of the 11,000 food facilities in King County are visited one to three times a year by health inspectors, who check for proper food handling, preparation, and storage. Nearly 30,000 inspections are conducted annually. Staff also investigate food-borne illness outbreaks and participate in product recalls.

Farmers Markets

Environmental Health issues permits to and inspects farmers markets in King County. There are over 40 farmers markets in King County.

Vibrant Street Food

During 2010, the food program began a pilot project with the City of Seattle to encourage more street food vending. New guidelines and policies were developed which encouraged street food operators to propose menus with greater variety while meeting the requirements of the food code.

Menu Labeling

The King County Board of Health's nutrition labeling regulation requires some chain food restaurants permitted by Public Health - Seattle & King County to provide calorie, saturated fat, carbohydrate and sodium information to customers.

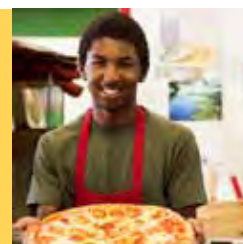


Our program's environmental health professionals work to ensure that public businesses are operating with the public's health in mind.



DID YOU KNOW?

Each year, over 30,000 inspections are conducted of King County's vibrant food businesses to protect the public's health.





3.3.2 Living Environment – Pools, Spas and Beaches

Pools, spas and beaches have inherent safety concerns and are a potential source of disease. Inspections are performed, construction plans are reviewed, and permits are issued at almost 5,000 locations each year. Staff review shoreline development permits, Environmental Impact Statements, and coordinate with the Corps of Engineers on environmental projects.

3.3.3 Policy Development

King County has the largest Local Public Health agency in Washington, serving the most populated county in the State. Environmental Health Services Division, therefore, participates and serves in leadership roles during the updating and development of statewide policies, legislation, and new strategies. Examples are State Food Code updates, standards for farmers markets, new permitting regulations for mobile vendors, and other emerging issues.



3.4 RELATIONSHIP TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH OPERATIONAL MASTER PLAN

The Public Health Operational Master Plan (PHOMP) identifies three strategies for addressing the health needs for King County's population, and especially for those whom health disparities are the greatest: Protection, Promotion, and Provision. Provision is specifically defined in the PHOMP as direct clinical and medical health services. Within that framework and definition, Environmental Health Services Division focuses on Protection and Promotion activities such as education, planning, monitoring and inspection, situation response, and access to resources. We interact on a daily basis with other divisions of Public Health, other King County agencies, and other government jurisdictions.



EHS PROGRAMS	Public Operational Master Plan		
	PROTECTION	PROMOTION	PROVISION
Community Environmental Health			
Sewage Disposal/Platting and Land Development	×	×	
Water Quality		×	
Plumbing and Gas Piping	×	×	
Policy Development	×	×	
Solid Waste and Rodent Control Program	×	×	
Zoonotic Diseases	×	×	
Local Hazardous Waste Management	×	×	
Community Toxics	×	×	
Healthy Community Planning			
Urban Planning Health Impact Assessment	×		
Policy Development	×		
Community Engagement		×	
Food and Facility Protection			
Food Protection	×	×	
Living Environment	×	×	
Policy Development	×	×	

4.0 THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The Environmental Health Services Division Strategic Planning process began in 2008 with initial discussions at program staff meetings to gather expectations. Initiated by the Division Director, the process was specifically designed to be a staff-driven process instead of a management-led activity. Various opportunities for input were engaged in the process. This Plan was developed in two phases:



PHASE I

Gathering input, environmental scan, gap analysis, and drafting goals and strategies. The steering committee coordinated and conducted Phase I of the strategic plan.

1. A steering committee, representative of all Division program areas, was formed in October 2008

Community Environmental Health	Food & Facility Protection	Healthy Community Planning and Administration	Management	Director's Office
Linda Van Hooser Mark Fallgatter Matt Johnson Ryan Kellogg	Diane Agasid Steve Curry Sid Forman Thu Bui	Greg Wilson Kadie Bell Morgan Barry	Barbara Wright Bill Lawrence Larry Fay Mark Rowe Ngozi Oleru	Dennis Worsham Hillary Karasz

2. Staff input sessions

- program staff meetings: 4-5 hour sessions within each program group to review PHOMP and gather input for EH Strategic and Operational Plan
- optional meetings based on tasks: developing themes from input, goals and strategies,
- Environmental Health conference

3. Stakeholder Input sessions

- community input sessions: 4-5 hours, with Environmental Justice advocates, Seniors, Youth, Asian and Pacific Islanders)
- stakeholder interviews (27): Local Health Departments, NACCHO, NEHA, Local policymakers, Board of Health, Center for Disease Control and Prevention
- Alignment with other plans and standards: PHOMP, Washington State Public Health Standards, National Environmental Public Health Standards

Phase 1 of the process was facilitated by Dennis Worsham from the Director's office, and consultant, Tami Kellogg.

PHASE II – Operational and work plans developed for each program.

Phase 2 was facilitated by Trudy Rolla, Evaluation Coordinator for the Local Hazardous Waste Management Program in Environmental Health Services.

Each program conducted a gap analyses and identified issues, resources, alignment with regulations and plans, and possible evaluation criteria. These detailed analyses were entered into a standardized matrix for consistency across programs in the Division. They develop a foundation for operational plans for each program that align with the Goals and Strategies that were defined in Phase I.

Implementation of these operations plans will be incorporated into annual workplans for each program and for the Division, so that progress towards our specified Goals can be tracked, and the Strategies we have identified continue to guide our approach.

5.0 GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Beginning in 2008 the most significant downturn in the national and local economy since the Great Depression began, driving budget and policy decisions that impact the public's health and well-being. Environmental Health Services Division was severely challenged to reduce staff and services during a time when the public's needs increase. Economic forecasts indicate that the road back to vitality will be long and gradual. Under this lens, the goals and strategies for our Division must focus on how we are to best protect the public's health and respond to emerging needs.

Identified by staff and stakeholders, and prioritized by the steering committee, the following goals and strategies are intended to guide the Environmental Health Services Division through the period ending in 2015. Aligning with the the PHOMP, the King County Strategic Plan, and with state and national goals and standards for environmental health practice, the Division will integrate these goals into our program workplans.



5.1 GOAL CONDUCT ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Assess environmental health conditions and evaluate interventions using comprehensive assessment tools to inform policy decisions.

Strategy 1.

Conduct periodic community health assessments to assess population health status related to environmental conditions.

Suggested Activities

- Expand the stakeholder input process used in the EH Strategic Planning Phase I to reoccur periodically (time period to be established). This included key stakeholder interviews (policy makers, local leaders, national EH leaders, EH Division staff, PH Department staff); scans of local community organizations; community members.
- Expand the input process within each programmatic area to get specific representation, input, and viewpoints.
- Compile input data from each program into a database for the EH division so information is available to all programs. This could be under the oversight of the Division's community outreach program.
- Continue to participate in the PH population health indicators work group. EH staff members could incorporate data from EH programs into the community health assessments.

Strategy 2.

Assess environmental conditions that pose threats to public health.

Suggested Activities:

- Develop a steering team with representation from all programs, administration, and will work with Assessment Planning

Development and Evaluations Unit in order to:

- o Identify and assess what data is currently available and useful for the EH division and EH programs. This could be data that resides internally to the Public Health Department or externally (such as Food and Drug Administration, Department of National Resources and Parks, Department of Ecology...)
- o Decide/prioritize data collection based on availability and division/program needs – both current and future. Process to be determined by steering team.
- o Develop systematic process to be used by EH division and EH programs to collect, assess, and use data in systematic, clear, transparent way.

Strategy 3.

Evaluate environmental health services and practices.

Suggested Activities:

- Ensure that all programs within EH align with current State Public Health Standards and/or FDA Standards, and King County Board of Health codes.
 - o Some programs (Food, Hazardous Waste, Zoonotics) have already gone through this process and may need to be reassessed – other programs have not gone through this process and will need to for the first time.

Strategy 4.

Communicate findings to diverse audiences.

Suggested Activities:

- Use the EH Annual Report to provide information on progress and accomplishments achieved during the year in line with Strategic Plan.
- Communicate data/assessment/evaluation findings to stakeholders including: Division/Department Public Health representation; Community groups; Program specific groups (food advisory committee, etc.); Equity and Social Justice group; Board of Health, council-members, local political representatives.
- Develop effective reporting methods – use a variety of presentation media for various audiences including: stories, graphics, non-technical narratives, data presentation, etc.

Strategy 5.

Provide assessment data to be incorporated into public health policy development.

(relates to goal 3 - to ensure policy decisions are based on assessment data)

Suggested Activities:

- Use evaluation and assessment information to improve programs. Share findings within the PH department which could lead to collaborative work and decisions department wide
- Use current research, best practices, data to inform future EH programmatic decisions including the public health role in:
 - o Climate Change
 - o Potable water - Grey-water, water re-use

Strategy 6.

Ensure staff capacity and resources to support the goal (e.g. data, technology, other equipment).

Suggested Activities:

- Continue to implement electronic technologies within EH (Electronic field devices, Envision Connect) – educate staff on merits of technologies and the future implications that the technology will bring.
- Encourage/educate “early adapters to technology and assessment/evaluation interests” through internal education methods – encouraging staff to educate and expand knowledge to their team
- Build the Division’s capacity to use geographic information systems (GIS) in program assessment and evaluation through internal staff education on the potential uses of GIS information and imaging.

5.2 GOAL • BOLSTER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Strategy 1.

Build internal capacity to effectively engage with all communities.

Suggested Activities:

- Collaborate with the community to improve environmental health conditions, emphasizing those disproportionately affected.
- Empower the community to become advocates for public health
- Improve diversity in hiring
- Conduct ESJ trainings for all staff
- Identify and encourage staff with particular training and skill in working with diverse communities to help the Division across programs – address work duties limitations
- Explore and implement ways to effectively share data – in working with various communities



Strategy 2.

Provide community outreach to raise environmental health awareness and visibility.

Suggested Activities:

- Develop the EH website as an outreach tool – improve our visibility and awareness
- Conduct a community assessment of what people think of when they hear “environmental health” to use in our planning and actions
- Build capacity in the community to fully engage with government; help the community navigate relationships with institutions – to help them be more successful
- Explore and implement new strategies to address funding limitations for community outreach
- Identify and implement mechanisms to effectively check our assumptions – learn from the community
- It is important to engage communities of privilege to get them to understand that the way things are set up is producing problems.
- Define and educate what we mean by “diversity” and address assumptions in using the word “diverse”

Strategy 3.

Establish partnerships with the community to assess and improve environmental health conditions.

Suggested Activities:

- Duwamish interagency team – facilitate messaging between community and govt to fill a gap in working together and improving environmental health
- Provide funding for grassroots nonprofits to work with us – to spread our message, own the message, own the solutions
- Produce a “rodent control tool kit” for community members – incorporate ESJ
- As a citizen of your community – attend council meetings as an advocate to address environmental health issues
- Abatement – would \$ be better spent on supporting abatement vs what it costs to do regulatory process

5.3 GOAL • BE A LEARNING ORGANIZATION

Operate an organization that continually adapts to improve environmental health conditions.

Strategy 1.

Build and maintain an organization that values and supports a culture of constant learning.

Suggested Activities:

- Providing life-long learning through continuing education, training and mentoring
- Develop leadership skills among all staff and classifications
- Take leadership in development of environmental health policy



Strategy 2.

Assure a competent workforce by:

Suggested Activities:

- Conducting workforce assessment, planning and development
 - o develop staffing models and standards for each program
- Setting workforce standards

Strategy 3.

Provide staff tools and resources to do the best work possible.

- regularly assess and upgrade software and hardware tools to support staff's work
 - o develop and implement electronic inspection forms for all program staff to help collect information and develop reports

Strategy 4.

Ensure internal processes support goal, including policies and planning

- Develop and document standard operating procedures and protocols for each program
- Conduct process improvement analyses
 - o implement recommendations to streamline processes for staff and customers
- Develop performance measures for each program to track progress
- Align workplans with strategic plans
- Develop financial plans to support program identified goals

Strategy 5.

Provide comprehensive environmental health services by conducting the assurance activities of:

- Enforcement
- Education
- Promotion
- Partnerships

5.4 GOAL • FOSTER INTERNAL COLLABORATION

Collaborate within environmental health and across public health to effectively address issues.

Strategy 1.

Promote and support internal collaboration throughout Public Health – Seattle & King County.

Suggested Activities

- Establish a process for seeking input from internal (within EH) and external stakeholders on new projects or program efforts
 - Marijuana
 - Wineries
 - Hazardous waste product stewardship
- Internal coordination of GIS-related data related to ESJ
 - Better access to information to determine programmatic decisions
- Identify new ways to proactively identify EH indicators for assessments
 - conduct GIS analyses to enhance our understanding of data
- Working more closely with/coordinate with other Public Health Divisions
 - CHS partnerships with LHWMP Young Children's Team
 - Healthy housing partnerships with Prevention and CHS
- Work with other Public Health Divisions on legislative issues
 - Establish coordinating and reporting-back procedures
- Identify a list of organizations and workgroups that EH should be participating in regularly
- Partner and coordinate decisions around medical waste facilities with other public health programs and solid waste programs
- Work with expertise within the Division
 - Establish a list of EH staff to "call on" that can be helpful across programs - research specialist, GIS specialist, community engagement specialist
- Find ways to develop a better working knowledge of what all the other Divisions do – what are other types of expertise that can enhance our work?
 - address the challenges of updating information regularly



Strategy 2.

Develop staff competency: to support and conduct internal collaboration.

Suggested Activities

- Train staff in methods of marketing EH services and QI efforts
 - Make it enticing for others in the Division to have a conversation with our program
 - Work across Divisions in the department to develop requests that are more successful
- Educate staff through exposure to various programs/ divisions to demonstrate stakeholder value
- Cross train staff across Divisions example: Food and CD EPI Team partnership
- Start up/attend interdepartmental meetings (ex: DDES Ag Team) to work through system coordination issues

Strategy 3.

Provide staff resources and tools that are needed to support internal collaboration (e.g. data, technology, information and communication management system).

Suggested Activities

- Develop the Division's capacity to use Sharepoint – Designate technical support expert in the Division for staff to use Sharepoint to work effectively with other groups across the Department or County.
- Use all – staff meetings (quarterly) to provide information to staff about other Divisions and programs
- Organize presentations at program staff meetings
- Build workplans to include sharing a staff member's expertise with other programs
- Identify internal skills and addresses staff's requests to be utilized in other programs for their expertise
- Look at ways that Envision can be used to partner with other Departments and programs
 - example: Permit integration

- Identify ways we can change our data collection systems to collect the data that we need
- Use camera-phones to communicate with supervisor about and issue in the field
- Assess whether there is a need for photo documentation for plan reviews, etc.
- As rules and regulations change, establish a way to keep information sources updated and find other data systems that can help us improve our work
- Review and assess what data we are collecting and if it is the right info to collect

Strategy 4.

Ensure policy/procedures to maximize operational efficiency.

Suggested Activities

- Establish a regular schedule for reviews of all policies and procedures
- Invite stakeholder input into the policy / procedure process
- Centralize policies and procedures and provide them online for customers and staff to have better access
- Clean up computer shared folders and website data so old forms, etc can be taken off, encourage people to use the updated versions online

Strategy 5.

Establish high-quality, effective collegial partnerships.

Suggested Activities

- Participate in conferences and cultivate relationships with organizations/ community groups with similar interests.
- Engage in Public Health Brown Bag sessions – EH should be conducting presentations
 - o EIR Tool
 - o Climate Change
 - o new Food program changes



5.5 GOAL • TAKE LEADERSHIP ON EMERGING ISSUES

Demonstrate leadership and innovation in addressing emerging environmental health issues.

Strategy 1.

Stay current with emerging environmental health issues.

Suggested Activities

- Because of the movement in healthy eating and access to healthy locally grown produce – our Ag community will grow – Identify ways EH needs to be ready to protect the public health
 - o examples: wastewater and other infrastructure challenges with growth of wineries
- Centralized systems and sustainability – is there more resilience in decentralized services? – EH needs to identify policies and procedures to provide same level of protections when we have large number of small systems.
 - o example: challenges with Cedar Grove expansion
- Develop a process to identify and address emerging issues and assessing evolving issues?
- Build and strengthen partnerships with community and academic/research institutions who are tracking emerging issues
- Increase the ability of EH staff to attend conferences to keep up with the field
- Bring experts to Public Health for presentations on those emerging issues
- Look at staffing capacity and classifications so we can build into our Division the expertise to address this
 - o example: We have only one “social scientist” in EH to do research. We need engineers, toxic risk assessors...the typical HEI may not be the best fit for addressing research and assessment issues
- In the construction field new technologies are emerging; establish ways EH staff can be trained and educated
 - o Use of webinars, etc....

Strategy 2.

Gather and develop information on best practices.

Suggested Activities

- On emerging areas of interest
 - example: rainwater harvesting
- Develop a more intentional focus on the use of work study and interns to conduct proactive research of areas where we need to develop programs
- Conduct research beyond Public Health arenas for Best Practices
 - example: new sustainability construction practices don't start at the regulatory level
- Coordinate and encourage use of listserves and other internet resources to keep updated

Strategy 3.

Provide resources and structure necessary to implement best practices.

Suggested Activities

- Develop (define) policy or position on a particular subject to guide staff
- Implement staff training on what the policy is and how to implement it
- Establish outreach, education, and engagement methods that get to all populations beyond the examples of translations of information on the web
- Encourage staff to pursue specialty trainings in various areas to be able to become more creative with our programs
- Establish a structure (criteria for priorities) to distribute limited resources for training
- Identify how can CRE classes be chosen more intentionally to improve our programs
- Use You Tube for staff and community education
- "ask Geraldine" – develop a place (webpage?) for information –
 - example: How to cut the pipe and connect it correctly to pass inspection

Strategy 4.

Foster a culture of innovation within the Environmental Health Division in identifying emerging issues and best practices.

Suggested Activities

- LEAN
- Implement creative ideas in small pilots, testing; then develop the policy and procedure
- Build an infrastructure for innovation projects – put it out to all staff and be intentional about ESJ and other criteria
- Take advantage of FrontRunners, GIS brown bag, other opportunities
- Communicate and celebrate internal successes
 - example: how LHWMP works with the East African community
 - give out awards like the Phil Holms Award

Strategy 5.

Communicate throughout the Environmental Health Division on emerging issues and best practices.

Suggested Activities

- Present at the EH Conference – provide a quick overall briefing and then breakout sessions on what we have accomplished, so all staff get to hear all the things
- Establish an inter-program (intra EH?) "strikeforce" to look at complicated emerging issues (ex: wineries)
- Use the Newsletter to let staff know about other programs and staff accomplishments
- Use Microsoft LIVE MEETING or LYNC to communicate with others

5.6 GOAL • SECURE FUNDING

Increase, diversify and sustain funding and resources to fulfill the Environmental Health Division mission.

Strategy 1.

Use strict accountability standards and marketing to ensure adequate resources are sought and applied to projects/work.

Suggested Activities

- Review program costs and finance coding frameworks to ensure an understanding of and monitoring of true costs for services
- Conduct a rate study as periodically scheduled by the Board of Health
- Set and align Fund Reserve policy with County policy and consultant recommendations

Strategy 2.

Ensure a robust, secure, and diversified funding system.

Suggested Activities

- Review scope of work and requests for work in each program to identify need for funding strategies
- Research more grant opportunities and collaborations with other agencies

6.0 OPERATIONAL PLANS

The EHS Division began integrating the goals and strategies into daily program operations and staff workplans. These operational plans for each program become a tool for tracking our progress towards the goals we have identified, and provide us with a strategy guide to accomplish our work. Operational Plans for each program are intended to frame staff workplans and enable us to compile information to monitor the successes and continually make improvements to our programs.

Utilizing a planning tool from the Public Health Prevention Division, the EH program supervisors described their program(s) using the categories and guidance/questions provided. This tool is provided in Appendix 1., and each program's operational plan is provided in Appendix 2.



Thank You to our Contributors Acknowledgements

All Environmental Health Staff across the various programs in the Division participated in the development of this strategic plan. The knowledge and expertise they provided have helped the Division to set this direction. We value and appreciate their role in protecting the public's health in King County, and being the foundation of one of the environmental health programs in the nation that people look to for leadership and innovation.

The Planning Committee for this Strategic Plan provided strong leadership in guiding the process. We wish to highlight the huge efforts, time, and leadership that they spent on charting the 5 year course for the Division:

EH Phase 1 Strategic Planning Steering Committee Members: *Diane Agasid; Morgan Barry; Kadie Bell; Thu Bui; Steve Curry; Mark Fallgatter; Larry Fay; Sid Forman; Matt Johnson; Hilary Karasz; Ryan Kellogg; Bill Lawrence; Cindy Marshall; Ngozi Oleru; Mark Rowe; Linda Van Hooser; Greg Wilson; Dennis Worsham; Barbara Wright; facilitator Tammi Kellogg*

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The Environmental Health Division is proud to be part of the Department of Public Health - Seattle and King County, and the King County government. This Strategic Plan strives to highlight the issues and innovations that our staff have identified, and at the same time identify our goals and strategies within the frameworks adopted by the Department Director's office and the County Executive's office.

