MISSOURI
PUBLIC HEALTH
INSTITUTE

2026 – 2028

STRATEGIC PLAN

STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2028

MISSION

We advance Missouri's public health system by building capacity, strengthening infrastructure, and fostering statewide public health system collaboration.

VISION

A strong, united public health system for every Missouri community.

MISSOURI PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTE

VALUES

Adaptability

We embrace creativity, innovation, and continuous improvement to deliver the best possible impact with a resilient and learning mindset.

Authenticity

We are genuine in our approach and honest about our capabilities and limitations.

Dignity

We are people-first, inclusive, and equitable. We treat every individual with respect and fairness, ensuring that our actions honor the worth and health of all people.

Integrity

We communicate openly and transparently. We are true to our mission in all relationships and decisions by extending our trust to others and being worthy of their faith in us.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

These principles serve as guardrails for our work, providing clarity about what we prioritize.

Facilitating and Building Capacity | We guide and empower public health partners. When we engage in implementation efforts, it is only to offer temporary support while driving lasting development. We believe our role is as a collaborator and capacity builder, not as a replacement for local agencies.

Focusing on the System | We prioritize initiatives that create long-term, systemic improvements over short-term solutions.

Centering Government Appropriately | We prioritize our partners in governmental public health at the local and state levels whenever possible. Connecting them to community partners, lived experience voices, and multi-sector stakeholders is a critical part of how we support our governmental partners.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Strengthen Public Health Infrastructure
- Increase Funding for Public Health
- Expand Policy Influence
- Maintain a Standard of Operational Excellence

OUR JOURNEY

The Missouri Public Health Institute (MOPHI) is a nonprofit public health institute and membership association (Missouri Center for Public Health Excellence, MOCPHE) working across Missouri's public health system to improve service delivery, advocate for public health policy, and engage new partners. Most of our efforts center on the needs of governmental public health at the state and local levels, where collaboration and consistency have the greatest impact.

This three-year strategic plan is the result of a year-long engagement process led by Nelson Roberts Consulting. Together, we gathered insights from MOPHI staff, the Board of Directors, MOCPHE Executive Committee, and MOCPHE members, and facilitated listening sessions with local public health agencies (LPHAs), state partners, and other key stakeholders. Through this process, several clear themes emerged—each helping shape the priorities and direction of this plan.

Our Insights

Stakeholders consistently described MOPHI as a unified voice, effective collaborator, and trusted resource supporting public health agencies across Missouri. Because we work alongside rather than within governmental systems, we are uniquely positioned to convene partners, solve problems, and advocate for funding in ways that drive system-level changes no single agency could achieve alone. As one stakeholder shared,

> *"MOPHI's most significant contribution is its role as the vital connector and catalyst that builds and strengthens the public health system through bold partnerships, capacity building, and steadfast commitments to health equity."*

At the same time, stakeholders named several challenges facing both MOPHI and the broader public health system. Funding instability and political volatility threaten the sustainability of services and implementation across the state. There is a desire for more aspirational and bold action toward transformation, particularly around equity, data systems, and infrastructure development.

Geographic reach also remains uneven, with gaps in our connections to local public health agencies and key policymakers in some areas of Missouri.

Our Strengths

Through this process, several strengths stood out that will continue to anchor our work in the years ahead. Together, they reflect what makes the MOPHI a trusted partner and catalyst for Missouri's public health system:

- Strong relationships with leaders and organizations across the public health ecosystem, built on trust, collaboration, and shared purpose.
- Recognized leadership in bringing diverse partners together to solve problems and create lasting, system-level solutions.
- Deep expertise across our staff and technical knowledge that local agencies rely on for guidance, support, and partnership.

Our Commitment

When stakeholders imagined MOPHI's success ten years from now, they saw a Missouri where every community has equitable access to foundational public health services, and a sustainable statewide infrastructure supports the people who deliver them. They envisioned MOPHI as a trusted thought partner to the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services and as a driving force for innovation, efficiency, and quality across national, state, and local levels.

This strategic plan turns that vision into action. It reflects our shared belief that a stronger, more connected public health system is possible, and that MOPHI is ready to help lead the way. Over the next three years, we are focusing our energy on four strategic priorities that build on our strengths and respond directly to the needs and opportunities identified by our partners.

OUR PATH FORWARD

Our four strategic priorities for 2026–2028 chart a clear course for MOPHI and for Missouri's public health system. They respond directly to what we heard from our partners – building on our strengths in relationships, leadership, and expertise, while addressing the challenges around funding stability, strategic focus, communication clarity, and geographic reach.

The actions outlined for 2026 mark the first steps on this three-year journey. This plan was intentionally designed to evolve with us. Each year, we will pause to reflect, evaluate, and adapt, ensuring our work stays responsive to emerging needs, new insights, and changing conditions across Missouri.

In 2026, our focus is on strengthening the foundation: expanding our operational infrastructure, deepening connections, and opening new opportunities for collaboration. As we move into 2027 and 2028, we will build on that progress, refining and expanding our efforts as we continue to learn, grow, and serve alongside our partners.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

STRENGTHEN PUBLIC HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE

Public health infrastructure encompasses the systems, workforce, data capabilities, and organizational capacity that enable agencies to deliver essential services. In Missouri, infrastructure gaps threaten the ability of LPHAs to meet community needs effectively. Workforce shortages, gaps in training opportunities, and inadequate data systems all contribute to a fragmented approach to public health service delivery across the state.

What We Hope to Achieve

By 2028, Missouri will have a more robust and equitable public health infrastructure characterized by a skilled and supported workforce, increased number of accredited agencies, improved data systems and capabilities, and innovative approaches to service delivery that can be replicated across communities. Local public health agencies will have access to high-quality training, technical assistance, and peer learning opportunities that strengthen their capacity to serve their communities. Ideally, public trust in public health will increase as agencies demonstrate competence, responsiveness, and effective communication.

What We Will Do in 2026

- **Communications and Narrative Building.** We will focus on improving communication strategies, narrative storytelling for public health, and building trust in local public health.
- **Data Action Center.** We will launch a Data Action Center to strengthen data capacity, provide training on data analysis and visualization, and help agencies leverage data for decision-making and advocacy.
- **Governmental Public Health Summit (GPHS).** We will convene governmental public health practitioners for a multi-day learning opportunity that is informed by practitioners and their needs.
- **Missouri Center for Public Health Excellence (MOCPHE).** We will continue to offer a high-quality membership association, MOCPHE; MOCPHE will continue to be a network of governmental public health leaders across the state focused on advancing the needs of Missouri's public health system.
- **Representation.** We will represent the voices, concerns, needs, and successes of governmental public health and the public health system. We will participate in discussions about the system in Missouri and generate partnerships that lead to transformation opportunities for public health.

- **Structured Listening and Responsiveness.** We will consistently offer opportunities for stakeholders and system partners to offer insight and feedback, especially on initiatives that impact them.
- **Technical Assistance.** We will provide technical assistance to LPHAs, including those pursuing accreditation, working to increase the number of agencies achieving accreditation.
- **Training and Workforce Development.** We will expand training pathways that close known, existing gaps. This includes launching a public health leadership academy, a training line of service, and convening practitioners at GPHS for learning and collaboration.

How We Will Measure Success in 2026

- Average satisfaction rate of lines of service offerings
- Number of activities related to Data Action Center
- Number of lines of service activities and participation
- Percent of Missouri counties engaging with MOPHI
- Percent of MOCPHE members utilizing membership benefits and/or engaging in membership activities

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

INCREASE FUNDING FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

Missouri ranks among the lowest states nationally in per capita public health funding. This chronic underfunding compromises the ability of both state and local agencies to deliver services specific to their communities, retain qualified staff, and respond effectively to emerging health issues. Sustainable, adequate funding is foundational to every other goal in this strategic plan.

What We Hope to Achieve

By 2028, Missouri will have made measurable progress toward sustainable funding for local public health agencies. LPHAs will have diversified revenue streams and increased capacity and confidence to secure grants and other funding sources. MOPHI itself will have a diversified funding model, ensuring our own sustainability and independence. Policymakers and the public will better understand the value of public health investment, leading to increased appropriations and political support.

What We Will Do in 2026

- **Foundational Public Health Services (FPHS) Preparation.** We will prepare for statewide implementation of FPHS by supporting the completion of a comprehensive cost gap analysis and building advocacy capacity among local agencies. This includes educating agency leaders about models and building support among traditional and non-traditional public health partners.
- **Grant Writing and Management Capacity Building.** We will work directly with LPHAs to strengthen their capacity to secure new forms of revenue and manage grant compliance. This includes providing training and technical assistance on grant writing, management, and reporting.
- **Improve Funding for Governmental Public Health.** We will partner with governmental public health on opportunities that direct funding to them, including but not limited to legislative advocacy, partnering on grant writing, and other innovative solutions that result in increased funding for our governmental public health partners. We will also continue to find solutions to improve the management of funding, whether through training or innovative strategies.
- **MOPHI Revenue Diversification.** We will focus on cultivating new types of partners, funders, and supporters, diversifying our revenue base to reduce dependence on any single source. This includes exploring new funding models consistent with our values of adaptability and authenticity. We will develop and implement a strategic approach to funder relations,
- **Focusing on foundations,** corporate partners, and other philanthropic sources aligned with our mission and values.

How We Will Measure Success in 2026

- Distribution of MOPHI revenue by source
- Number of compliance-related trainings and participation
- Number of meetings and convenings supporting the increase of funding to governmental public health, including FPHS
- Total new dollars secured for Missouri's public health system

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3

EXPAND POLICY INFLUENCE

Policy drives funding, shapes the environment in which public health operates, and determines whether agencies have the authority and resources to protect community health. MOPHI's position outside of government enables us to advocate in ways that government agencies cannot.

What We Hope to Achieve

By 2028, MOPHI will be recognized as a leading voice on public health policy in Missouri, respected as a thought leader and legislative partner across the state. We will have established strong relationships with both traditional public health partners and non-traditional allies who can amplify our policy agenda. Policymakers will view us as a trusted, nonpartisan source of expertise and evidence.

What We Will Do in 2026

- **Center for Transforming Public Health Policy Launch.** We will launch the Center for Transforming Public Health Policy, establishing our identity as a policy leader and providing a clear structure for our advocacy work.
- **Missouri Association of Local Boards of Health (MALBOH) Launch.** We will launch MALBOH, including an action plan and defined scope of work for 2026 that builds the voice and capacity of local boards of health.
- **Missouri General Assembly Engagement.** We will develop and execute a comprehensive legislative plan for the Missouri General Assembly, including advocacy for priority legislation and strategic engagement with Missouri legislators and stakeholders.
- **State of Public Health Report.** We will publish an inaugural State of Public Health report that provides data-driven analysis of Missouri's public health system, positioning MOPHI as an authoritative voice on public health conditions and needs in the state.
- **Support Educational and Advocacy Opportunities for Public Health Practitioners.** MOPHI will host advocacy opportunities for practitioners, whether through our in-person Capitol Day, co-hosting update opportunities, or new innovations that advance public health policy.

How We Will Measure Success in 2026

- Development of a system for documenting educational activities related to policy
- Number of activities related to Center for Transforming Public Health Policy launched
- Number of meetings or events with key legislators and legislative champions

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4

MAINTAIN A STANDARD OF OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

MOPHI's credibility and impact depend on our ability to deliver high-quality work, maintain strong internal operations, and live our values. As we expand our reach and ambition, we must ensure that our organizational infrastructure, staff capacity, and governance structures support that growth while maintaining excellence. This priority focuses inward, recognizing that our external impact depends on internal strength.

What We Hope to Achieve

By 2028, MOPHI will have sustained a high-achieving, mission-driven staff and Board of Directors committed to our vision and values. We will have established clear performance management systems, developed internal leaders who advocate for and work within Missouri's public health system, and maintained a workplace culture that reflects our organizational values. Our members and stakeholders will consistently value our perspective, leadership, and decision-making. We will be recognized as an organization with strong governance, fiscal responsibility, and operational effectiveness.

What We Will Do in 2026

- **Communications Plan.** We will develop and deploy a comprehensive communications plan centered on our identity clarity and our strategic priorities. This includes external adoption of MOPHI-approved language, frameworks, and messaging that clearly articulate who we are and what we do.
- **Management Culture Development.** We will establish a management culture that reflects our organizational values and guiding principles, including management training and professional development opportunities for MOPHI staff.
- **Performance Management Systems.** We will develop and implement structured performance management processes, including annual Board of Directors performance evaluation, employee performance reviews, and leadership performance reviews. These systems will be explicitly tied to our organizational values and guiding principles.
- **Service Delivery Standards.** We will develop a customer service philosophy and service delivery standards born from our organizational values. We will cross-train staff to ensure that member and partner experiences are predictable and consistently excellent.

- **Sustainable Financial and Compliance Infrastructure.** We will continue to develop and implement an annual compliance plan that ensures we stay on track with the required timelines. We will continue to grow our operational reserves and build towards sustainability.
- **Workplace Equity Committee.** We will continue our Workplace Equity Committee, which serves as a think tank for employee engagement, provides accountability, and generates internal insights that benefit both staff and the LPHAs we serve.

How We Will Measure Success in 2026

- Annual self-reflection and evaluation of communications materials and branding
- Average staff satisfaction rate
- Develop an internal workforce development plan
- Percent of operational reserves secured relative to set targets
- Results from Board of Directors self-evaluation

LOOKING AHEAD

This plan charts an ambitious and achievable course for MOPHI and for Missouri's public health system. It acknowledges the challenges we face while staying grounded in the strengths, relationships, and values that make us trusted partners across the state.

As we enter 2026, we do so with clarity and purpose. Our priorities are defined, our first steps are set, and our commitment to Missouri's public health system is unwavering. We also know this work will evolve. Public health is dynamic, new opportunities will emerge, and unexpected challenges will arise. That is why this plan was designed to be flexible and responsive. Each year, we will pause to assess progress, reflect on what we have learned, and adjust our course while staying true to our strategic priorities.

Ultimately, our success will be measured not just in metrics, but in meaningful impact: more local agencies with the capacity to serve their communities, more sustainable funding to ensure long-term progress, more policies that strengthen the system, and a public health network that is stronger, more connected, and better equipped to serve every community in Missouri.

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