



**Virginia Public Health Association  
FY 2023 – 2025 Strategic Plan**

Adopted March 24, 2023

## Introduction

The Virginia Public Health Association (VPHA) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that seeks to improve the public's health in Virginia by strengthening public health practice, fostering health equity, and promoting sound public health policy. Its vision is for Virginia to be the healthiest state in the nation.

Founded in 1950, VPHA is a state affiliate of the American Public Health Association (APHA). For decades, VPHA has championed strong public health practice and policies in close partnership with the Virginia Department of Health. After this formal relationship ended in the early 2000's, VPHA primarily sustained itself through financial support from Virginia's graduate public health programs. It held an annual conference and offered students networking opportunities but otherwise had a limited impact.

In 2019, VPHA's Board of Directors committed to growing the organization's impact beyond its academic base. Since then, VPHA's impact has grown tremendously by engaging public health professionals across the clinical, academic, government, industrial and nonprofit sectors. It has nearly tripled its membership, achieved significant policy wins, expanded its networking and engagement opportunities, and more – all without paid staff and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**The next three years (2023 - 2025) will be critical for the association. VPHA must continue to grow its impact while sustaining what it has already achieved. The purpose of this strategic plan is to chart a path that accomplishes both these goals.**

VPHA began developing this strategic plan in July 2022 with the help of Jeanie Holt, former President of the New Hampshire Public Health Association and Executive Board member of APHA. The VPHA Board of Directors received input from its members and external partners and held a retreat in Fall 2022 to synthesize these inputs into a strategic framework. This Strategic Plan is the culmination of these efforts.

VPHA's Board of Directors provided feedback on drafts of this document and adopted the final Strategic Plan on March 24, 2023.

## What Does Success Look Like?

The purpose of this strategic plan is to share our vision for VPHA's future and to create a platform from which we can engage members and partners in making this vision a reality.

The purpose of this strategic plan is to set a shared vision for VPHA's future and what the association needs to do to achieve it.

### The Vision

By the end of 2025, VPHA will:

1. Have a robust, diverse, and engaged membership
2. Be an influential, trusted public health voice for policymakers and the public
3. Be an invaluable career resource for public health professionals and students
4. Have sufficient, sustainable finances to support at least one full or part-time position

This vision excludes quantifiable measures of success with the partial exception of the final item. This is intentional. There is no way of knowing what exactly the association will consider success three years from now. For instance, will 500 members be sufficient? 1,000? Similarly, it is at best arbitrary to attempt to quantify terms like “influential,” “trusted,” and “invaluable.”

Rather, this vision is what it sounds like - visionary. It sets the direction that the association will travel. The remainder of the document describes how it will get there.

### The Strategies

VPHA will achieve this vision via three strategic priorities. Unlike the overall vision, each strategic priority includes focus areas, activities, and measures of success. VPHA's three strategies mirror its mission:

1. Strengthen public health practice
2. Foster health equity
3. Promote sound public health policy

The strategic plan does not refer to these priorities as pillars. Pillars imply silos. To succeed, these priorities must overlap. For instance, fostering health equity is not an isolated activity, but an organizational commitment that will inform all of VPHA's work.

Finally, these strategic pillars lay atop one foundational priority: Develop and sustain sound operations and finances. The association cannot implement the preceding strategies without sustaining itself.

Figure 1: VPHA's Strategic Priorities



**Foundational Priority:**  
Develop and sustain sound finances and operations

## Strategic Priority #1: Strengthen Public Health Practice

*Goal: Be a valuable resource for public health partners, including but not limited to professionals, researchers, and students.*

The following table lists focus areas and activities VPHA is taking or will undertake to strengthen public health practice.

| Focus Area   | Activities  | Measures of Success  |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Develop accessible resources to promote public health careers</b> | Offer professional development webinars that offer continuing education credits | Number of webinars hosted and amount of continuing education credits offered |
|  | Implement and grow the VPHA mentorship program                                  | Number and feedback from mentors and mentees                                 |
| <b>Bring together diverse public health partners</b>                 | Host an Annual Conference   | Number of attendees and feedback from Conference attendees                   |
|  | Host quarterly membership meetings  | Number of attendees and feedback from meeting attendees                      |

Partners shared several other potential activities that VPHA should consider doing to strengthen public health practice. These activities include:

- Hosting virtual meet-and-greets
- Hosting virtual happy hours with brief “Get to Know You” presentations
- Facilitating introductions among individuals and organizations
- Highlighting the work of organizations that contribute to public health but are not typically recognized as public health organizations
- Establishing a web-based resource with updated information on career and educational opportunities.<sup>1</sup>

VPHA’s Board of Directors will consider pursuing these activities should it have the capacity to do so.

<sup>1</sup> VPHA intends to share organizational members’ job and educational opportunities on its website as a membership benefit.

## Strategic Priority #2: Foster Health Equity

*Goal: Be recognized as a role model for incorporating health equity principles into VPHA's programs and communications.*

The following table lists focus areas and activities VPHA is taking or will undertake to foster health equity.

| Focus Area  | Activities  | Measures of Success   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>Strengthen racial, ethnic, income, and geographic diversity among the VPHA Board and it's membership</b> | Build and maintain relationships with individuals and organizations that represent historically disenfranchised communities | Annual DEIA survey.   |
|   | Update VPHA membership registration to include optional demographic data fields   | Annual DEIA survey and number of members who have shared demographic information when they register or renew their membership |
| <b>Prioritize health equity in public-facing materials</b>  | Incorporate equity impact analyses in policy analysis and advocacy  | Percentage of policy analysis and advocacy materials that include an equity impact analysis                                   |
|   | Adopt a health equity style guide for use in VPHA's communications  | Share of public communications that follow a health equity style guide  |

Partners shared several other potential activities that VPHA should consider doing to strengthen public health practice. These activities include:

- Reviewing current VPHA policies and procedures to ensure adherence with DEIA principles
- Developing a standard operating procedure that ensures adherence with DEIA principles in future materials and communications
- Ensuring Health Equity Committee representation in VPHA meetings and activities
- Incorporating DEIA training into Board of Directors orientation

VPHA's Board of Directors will consider pursuing these activities should it have the capacity to do so.

### Strategic Priority #3: Promote Sound Public Health Policy

*Goal: Be recognized by policymakers and the public as an expert public health organization that can influence statewide public health policy.*

The following table lists focus areas and activities VPHA is taking or will undertake to promote sound public health policy.

| Focus Area                                  | Activities   | Measures of Success   |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Build Public Health Policy Expertise</b> | <p>Publish issue briefs on pertinent statewide public health issues</p> <p>Develop relationships with statewide public health policy experts</p> | <p>Number of published issue briefs</p> <p>Number of new relationships</p>  |
| <b>Advocate in Support of Public Health</b> | <p>Conduct annual policy priorities survey</p> <p>Develop and execute public health advocacy agenda during General Assembly session</p>          | <p>Number of survey respondents</p> <p>Number of legislative priorities that become law or fail to become law depending on the association's position</p> |

VPHA's Board of Directors will consider pursuing additional activities should it have the capacity to do so. These activities include:

- Training public health professionals and students to effectively advocate and engage policymakers.

## Foundational Priority: Develop and Sustain Sound Finances and Operations

*Goal: To have the resources necessary to meet the commitments made in this strategic plan.*

The following table lists focus areas and activities VPHA is taking or will undertake to develop and sustain sound finances and operations

| Focus Area  | Activities   | Measures of Success   |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Secure sustainable revenue to support programs and operations</b>  | Pursue grant funding from APHA and other value-aligned organizations | Net revenue growth  |
|   | Recruit and retain individual and organizational members             | Net revenue growth  |
|   | Seek sponsors for Annual Conference                                  | Dollar amount in Conference sponsorships                    |
| <b>Grow and diversify membership to be representative of the public health workforce and the populations they serve</b> | Update membership and dues levels                                    | Net revenue growth  |
|   | Analyze membership retention rate                                    | Percentage of members who renew their membership each year  |
|   | Conduct annual membership survey                                     | Percentage of members who respond to the survey             |
| <b>Hire an Executive Director to grow and sustain VPHA's activities</b>   | Determine salary and hours for position                              | Revenue that can be allocated to fund an Executive Director |
|   | Draft job description  | N/a   |
|   | Hire Executive Director when financially appropriate                 | Revenue that can be allocated to fund an Executive Director |

VPHA's Board of Directors will consider pursuing additional activities should it have the capacity to do so. These activities include:

- Selling branded merchandise online and at VPHA events.

## Conclusion

This strategic plan charts a path for the Virginia Public Health Association to sustain and grow its impact. While new opportunities and challenges may force the association to adapt, this plan serves as a guide for current and future leaders. Our course is set, now the work begins to reach our destination.