

The purpose of this Strategic Plan is to articulate the priorities of the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) in response to current and projected health needs of the community.

All of these efforts are directed towards the fundamental work of public health, which is defined by the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHA) to be:

"The science and art of protecting and improving the health and well being of people in local communities and across the country. It focuses on the health of the entire population or segments of it such as high risk groups, rather than individuals. Public health uses strategies to protect and promote health and prevent disease and injury in the population."

This strategic plan is flexible and practical and yet serves as a guide to implementing programs, evaluating how these programs are doing, and making adjustments when necessary. This plan reflects the thoughts, feelings, ideas, and realities of the health unit and molds them along with the agency's vision, mission, and values into an integrated document.

The plan is a tool for organizing the present, based upon the projections of the desired future. It is a road map that will lead the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit from where it is now to where it would like to be in four years.

The development of this plan included much probing, discussion, and examination of the views of the stakeholders who are responsible for the plan's creation. However, the development of this plan is less complicated than the implementation will be. The process of implementation will, in essence, pull the plan apart and diffuse it throughout the organization. Every program, service and functional unit is encouraged to accept and apply the plan to their work by defining and implementing specific actions that will contribute to achieving our desired future. In this way the plan will become a living document where the whole is much greater than the sum of the parts.

The desired future for the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit is represented in its Vision Statement, as created in 2006.

Vision 2026 provides everyone in the organization with a shared mental picture of what the organization intends ultimately to become 20 years in the future.

This statement is not abstract. It expresses as concrete an image of the desired future state as possible, and also provides the basis for formulating strategic priorities, goals and expected outcomes.

VISION 2026

We see the people of Simcoe Muskoka leading healthy, fulfilling and productive lives. The health of people, communities and the environment in which we live, work and play is a key consideration in community planning and policy making.

The Health Unit makes a significant contribution to population health and quality of life through its leadership and work with communities, such that:

- people of all ages build on strengths and opportunities to nurture healthy, lifelong growth and development, achieve optimal levels of education, employment, shelter and nutrition, and develop socially supportive networks of relationships;
- people and communities have the information, knowledge and skills required to make choices for health;
- services are designed and implemented in partnership with people to meet their needs, respect diversity, and are accessible, culturally appropriate, and coordinated;
- a healthy environment is sustained through public policy and actions to ensure clean air, land and water;
- threats to people's health are anticipated, prevented or minimized, and communities have the capacity to respond to emerging and emergency issues.

Fundamental to the success of any organization is the **Mission Statement**, which defines the core purpose of the organization - why it exists. The SMDHU Mission, created in 2006, examines the "raison d'être" for the organization, and reflects our employees' motivations for engaging in the organization's work.

OUR MISSION

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit is committed to excellence in promoting and protecting health, and preventing disease and injury. Our goal is to work with individuals, families, communities and agencies to achieve optimal health through the delivery of programs and services.

Six **Values** are fundamental to the way we work with each other and within the community. They represent the deeply held beliefs within the organization and are demonstrated through the day-to-day behaviours of all employees. These values make an open proclamation regarding the behaviours we expect from one another. These values will endure over the long term and provide a constant source of strength for the organization.

WE VALUE:

EXCELLENCE in providing services to our clients and our communities

ACCOUNTABILITY for our individual and collective choices, actions and outcomes; and for the responsible and efficient use of public funds and resources

RESPECT for the rights of all people to be treated fairly and with dignity, and to make choices that reflect individuality and diversity while working toward improved health for all

WORKING TOGETHER and sharing responsibility among health unit staff, and with government, agency and community partners

POSITIVE WORKING ENVIRONMENTS which foster open communication, work-place wellness and work-life balance

ACHIEVEMENT of equal opportunity for health

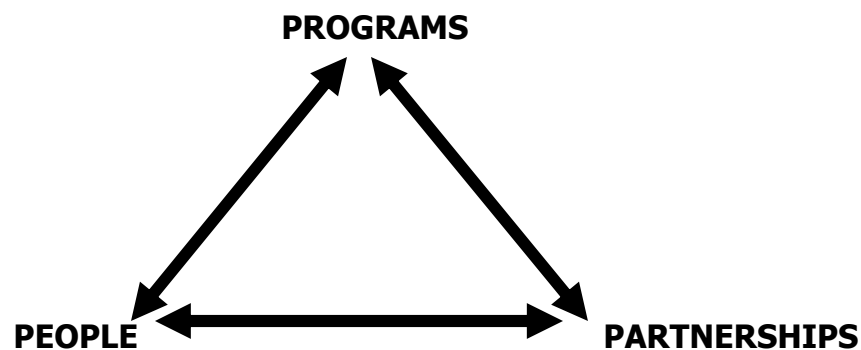
With these long-term strategic statements in place (vision, mission, and values), the stage was set to identify the priorities for specific action within the 2007-2010 timeframe. Input to this decision was gained through:

- a review of community health needs and broader community trends
- an electronic survey conducted with employees
- interviews with identified key informants
- a Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis
- discussions with the internal Strategic Planning Working Group, managers and supervisors, health unit executive committee and the board of health
- post-merger focus groups conducted with SMDHU employees.

From several potential options, the decision was made to focus on three **Strategic Priorities**. These priorities describe the clusters of activities the organization will pursue in the next four years to focus the work, allocate resources, and make progress towards the Vision. The Strategic Priorities are the bridge between the broad statements of vision, mission and values and the operational tactics or concrete actions undertaken. The three Strategic Priorities of **Programs, People** and **Partnerships**

were established and are described below along with the associated **Goal** and **Outcomes** expected for each between 2007 and 2010, and the rationale from the strategic planning research that supports each priority.

The three priorities are inextricably linked and the excellence to which the health unit aspires is dependent upon success in all three areas. The delivery of high quality programs and services is fundamental to the health unit's efforts to improve the health of the community. Highly skilled people are required to work together behind the scenes and on the front line to address the complex health needs of a growing community. Continuing to work with partners from diverse sectors, as well as seeking new partnerships will be a critical success factor.



Strategic Priority #1:

PROGRAMS

Provide leadership and excellence in public health programs

Programs are the method by which the health unit works towards the attainment of its vision and goals. They are the public demonstration of the health unit's adherence to its values. Public health agencies in Ontario are required to meet the minimum standards set by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-term Care (MOHLTC). These standards provide the Ontario-wide framework for the planning and delivery of public health programs and services; however, additional areas of emphasis may be established by each public health agency in response to local community and agency identified needs. Programs are the community face of the health unit. The community understands the health unit's role through the specific public health programs delivered and therefore programs can be used as a vehicle to increase public awareness and public profile. Programs are the fundamental means by which the public health needs of the population are addressed, and the lens through which most SMDHU staff see their role within the organization. As well, programs are often the catalyst for the formation of new community partnerships.

GOAL: Deliver evidence-based provincially mandated and locally determined programs and services that protect and promote the health of Simcoe Muskoka's population, and be recognized as a leader, innovator and credible voice of authority on significant public health issues.

OUTCOMES:

Emerging Public Health Directions

- 1.1 The Health Unit has explored options, identified required resources and determined a clear role, which is well-communicated internally and externally, in the following emerging areas of public health:
 - The Built Environment and Health
 - Social and Economic Determinants of Health
 - Environmental Health Hazards
 - Mental Health Promotion
- 1.2 Program activities and resources are identified and coordinated across programs and service areas in order to create comprehensive, integrated, setting-specific initiatives in the following areas:

- Comprehensive School Health
- Childhood Obesity

Service and Program Delivery Models

- 1.3 A model of service delivery, including physical and technological infrastructure, is established that is client-centred, accessible, reflective of mandatory requirements and responsive to the community needs.
- 1.4 A standardized model for program planning and performance measurement is in place that is based on the best available evidence with a demonstrated commitment to continuous quality improvement.
- 1.5 Current and emerging programs and services are critically assessed to ensure that sufficient resources, including current and new technologies, are available and efficiently used.

Strategic Priority # 2:

PEOPLE

Be a healthy, vibrant and desired workplace

The core of the health unit is widely acknowledged to be our people. As a new entity, SMDHU identified the need to engage staff in the development of a common vision for the future. This included the development of a set of values that would guide the way we work and relate to each other with the underlying premise that strong internal working relationships translate into strong professional relationships within the community and excellence in customer service.

Positive working environments which foster open communication, workplace wellness and work-life balance are health unit values. The named value of *"Respect for the rights of all people to be treated fairly and with dignity while working together to improve health"* identifies the high priority placed upon the agency's human resources. Community data identifies a pending shortage in health care sector workers in this community. This, combined with the baby boomer population retiring in the near future, makes it imperative that we address retention and recruitment issues and position ourselves as an employer of choice. A focus on people is necessary to achieve these results.

GOAL: Provide a healthy working environment where skilled and dedicated people choose to work together to promote and protect health, and prevent disease and injury.

OUTCOMES:

- 2.1 Employees share responsibility for agency outcomes, have influence over work processes and demands, and experience a healthy work-life balance.
- 2.2 Public health programs and services are supported by staff, who are well-informed through timely communication, and experience consistent application of clear and equitable human resources policies and procedures.
- 2.3 Effective strategies are in place for employee recruitment, orientation, retention, succession and recognition such that employees deliver innovative, excellent programs and services in a supportive team environment.
- 2.4 The principles of a learning organization are applied as the workplace addresses the core competencies for public health.

Strategic Priority # 3:

PARTNERSHIPS

Strengthen partnerships to enhance public health

"Working together and sharing responsibility with government, agency and community partners" is a health unit stated value. As the scope of public health programming broadens to include new and emerging health concerns and issues, it will be necessary for the health unit to work even more closely with partners in the community. Sustainability principles also dictate that multiple partners work together on related issues. Key informant interviews undertaken during the strategic planning process indicated an eagerness to partner with the health unit and an openness to exploring new ways of working together. The health unit is currently considered to be a strong partner in the community and this strength will need to extend to new partnerships.

GOAL: Seek new partnerships and nurture existing partnerships to integrate services and enhance public health in Simcoe Muskoka.

OUTCOMES:

- 3.1 Partnerships to address emerging public health directions are developed.
- 3.2 Programs and services are developed and delivered with the appropriate mix of internal and external partners.
- 3.3 The health unit has provided leadership to the re-orientation of local health services to focus more on health promotion and disease prevention through collaborative planning with health care partners, and education for applicable health sector workers.
- 3.4 The health unit has contributed to the advancement of public health knowledge and practice through research.

References

- 1. Strategic Planning Handbook. Special Libraries Association. 1997.
<http://www.sla.org/pdfs/sphand.pdf>
- 2. "The Balanced Scorecard". <http://www.balancedscorecard.biz/Glossary.html>