



Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Health**

# Public Health Planning Guide for Local Government

Guide to support the preparation and ongoing review of  
local public health plans

*Public Health Act 2016 (WA)*

<<<Cover Picture to be added>>>

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## **Disclaimer**

This document provides general guidance on public health planning aspects of the *Public Health Act 2016* (the PH Act) This Guide is not a substitute for reading the PH Act and should not be regarded as legal advice.

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## **Acknowledgment of country and people**

The WA Department of Health acknowledges the Aboriginal people of the many traditional lands and language groups of Western Australia. It acknowledges the wisdom of Aboriginal Elders both past and present and pays respect to Aboriginal communities of today.

## **Contributions**

The Office of the Chief Health Officer would like to thank everyone who contributed to the development of this Guide. The process could not have been completed without the cooperation of stakeholders and their willingness to contribute their time and expertise throughout the development and consultation process.

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# Working together to protect, preserve, promote and improve good health and wellbeing of Western Australians.



Figure 1: Public health and wellbeing. (Source: Department of Health WA)

# Part 1. Introduction

Public health means the health and wellbeing of the public; it is much more than just the provision of health services but encompasses all aspects of our life that enable us to thrive. By actively planning for the best public health outcomes of a community, we can support and drive the changes required.

The requirement to do public health planning elevates public health as an important function across government; it complements other areas government must already plan for, such as emergency management.

It ensures that governments are regularly assessing the public health needs of the population and implementing strategies to address gaps and public health priorities. A key component of this is knowing the needs of the population being served, by looking at data and consulting with the community. Public health planning also drives the development, or strengthening, of partnerships across government, non-government organisations and the community.

This Public Health Planning Guide for Local Government (the Guide) has been developed to assist Western Australian local governments with public health planning. This guide should be read in conjunction with the State Public Health Plan for Western Australia.

## 1.1 Background

Implementation of Section 45 of the *Public Health Act 2016* (PH Act) commenced on 4 June 2024, formally enacting the requirement for the preparation of:

1. A State Public Health Plan prepared by the Chief Health Officer, and
2. A local public health plan prepared by each local government.

The first State Public Health Plan for Western Australia was released in 2019.

The State Public Health Plan is being revised and will be released in early 2025.

The key objectives of the new plan are to:

- PROMOTE
- PREVENT
- PROTECT and
- ENABLE

public health to ensure the best possible health, wellbeing, and quality of life for all Western Australian, now and into the future.

There are two overarching objectives, to be considered as part of each objective:

- To improve Aboriginal health and wellbeing and
- To ensure equity and inclusion

Each objective is supported by a number of priorities. Whilst many of these were included in the last version of the plan, of note is the inclusion of managing the effects of climate change on people's health.

## **1.2 State government and public health**

State government agencies are primarily responsible for state-wide issues. The WA Department of Health (WA Health) leads the coordination and delivery of public health and wellbeing policies, programs and services at the state level.

## **1.3 Local government and public health**

The varied work of local government touches almost all areas of day to day life –in cities, towns, and country areas. Local governments play a vital role in helping to support and drive improvements to the health and wellbeing of their local community.

## **1.4 Legislation**

The legislated requirement for public health planning strengthens the need to better plan for public health and wellbeing by both tiers of government.

It aligns the public health objectives and policy priorities of local and state government, and strengthens partnerships across government, non-government agencies (NGOs) and the community to improve collaboration and innovation to support the biggest gains in public health and wellbeing.

Sections 45 – 47 of the PH Act provide the public health planning requirements for local governments. An extract has been provided on the following pages.



## Public Health Act 2016

### Section 45 – Local Public Health Plans

- (1) A local government must prepare a public health plan (a local public health plan) that applies to its local government district.
- (2) A local public health plan must be consistent with the State public health plan.
- (3) A local public health plan may be prepared in conjunction with a plan for the future of the local government district prepared under the Local Government Act 1995 section 5.56.
- (4) A local public health plan must —
  - (a) identify the public health needs of the local government district; and
  - (b) include an examination of data relating to health status and health determinants in the local government district; and
  - (c) establish objectives and policy priorities for —
    - (i) the promotion, improvement and protection of public health in the local government district; and
    - (ii) the development and delivery of public health services in the local government district; and
  - (d) identify how, based on available evidence, the objectives and policy priorities referred to in paragraph (c) are proposed to be achieved; and
  - (e) describe how the local government proposes to work with the Chief Health Officer and other bodies undertaking public health initiatives, projects and programmes to achieve the objectives and policy priorities referred to in paragraph (c); and
  - (f) include a strategic framework for the identification, evaluation and management of public health risks in the local government district and any other matters relating to public health risks in the local government district —
    - (i) that the local government considers appropriate to include in the plan; or
    - (ii) that are required to be included in the plan by the Chief Health Officer or the regulations; and
  - (g) include a report, in accordance with the regulations, on the performance by the local government of its functions under this Act.
- (5) A local government must review its local public health plan each year and may amend or replace it at any time.

(6) Unless it is sooner replaced, a local public health plan must be replaced at the end of the period of 5 years after it was prepared.

(7) A local government must prepare its first local public health plan not later than 2 years after this section comes into operation.

*Section 46. Publication of current local public health plans*

(1) A local government must make its current local public health plan publicly available without charge.

(2) A local government may comply with subsection (1) in any way the local government considers appropriate, including (without limitation) by making the current local public health plan available on a website maintained by or on behalf of the local government.

*Section 47. Provision of local public health plans to Chief Health Officer*

(1) The Chief Health Officer may, by notice in writing, direct a local government to provide the Chief Health Officer with all or any of the following —

(a) a copy of the local government's current local public health plan;

(b) a copy of any amendments to the local government's current local public health plan.

(2) A notice under subsection (1) may —

(a) direct a local government to supply a copy of a particular local public health plan or particular amendments to a plan; or

(b) direct a local government to supply, on an ongoing basis, a copy of all local public health

plans or amendments to plans prepared after a specific date; or

(c) do both of those things.

(3) A direction under subsection (1) to a local government must specify a time frame for compliance with the direction, and the local government must comply with the direction within that time frame.

(4) The Chief Health Officer may at any time, by notice in writing, amend or revoke a direction given under subsection (1).

## Part 2. Process for developing a plan

The plan must comply with the requirements of the PH Act and be consistent with the State Public Health Plan. However, no specific process or standard template applies, and local governments should tailor their plans to their own circumstances.

Section 45 of the PH Act outlines the key elements of a local public health plan:

### A local public health plan must

Identify public health needs – what are the specific needs of their community?

Examine health status and health determinants – what is the current state of health of their community and what are the key factors that influence it?

Establish objectives and policy priorities (the key strategies) for:

1. Promotion, improvement and protection of public health

2. Development and delivery of public health services

Identify how the objectives and policy priorities are proposed to be achieved

Establish a framework for identifying and responding to public health risks

Describe the formation of partnerships for undertaking public health initiatives, projects and programs to achieve the objectives and policy priorities

Ensure continuous review, replacement and reporting of the plan

A public health plan should include a:

1. **Health profile:** an analysis of the health status and health determinants of the population (noted in green above)
2. **Strategic plan:** objectives, policy priorities and actions that focus on achieving positive public health outcomes (noted in blue above).

### 2.1 Format of local public health plans

Local public health plans may be integrated into existing plans or developed as a standalone plan.

#### 2.1.1 Integrated planning and reporting

All local governments are required to plan for the future of their district under s.5.56 (1) of the *Local Government Act 1995* (the LG Act). Local public health plans can be integrated into these plans (listed below) in accordance with section 45(3) of the PH Act.

- **Strategic Community Plan (SCP):** the local government’s principal 10-year strategy and planning document.
- **Corporate Business Plan (CBP):** a four-year delivery program, aligned to the SCP, and accompanied by four-year financial projections.

Public health planning places a public health lens over the integrated planning and reporting framework, allowing a local government to set its priorities within its resourcing capability and deliver short term, medium term and long term goals.

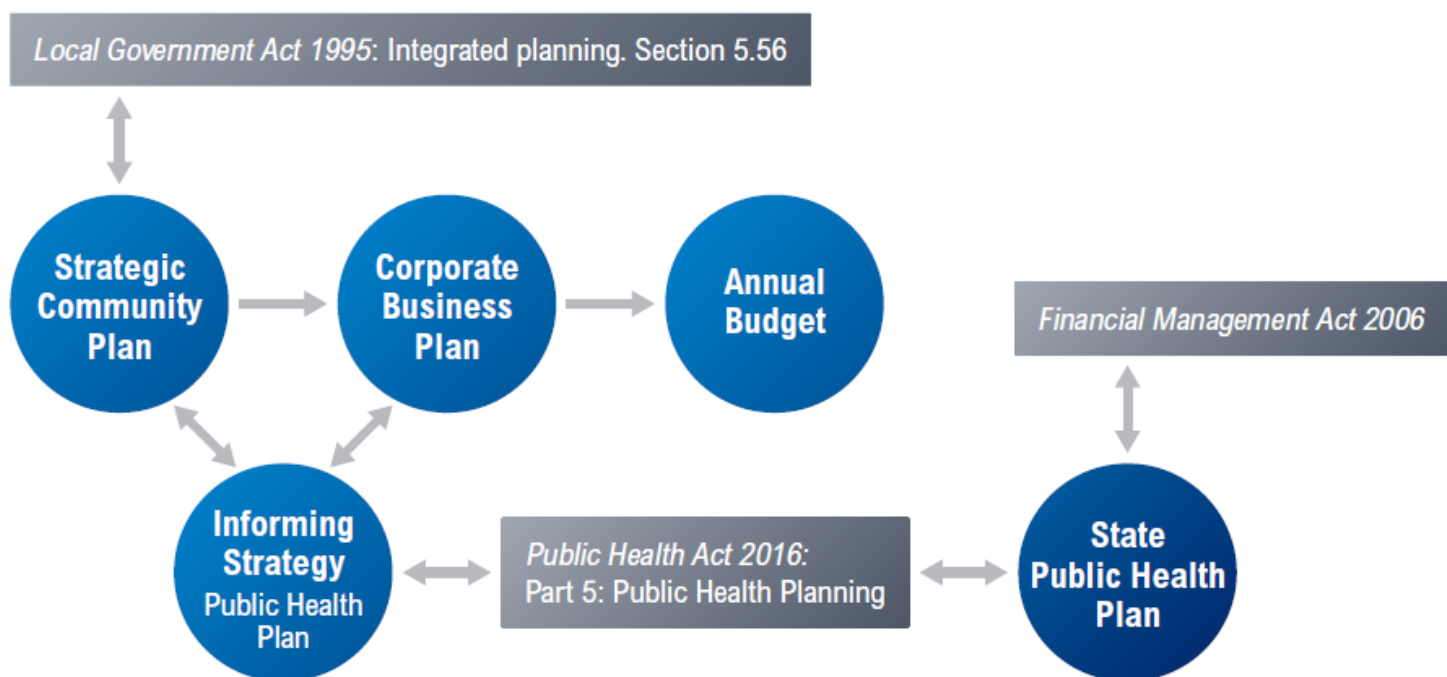


Figure 2: Linkages between Part 5; public health planning of the Public Health Act 2016, and local government planning for the future requirements under section 5.56 of the Local Government Act 1995. (Adapted from the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework and Guideline 2010. [https://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/docs/default-source/local-government/integrated-planning-and-reporting/integrated-planning-and-reporting-framework-and-guidelines-october-2010.pdf?sfvrsn=15d7b6ac\\_2](https://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/docs/default-source/local-government/integrated-planning-and-reporting/integrated-planning-and-reporting-framework-and-guidelines-october-2010.pdf?sfvrsn=15d7b6ac_2))

### 2.1.2 Stand-alone plan

Local governments may prefer to develop a stand-alone local public health plan to sit alongside their other plans and policies, using a planning method of their choice, in order to achieve the requirements of the PH Act.

### 2.1.3 Plan structure

The structure of any plan should be easy to follow and written in clear, concise and plain English.

## 2.2 Development process

Figure 3 presents one suggested approach to public health planning, noting that the stages may not be sequential.

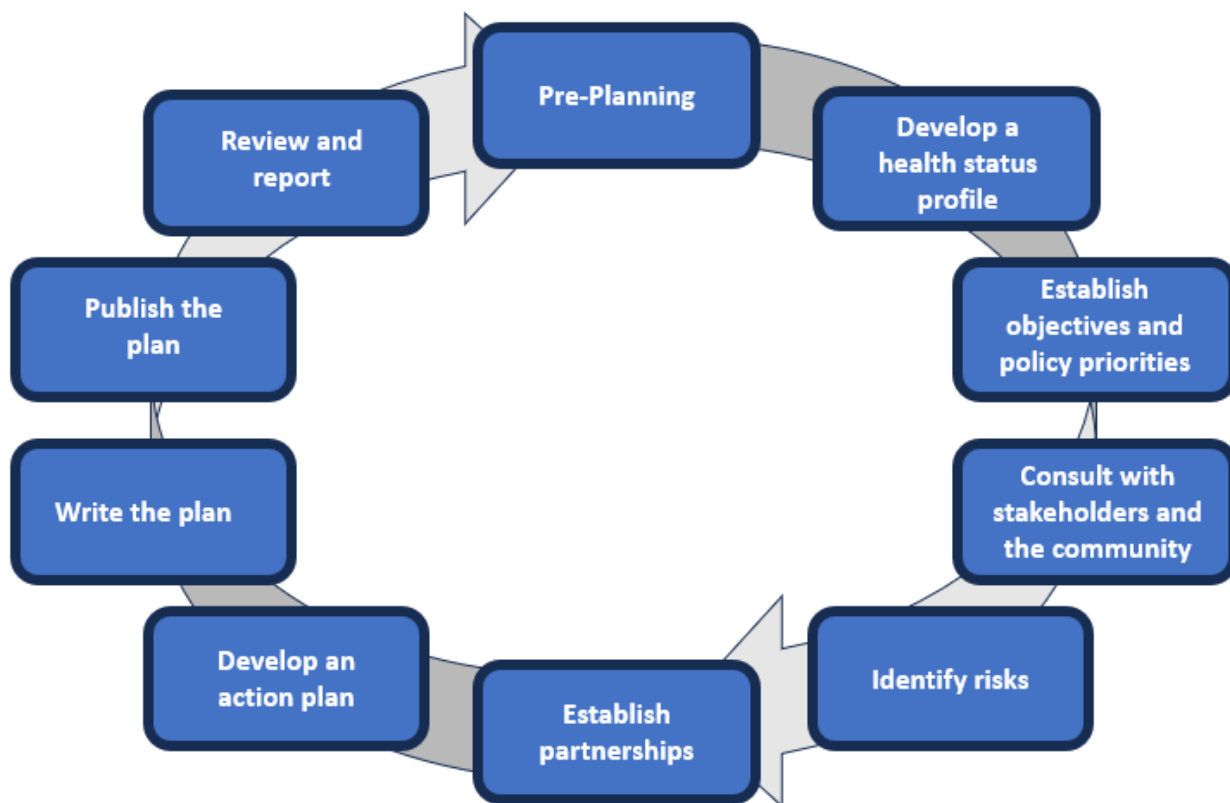


Figure 3: The key stages of public health planning process. (Source: Adapted from Public Health Planning for Local Government – March 2018 Edition, Department of Health WA)

## 2.3 Pre-planning

### 2.3.1 Engage with Council and executive staff

Staff should engage with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), mayor and elected members. It is important to create an environment across local government that places public health and community wellbeing on the agenda, and identifies the gains in public health outcomes for the community through carrying out this process. Many activities already underway will have public health benefits, including responding to climate change.

### 2.3.2 Establish governance arrangements

Governance may include:

- assigning responsibility to a senior manager(s) who is/are key champion(s) to influence the strategic and political landscape
- establishing a committee or working group to oversee the process
- establishing reporting mechanisms.

### 2.3.3 Collaborate with internal partners / committees

Public health planning should involve all divisions of local government, including: corporate services; community development; infrastructure; sustainability; planning; operations; and regulatory divisions, however named. All divisions of a local government play a role in delivering services or providing assets relating to public health.

### 2.3.4 Develop skills and workforce capacity

Local governments should focus on building the skills internally to develop and sustain a plan. Local Health Service Providers can advise of any existing public health planning networks that connect local governments and enable sharing of ideas.

### 2.3.5 Develop and communicate the planning framework




Develop the planning framework outlining the steps to be taken to develop each part of the plan (see below) and the appropriate timeframes.

## 2.4 Develop a health status profile

A local government community health profile is essentially a report that documents everything that is known about the health status and health determinants of a local community, and the local public health risks. The report may include a comparison of the data with State and national averages

Having access to meaningful data to describe what is happening in the community will ensure that health priorities and objectives are based on the best available evidence.

A health status profile:

 <p>Describes the current state of health of local people</p>	 <p>Identifies any major health risk factors and causes of ill health</p>	 <p>Identifies priority health areas for action</p>
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There are several resources available to assist local government to develop a local community health status profile. Links and suggested resources can be found on the [Public Health Planning](#) website.

## 2.5 Establish objectives and policy priorities

A local government should establish public health objectives based on the priority public health risks identified for the community and in line with the State Public Health Plan. Policy priorities should be determined for each of the objectives and should outline how the objectives will be achieved.

### 2.5.1 Review the State Public Health Plan

Local government should review the State Public Health Plan's objectives and policy priorities and consider how they apply to the local community.

### 2.5.2 Review existing local plans and policies (desktop review)

One of the most important steps of the planning process is to review what is already being done to address health. Current plans and policies in place, and also activities that are undertaken by local government may already address one or more objectives of the State Public Health Plan.

### **2.5.3 Develop objectives and policy priorities**

Local government should ensure their resources are used in the most appropriate and efficient way to address the public health needs of the local population, ensuring that they align with the State Public Health Plan and its overarching objectives of improving Aboriginal health and wellbeing, and ensuring equity and inclusion.

Local government will need to prioritise areas of highest risk and/or importance for their community, aligning with the State Public Health Plan objectives and priorities as they are relevant to the needs of their community.

## **2.6 Consult with stakeholders and the community**

Local government should keep their community informed and provide opportunities for stakeholders and community members to participate in the public health planning process. Consultation on proposed priorities is critical to understanding what is most important to the community.

## **2.7 Identify risks**

Local government will need to assess, and prioritise, public health risks in their local community.

Information that could be gathered through consultation with stakeholders and community members includes:

- views regarding public health risks and their relative priority
- ideas for addressing risks.

It is important to consult with different population-groups within a community to ensure that all voices are heard and represented.

## **2.8 Establish partnerships**

Establishing partnerships with a range of agencies will support and guide the implementation of locally based objectives and policy priorities. It may help to identify resources, grants and other available funding.

A key partner is the local public Health Service Provider (HSP).

Support available may include:

- education and awareness raising of the public health planning process
- the provision of health and wellbeing data for health status reports
- assistance with data interpretation
- identification of key public health partners
- networking with other local governments
- support with seeking local government executive endorsement.

## **2.9 Develop an action plan**

Consider what actions will need to take place to achieve the identified objectives and policy priorities. Actions should be specific, measurable, achievable and realistic, and should describe in detail how the priorities will be achieved. Each action should be allocated to an individual or team, and have specific timeframes for completion.

Key considerations include:

- who will carry out these actions?
- when will the actions be undertaken, and for how long?
- how will progress of actions be measured and monitored?
- what resources are needed to carry out these actions?
- what communication needs to occur, and to whom?

Actions should address the overarching objectives of improving Aboriginal health and wellbeing and ensuring equity and inclusion, in line with the State Public Health Plan.

Actions should also be monitored and evaluated over time and adjusted or terminated as necessary.

## **2.10 Write the plan**

The format of the plan must be relevant for the local government, specific to their community, and consistent with the State Public Health Plan.

## **2.11 Publish the plan**

A local government must publish its first local public health plan not later than 4 June 2026.

## **2.12 Review and report**

A person should be nominated to be responsible for implementing, reviewing and reporting on the plan.

### **2.12.1 Reviewing plans**

A local government must review its local public health plan each year and may amend or replace it at any time. Conducting an annual review ensures that actions identified in the plan are being implemented satisfactorily, and that the priorities and activities are appropriately aligned over the life of the plan.

The PH Act does not prescribe how an annual review might be conducted. The review is an opportunity to:

- check implementation is on track
- check results to date are as expected
- report on and celebrate achievements
- inform other related plans and policies
- strengthen networks and partnerships
- reduce or conclude activities that might no longer be necessary
- commence new activities in response to newly-identified needs
- decide what needs to be done differently
- reconsider strategic directions and priorities
- influence resource allocation
- commence the next period of activity.



Where a local government prepares a local public health plan integrated with other strategic plans, they need to be aware of the differing review and replacement timeframes required by the LG Act and the PH Act.

A summary of the suggested stages of an annual review can be found at [Appendix A](#). Where changes are made to the plan through these reviews, these should be communicated to stakeholders and community members.

### **2.12.3 Existing local public health plans**

Local governments may already have had a public health plan in place on 4 June 2024. These plans will still be relevant, however local governments must ensure existing plans are consistent with the new State Public Health Plan, and comply with the requirements of the PH Act, by 4 June 2026. If the plan is over five years old, it should be replaced.

### **2.12.4 Replacing local public health plans**

Unless it is replaced sooner, a local public health plan must be replaced at the end of the period of 5 years after it was prepared. The process of replacing a local public health plan may include a combination of activities described in the broader planning process, or the annual review.

### **2.12.5 Reporting**

In accordance with section 22 of the PH Act, local governments are required to report to the Chief Health Officer (CHO) on the performance of functions under the PH Act. As part of this reporting process, the CHO may require local governments to report on whether they have produced their public health plan. No additional details are required.

## **Part 3. Resources**

The [Public Health Planning](#) website provides links to key resources to assist local governments in developing their local public health plans. As additional resources are developed, including those that focus on Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing, and managing the effects of climate change, they will be added to the website.

## Part 4. Appendices

### Appendix A – Stages of an annual review

Stages	Action	Information requirements
<b>1. Plan for an annual review</b>	Identify timing and information requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and gather the information you will need for stages 2, 3 and 4 of conducting the annual review.</li> <li>When is your target deadline for the annual review?</li> <li>Are there budget timeframes that this review might influence?</li> </ul>
	Identify stakeholders and engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify who needs to be involved in the review process.</li> </ul>
	Create an annual review schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schedule when you will collect and analyse the information</li> </ul>
<b>2. Check implementation is on track</b>	Check the progress of health actions and partner projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are the actions being implemented within the published timeframes?</li> </ul>
	Identify what might need to change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What amendments may be needed to the plan?</li> <li>Do timeframes need to be modified?</li> <li>Does the project need to be reassigned to someone else?</li> <li>Do the actions need to be amended to reflect changes in funding, services, policies etc?</li> </ul>
<b>3. Check the context has not changed</b>	Review any change in health status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider if the public health needs, health status or health detriments of the local government district have changed?</li> </ul>
	Identify emerging health risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check whether any national or State and local health priorities have changed.</li> </ul>
	Identify relevant funding opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there any new, relevant funding opportunities that can help you to achieve your priorities?</li> </ul>
	Identify systems or personnel changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How will changes impact performance and function?</li> </ul>
	Identify budget changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have there been budgetary changes that may impact programs?</li> </ul>
<b>4. Recommendations and amendments</b>	Propose changes to the next phase of the Local PH Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The review process may identify priorities and actions that may need to be amended, updated or even removed from the plan if the actions are no longer considered achievable (e.g. no available funding to complete the next stages) or appropriate.</li> <li>All amendments must be published.</li> </ul>

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