

## 2024 Supplemental Department Questions

*Please answer the following questions in a word document and return to Council. The answers to these questions will be provided to council as supplemental information. While not part of the physical budget presentation to Council, departments should be prepared to answer questions Council may have on these supplemental questions. If you feel that you have provided an answer in a previous question, please don't repeat your answer, simply refer to the earlier question/answer.*

### Strategic Goals

1. Provide your 2024 strategic goals; how are they different from 2023? In what way, if at all, are your strategic changes demonstrated in your budget request?

*The strategic goals for the Health Department remain consistent with a few emphasis areas based on department strategies focused on community needs with some additional funding resources. Public health continues to work with Snohomish County Government and partners in addressing the drug overdose crisis, monitoring community respiratory illnesses, revising and updating all Environmental Health Codes, and protecting the community from an increased number of infectious diseases. By end of 2024 the Department will complete a department assessment with updated strategic priorities and strategies.*

#### Health Department's Overall Strategic Focus Areas:

- *Build and improve Foundational Public Health capabilities (e.g. business functions, policy, planning, strategic partnerships, health equity, and communications.)*
- *Reduce the rate of communicable diseases and other notifiable conditions (e.g. TB, respiratory illness, STDs, vaccine preventable diseases, etc.)*
- *Prevent or reduce chronic diseases and injuries*
- *Provide high-quality and responsive environmental health services*
- *Improve maternal, child, and family health outcomes*
- *Provide legally required vital records*
- *Continual performance improvement*
- *Address ongoing, critical public health issues (suicide prevention, opioid abuse and illicit drug use, and public health emergency preparedness and response)*
- *Support and in assure access to medical, oral, and mental health care services*
- *Continue to provide and build on department's ability to collect, analyze, and share population health data.*

## National, state and local landscape:

1. What are the federal, state and local issues facing your work? What risks or opportunities does that create for you in 2024 and beyond? What is your plan to leverage the opportunity or mitigate the risk? What support do you need?
  - *We need to align the department's direct service and grant admin costs to the county's interfund rates to establish a new baseline.*
  - *Opioid Settlement funds have been a benefit to our community. Through the MAC group – we have been able to bring a system's approach to addressing the epidemic here locally. Settlement funds have helped the department to provide epidemiology support to the County effort. Good data collection helps us to better understand the epidemic – which leads to better prevention, intervention, and response.*
  - *Federal funds that we provided to increase public health's ability to respond and address to the COVID pandemic. As these funds are retracted, it does threaten the department's ability to provide core services such as epidemiology, disease invention specialist, and community protective factors such as health promotions, education, and prevention. Public health, as a system was not prepared or adequately staffed to address any surge of disease in the community. Data systems, informatics, and analytics were limited and outdated – and slowed the response. COVID emergency funding was helpful during the pandemic – but to address gaps and modernize the systems – new funding will need to be found to sustain the transformation going forward. As part of the departments assessment in 2023 – 2024, we will set our strategic priorities to address highest priority needs.*
  
2. What, if any, new mandates do you have impacting your work? Are they funded or unfunded? What is the plan for accomplishing the work?
  - *There are no new mandates currently. It is worth mentioning the on-going role in determining drug contamination in facilities that could have human impact. New standards may be set as research and science is catching up with the fentanyl crisis with 2<sup>nd</sup> hand contaminates / exposures. The public health system is quickly looking to establish new standards and the role of local and state public health departments. I anticipate this will be better defined in 2024.*

## Programs

1. List programs, projects and services within your department funded through federal COVID/ARPA funds. What, if any, of those programs are you recommending ongoing funding for and what is the source of ongoing funding?
  - **Department services and programs being funded through ARPA funds:**
    - Savvy Septic
    - The School Based Healthcare Clinic Project
    - Equity Review – Review Department’s response to COVID Pandemic
    - Gold Standard Study
    - General COVID response activities and services (ending 12/31/2023)
    - Inventory Septic System
    - Mobile Van Purchase – Mobile Vaccinations
    - Food Permit Responsiveness - EH Permit Technicians (2 Project FTE)
    - Environmental Health Software Upgrade
  
2. For programs funded by COVID/ARPA funds, detail the plan to close out and/or transition those programs to an ongoing funding source in 2025 and beyond.
  - **Savvy Septic** – We have two additional funding sources that will help to support this work going forward, Washington State Department of Health (DOH) grant and an Ecology Clean Water grant. We are actively seeking additional grant dollars to sustain the project going forward. We believe the ARPA funds will allow a great jump start work while we seek other sustainable resources.
  - **The School Based Healthcare Clinic Project** – The ARPA funds will assess school readiness in Snohomish County. This survey and assessment is a one time funding need. This assessment will be done through contract or through a project assessment. Depending on the outcomes of this funded work – the department will help to identify strategic partners and resources to support the development of an implementation plan.
  - **Gold Standard Study** – we will use FPHS resources to fund a position to oversee on-going planning, performance accountability, and evaluation. The ARPA contacted consultants were onetime expenses.
  - **General COVID response activities and services** – Funding includes 1 supervisor and 4 disease intervention specialist who support schools/childcares. These positions will end December 31, 2023. We are finding there continues to be a need in both schools and childcares. If we can identify new funding sources – we would strive to maintain one position to support schools and childcares around COVID and other infectious diseases in school settings.

- **Food Permit Responsiveness - EH Permit Technicians** – the two project positions will be sustained in new EH funding model if approved by BOH.
3. What new programs are you launching for 2024? What need or efficiency is that new program addressing? How is that program funded for sustainability? What metrics are in place to determine effectiveness?
- *The Department will create a program to work on substance use prevention which has historically been covered by our Healthy Communities Team. Substance use issues has become more complex over time; work has increased therefore we have created a separate program. There will be 3 FTE funded with CDMH funding, 3 FTE funded with a long-term Federal Grant and the other 2 FTE are funded through Department of Health.*
  - *STD Clinical services using state funding through June 2025. These funds are in place to address the increase of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) in Snohomish County. From 2019 – 2022 rates of syphilis cases have doubled. We have also seen an increase in congenital syphilis affecting unborn and newly born children to mothers untreated. Public health's role is to prevent and interrupt transmission of STDs in the community.*
  - In 2024 the Health Department will partner with Molina Health in launching an initiative to improve immunizations rates in Snohomish County. Improving immunization rates is one of the most cost-effective means of public health promotion and disease prevention. Vaccines prevent disease, disability, and death in children and adults.
4. If different than #3, what are your areas of significant investment? What are you not doing because of that investment?
- N/A

### **Internal Operations**

1. What is your department doing to streamline processes or deliver services in a new way? How do your budget allocation requests play into these innovations? Are there ways which a different budget approach, e.g. several departments sharing a resource, could achieve the same or better results in a more cost-effective way?
- *In order to shorten response times to public information requests, the department has converted Environmental Health documents to electronic*

*formats for quicker access. Most of the costs related to this effort were incurred in the 2023 budget year.*

- *Food Permit Technicians are going to be hired as project roles to work on the food safety programs application process. The department has a longer than expected wait time on new plan reviews and are looking for ways to improve the wait time. The technicians will work with the customer to ensure that the application is complete and accurate for when the Environmental Health Specialist is ready to review the application. These roles have been previously added in the Land Use program and have seen a significant impact on the application process.*
2. What, if any, hiring challenges are you experiencing? How is that affecting your level of service or internal operations? How are you mitigating those operational challenges and/or what is your plan for recruitment?
- *It remains difficult to hire and retain nursing staff, not only in public health, but health care in general. Many nurses have left the career field after years of COVID response. We have had to be assertive with offerings to remain competitive in the market. The past year has seen realignment of staff and hiring of temporary contract labor to sustain mandated operations such as TB control.*
3. To help inform Council on experiences around hiring and retention, please provide a list of all vacant position titles, position codes, FTE amount (1.0, 0.5, etc.), date vacated, and date first posted. Template spreadsheet attached for convenience and conformity; if already tracking information in another format, that is acceptable as well. Please list each vacancy separately.
- *Refer to the Supplemental FTE Info attachment.*
4. What effect has the increase of inflation and/or supply chain issues had on your department? What, if any, services, or projects have you had to adjust to accommodate for this? (i.e. moving to outside contracted services, delaying of project starts and/or purchasing, redistribution of workload, etc.)
- *Due to supply chain issues, the process of replacing aging fleet vehicles with hybrid or electric vehicles has been challenging due to vehicles being either unavailable or having significantly delayed delivery dates.*
5. When was the last time your department implemented a fee increase? Do you have any plans to increase fees?

- *The previous increase to the department's Environmental Health (EH) fees occurred November 2022. The department's EH division anticipates a fee increase to be approved by the Board of Health October 2023 in response to the COLA received in 2023. There is currently a tentative plan to present an additional implementation of fee adjustments to the Board of Health in Spring of 2024.*
6. Do you have any plans to do a rate/fee study? Are your current fees established based on a full cost recovery model?
- *The Environmental Health division plans to conduct a rate/fee study as part of the tentative Spring 2024 adjustment proposal. The department currently does not have a cost recovery model but is considering developing one as part of the study.*

### **Successes**

1. Take this opportunity to share one significant success in your department over this past year. What made it a success?
- *Effective January 1, 2023 the Department integrated into county government from a special purpose district. The integration continues as staff learn new processes.*
  - *New \$1M state funding to begin STD clinical services.*
  - *New FPHS funding \$1.6M for core public health services*
  - *Formulation of the new Board of Health*