



Public health planning

Frequently asked questions

This document has been developed to assist Health Service Providers (HSP), local governments, and the broader WA community.

I am not sure where to start when developing a local public health plan. What resources are available?

The [Public health planning guide for local government](#) provides step-by-step advice to support WA local governments in developing their local public health plans. The guide recognises that different local governments may use different approaches. It should be read alongside the [State Public Health Plan 2025–2030](#).

A suite of supporting resources has been developed, including factsheets on Aboriginal health and wellbeing, climate change, communicable diseases, and environmental health. These resources are available on the public health planning [webpage](#).

Your local HSP is your first point of contact for support.

Do we have to update our local public health plan if it was prepared under the previous State Public Health Plan?

Yes, in accordance with section 45 of the *Public Health Act 2016*, the local public health plan must be consistent with the State Public Health Plan 2025–2030 by 4 June 2026.

How do we report to the Department of Health that we've met the legislative requirement for local public health planning under the *Public Health Act 2016*?

Reporting on local public health will form a part of the [annual performance reporting for local government enforcement agencies survey](#) for local governments to confirm whether local public health plans have been published in line with the State Public Health Plan 2025-2030 and legislative requirements. This survey will be circulated in June 2026, with a closing date of 31 August 2026.

Do local governments have to send their local public health plans to the Department of Health for review?

Local governments are not required to send their local public health plans to the Department of Health for review.

Are local governments required to report on the implementation of the local public health plan?

Local governments are required to report the publication of their local public health plan, review the plan annually, and replace it every five years. There is no legislative requirement to report on implementation. However, local governments are encouraged to share progress updates through their existing community forums, webinars, and engagement channels. This helps maintain transparency, supports collaboration at the local level, and builds community confidence that public health priorities are being actively addressed.

What does overarching objectives mean? How do we ensure these objectives are appropriately included in the local plan?

The State Public Health Plan 2025–2030 identifies two overarching objectives:

- Aboriginal health and wellbeing
- Equity and inclusion

Overarching objectives are those that underpin all the priorities in the plan. When creating the local public health plan, you should actively consider and inform how the needs of Aboriginal people and priority population groups will be met for your priorities in the plan.

The Department of Health has developed a series of [factsheets](#) on Aboriginal health and wellbeing to support local governments to implement public health planning initiatives which address racism and strengthen the cultural determinants of health for Aboriginal people.

How can the local public health plan outline the way local governments will work with the Chief Health Officer and other public health partners to deliver its objectives and policy priorities, as per section 45 of the *Public Health Act 2016*?

The local public health plan should list the organisations that will support the implementation of the plan and its public health programs. Clearly outlining these partnerships promotes transparency and helps the community understand who is contributing to public health initiatives in their area.

Local governments can demonstrate partnership with the Chief Health Officer by supporting the State Public Health Plan 2025–2030 and actively participating in its implementation of priorities through actions tailored to local community needs.

What is meant by public health risks in section 45 of the *Public Health Act 2016*?

Public health risks are the conditions or factors that may negatively impact the health and wellbeing of people in your local area, now or in the future. The scope of public health risks is broad and includes risks arising from health status, environmental conditions, social and economic factors, and emerging threats. Public health risks are identified by looking at reliable evidence such as health status profiles and local data. By identifying these risks, local governments can decide which public health priorities and initiatives are most important for their community.

How can local governments access their health status profiles?

Health status profiles are distributed to local governments through HSPs. Local government can obtain health status profiles at no cost through 2 methods:

- Contacting your local HSP who will provide the report directly to the local government.
- Submitting a [data request form](#) directly to the Epidemiology Directorate at the Department of Health.

A fee applies to external consultants who request a health status profile without direct instruction from a local government and their HSP.

In addition to the health status profiles, the [Health and Wellbeing Surveillance System](#) provides more comprehensive risk factor and prevalence statistics at the health region level.

Must we align our local public health plan's priorities to the health status profile?

Local governments should base their public health priorities on evidence. Health status profiles and the Health and Wellbeing Surveillance System are sources of evidence presented at the local government and health regional level. The patterns and trends summarised in the reports can be an informative resource to assist local governments determine the most appropriate interventions needed in their local public health plans.

We have already developed priorities based on the previous health status profiles for our area. Must we now change these based on the refreshed data?

If your plan has already been submitted or is close to completion, there is no expectation that it needs to be revised. The updated health statistics can instead be used to inform future reviews or updates and will be valuable for monitoring changes over time. Local governments are required to review their local public health plan every year, which provides a good opportunity to incorporate the latest data and assess whether the current priorities remain relevant. Refreshed profiles will be produced every three years, with the next update scheduled for 2029.

Can we use other data sources to inform our local public health plan, or must it rely solely on the health status profiles provided by the Department of Health?

Local governments may use other national, state or local data sources where relevant. The advantage of the health status profile is that it provides estimates specifically for each local government area – information that was not previously available at that geographical level. These profiles offer a clearer picture of local health patterns and support evidence-based priority setting for local public health plans. Local governments have access to the same indicators, presented in a consistent format, including comparisons between each local government and WA.

We cannot meet the legislated 4 June 2026 timeline to publish our local public health plan. What are our options?

Local governments are expected to comply with the legislation. However, if a short extension of time is required, please send an email to DoH.PHPlanning@health.wa.gov.au, and include the following information:

- Confirmation that your CEO requests an extension.
- A clear and valid explanation of the reasons for the request.
- The proposed revised completion date.

Your request will be considered by the Chief Health Officer.

Are there penalties for not publishing our local public health plan by the deadline?

The *Public Health Act 2016* provides for the development of regulations for public health planning, including provisions for penalties for non-compliance.

For further information, please contact the Department of Health at DoH.PHPlanning@health.wa.gov.au.

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with disability.

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