

# The South East Public Health Unit Strategy

2024–2029





### **Acknowledgement of Country**

Monash Health respectfully acknowledges the Bunurong and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung peoples, the Traditional Custodians and owners of the lands where our facilities are located and programs operate. We recognise the ongoing spiritual link Aboriginal people have to their lands, culture and lore; and acknowledge that their connections build healthier families and communities. Monash Health pays respect to the Elders of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong peoples; past, present and future. We extend our respect to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, consumers and stakeholders.



Ngarra-jarra-noun artwork  
by Dixon Patten

# Message from the Director and General Manager of the South East Public Health Unit

*We are delighted to present the South East Public Health Unit Strategy 2024-2029.*

Public Health is everyone's business. It shapes our lives for the better, by preventing chronic disease, promoting health and wellbeing and helping to protect communities from emerging health threats.

Together with partner organisations, we aspire to deliver coordinated public health care in rapidly growing and diverse communities across 11 local government areas of over 1.8 million people. We believe that to achieve better health outcomes and address health inequities, we must work with our communities, build trust, and develop strong relationships.

A new era in health care is emerging, with place-based care at the heart of all that we do. Collectively, we are committed to our clear vision that our catchment is a place where every person can live their healthiest life.

In 2020, the Victorian Government created nine Local Public Health Units (LPHUs) across the state to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. In July 2022, that focus began to shift from COVID-19 to broader public health functions, including prevention, health promotion and health protection.

Today, the South East Public Health Unit is responsible for the management of over 80 notifiable infectious diseases, and we work with the community to ensure a rapid response to outbreaks.

Our Health Promotion team enables individuals and groups to improve their health via education and empowerment. We also work to reduce the risk of chronic disease or injury before it occurs, undertaking research to improve health outcomes and engage with our communities.

The development of this strategy represents months of diligent collaboration and consultation. It details our commitments for the next six years, grounded in a robust understanding of our community's needs, evidence-based interventions, and ongoing engagement with our stakeholders, partners, and the community to align our efforts with their aspirations for a healthier future.

We acknowledge our valued partners, including health services, local councils, healthcare providers, peak bodies and community groups who have co-designed and will co-lead our public health initiatives into the future.

Our strategic focus on engagement with at-risk populations, capacity building across networks, developing localised strategies, targeted health equity projects and strengthening our relationships and strategic partnerships is designed to ensure our success. We are proud to present a strategy that aims to improve the lives of almost two million Victorians.

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**Professor Rhonda Stuart**  
Director  
South East Public Health Unit

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**Sharyn Donald**  
General Manager  
South East Public Health Unit

# Our Functions



Communications  
and Engagement

Research and  
Evaluation



# Introducing the SEPHU Strategy

In 2023, South East Public Health Unit (SEPHU) undertook a broad consultation and intelligence gathering process to help understand the experience of our local community, employees, government and health services to inform our strategic priorities and the outcomes we want to achieve as a public health unit (see our strategic roadmap).

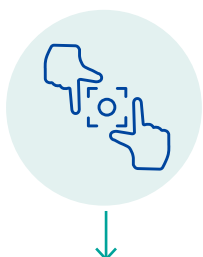
The inaugural SEPHU Strategy 2024-2029 sets out how SEPHU will work in partnership with our stakeholders to reshape the public health and wellbeing of our catchment.

This document details the vision SEPHU has for the public health and wellbeing of South East Metropolitan Melbourne, the purpose of our organisation, our strategic priorities, organisational values and the initiatives we will undertake for each priority. We also outline our plan for monitoring the progress of the SEPHU strategy and how we will evaluate our strategy's impact on the public health and wellbeing of our catchment.



# Our Strategic Roadmap

## Because...



- › Our catchment is diverse, with people from many cultural backgrounds and differing health needs.
- › We want everyone to have equal opportunity to attain their full potential for health and wellbeing.
- › We want to protect our community against emerging public health threats and reduce the risk of outbreaks in the community.
- › We want to drive innovation and support our stakeholders in achieving better public health outcomes.

## We focus on...



- › Strengthening community connection and capability.
- › Advancing equity in health and wellbeing.
- › Ensuring timely and coordinated responses to public health threats.
- › Cultivating a thriving public health workforce.

## To achieve this we...



- › Work together with communities so they can prepare, respond and recover effectively from a wide range of health challenges.
- › Partner with communities and stakeholders to promote access to better health and wellbeing for all people.
- › Work with partners to detect, communicate and respond to threats to the health, safety and wellbeing of our communities.
- › Collaborate with stakeholders to build a workforce where knowledge is shared, evidence drives decision-making, talent flourishes, and innovation thrives.

## That results in...



- › A more connected and integrated public health and wellbeing system across the catchment.
- › Better health and wellbeing outcomes for the people in our catchment.
- › A public health network that is well prepared to anticipate and respond to public health incidents.
- › A more capable and skilled public health workforce.

# Our Strategy at a glance

VISION	Where every person can live their healthiest life			
PURPOSE	We will listen to our communities and work together in strong partnerships to improve the health and wellbeing of all individuals			
PILLARS	 <p>Strengthening community connection and capability</p>	 <p>Advancing equity in health and wellbeing</p>	 <p>Ensuring timely and coordinated responses to public health threats</p>	 <p>Cultivating a thriving public health workforce</p>
INTENT	<b>We will work together with communities so they can prepare, respond and recover effectively from a wide range of health challenges</b>	<b>We will partner with communities and stakeholders to promote access to better health and wellbeing for all people</b>	<b>We will work with partners to detect, communicate and respond to threats to the health, safety and wellbeing of our communities</b>	<b>We will collaborate with stakeholders to build a workforce where knowledge is shared, evidence drives decision-making, talent flourishes and innovation thrives</b>
OBJECTIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build and maintain our reputation while increasing our presence and visibility</li> <li>• Develop tailored engagement strategies for target populations</li> <li>• Strengthen partnerships and build shared priorities with stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measure and report progress on equity in health outcomes</li> <li>• Advocate for systemic change for our priority populations</li> <li>• Promote and improve access to care and opportunities for advancing wellbeing</li> <li>• Promote and support health education in our community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve and implement new processes for monitoring and early threat detection</li> <li>• Improve current communication methods and processes when responding to public health concerns</li> <li>• Identify and respond to key public health threats that impact the SEPHU catchment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide continuous learning, research, quality improvement and development opportunities</li> <li>• Foster a positive organisational culture</li> </ul>
VALUES	<p><b>Integrity:</b> Honesty, open and transparent, admit mistakes, maintains confidentiality, fairness, builds trust</p> <p><b>Compassion:</b> Empathy, sensitivity, concern for others, interacts with dignity, tolerance, anticipates needs</p> <p><b>Accountability:</b> Understands roles, uses resources wisely, delivers on time, timely decision making, achieves stretch goals, takes responsibility for performance</p> <p><b>Respect:</b> Builds relationships, courteous, listens and understands, gives &amp; receives feedback, sensitivity &amp; understanding, values difference and individual worth</p> <p><b>Excellence:</b> Supports creativity &amp; innovation, proactive &amp; solution focused, seeks out opportunities, embraces quality improvement, professionalism</p>			

# Pillar 1

## Strengthening community connection and capability



**Intent:** We will work together with communities so they can prepare, respond and recover effectively from a wide range of health challenges.

Objective	Goals	Initiatives
1.1 Build our reputation and presence.	1.1.1 Improve our digital presence.	<p>Refresh and maintain the SEPHU website with updated information.</p> <p>Develop relationships with partners to leverage their communication channels.</p>
	1.1.2 Enhance our presence and visibility.	<p>Review the SEPHU branding and identity.</p> <p>Scope and explore the implementation of new channels.</p>
	1.1.3. Review and refine our approach for communications and engagement with stakeholders.	<p>Define and implement a process for health alerts, incident and emergency communications.</p> <p>Embed the Stakeholder Relationship Management (SRM) tool.</p> <p>Deliver timely and tailored communication materials sent by SEPHU to external stakeholders.</p> <p>Integrate content by partner organisations and distribute through SEPHU channels.</p> <p>Apply engagement methods specific to context to build trust.</p>
	1.1.4 Attend and host networking and capacity building events with partners across the catchment.	<p>Lead governance structures for the four priorities of the SEPHU catchment plan.</p> <p>Collaborate with VicHealth for health promotion events.</p> <p>Participate in networking events hosted by the Department of Health for all LPHUs.</p> <p>Host SEPHU networking events (e.g., engagement events and leadership forums with community leaders).</p> <p>Provide opportunities for stakeholders to share their priorities and hear about our work.</p>



Objective	Goals	Initiatives
1.2 Develop tailored engagement strategies for target populations and stakeholders.	1.2.1 Develop and implement plans for engaging with multicultural groups, priority populations and stakeholders across the catchment.	<p>Develop strategies for engaging with priority groups including LGBTQIA+, multicultural, disability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations.</p> <p>Expand relationships and utilise existing structures to engage with priority populations. This includes bicultural networks, community champions, partner programs and local government advisory committees.</p> <p>Maintain an updated stakeholder directory to target engagement for planned initiatives.</p>
1.3 Strengthen partnerships and build shared priorities with stakeholders.	1.3.1 Co-lead projects with other organisations and community groups.	<p>Explore opportunities to partner with our stakeholders to deliver population and public health projects in the community.</p> <p>Support consumer / community engagement and communications for the SEPHU catchment plan.</p> <p>Support communications and community engagement as part of the communicable diseases prevention and control priorities.</p>
	1.3.2 Develop connections with organisations beyond our catchment.	<p>Develop partnerships or work collaboratively with organisations operating in other LPHUs or nationally that deliver services that may impact the SEPHU community.</p> <p>Learn from organisations operating in other countries with similar public health challenges.</p>

# Pillar 2

## Advancing equity in health and wellbeing



**Intent:** We will partner with communities and stakeholders to promote access to better health and wellbeing for all people.

Objective	Goals	Initiatives
2.1 Measure and report progress on equity in health outcomes.	2.1.1. Develop a baseline understanding of equity in health outcomes for the SEPHU catchment.	<p>Conduct a review of existing SEPHU catchment data.</p> <p>Develop and publish a minimum dataset to assist with monitoring of key public health functions and to support opportunities for quality improvement and research.</p> <p>Establish a process for measuring and reporting meaningful and inclusive health outcomes.</p> <p>Establish a live, interactive and collaborative data platform across the health promotion and prevention sector.</p>
2.2 Advocate for systemic change for our priority populations.	<p>2.2.1. Launch and deliver public health campaigns led by SEPHU or through supporting partnered organisations.</p> <p>2.2.2. Collaborate with stakeholders to shape policy and regulations that influence the public health of our catchment.</p>	<p>Deliver tailored health priority campaigns aligning with the population health catchment plan.</p> <p>Cross-promote externally led campaigns aligning to SEPHU's priorities.</p> <p>Strengthen engagement with relevant government bodies, organisations and professional unions to identify opportunities for collaboration.</p>
2.3 Strengthen and improve access to care and opportunities for advancing wellbeing.	2.3.1. Collaborate with health services and other sectors to improve access to care and wellbeing.	<p>Coordinate local action planning, activity and evaluation aligning with the catchment plan and the Community Health-Health Promotion guidelines.</p> <p>Strengthen the alignment of health promotion and prevention work with other LPHUs.</p> <p>Develop, support and promote of improved health system navigation.</p> <p>Strengthen approaches to address commercial determinants of health.</p>
2.4 Promote and support health education in our community.	2.4.1 Deliver public health promotion initiatives to our catchment.	<p>Deliver health promotion and prevention activities according to the catchment plan.</p> <p>Work with the Department of Health and the health promotion and prevention sector to build a common platform and measurement tools to support the measurement of collective impact.</p>

# Pillar 3

## Ensuring timely and coordinated responses to public health threats



**Intent:** We will work with partners to detect, communicate and respond to threats to the health, safety and wellbeing of our communities.

Objective	Goals	Initiatives
3.1 Improve and implement new processes for monitoring threats and early hazard detection.	3.1.1 Enhance existing data and intelligence gathering processes to improve public health threat monitoring and response.	<p>Conduct a review of current processes / workflows and develop new automated processes (e.g., communications with aged care services).</p> <p>Work with SEPHU medical providers to improve urgent notification practices.</p> <p>Identify new areas of data collection to enhance public health response (e.g., routine Health Needs Assessments and improved data for vaccination).</p>
	3.1.2. Develop local preparedness and response plans for public health threats in the catchment.	<p>Working together with the Department of Health, LGAs, health services and other agencies, SEPHU will develop the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A climate change / sustainability plan.</li> <li>• A SEPHU Public Health Emergency Management plan.</li> <li>• A pandemic preparedness and communicable disease response plan.</li> <li>• An environmental health response plan.</li> </ul>
3.2 Improve communication methods and processes when responding to public health concerns.	3.2.1. Develop new processes for communicating with stakeholders for responding to public health concerns as part of Business As Usual.	<p>Conduct a review of current barriers impacting stakeholders' experiences when working with SEPHU.</p> <p>Establish data sharing processes for internal and external stakeholders.</p> <p>Review resources and templates used by SEPHU for communications.</p>
3.3 Identify and respond to key public health threats that impact the SEPHU catchment.	3.3.1 Develop a communicable disease catchment plan for SEPHU.	<p>Work with the community and stakeholders to identify key communicable disease risks and develop a local plan to tackle the identified risks.</p>
	3.3.2 Provide public health leadership in Blood Borne Viruses and STI health activities.	<p>Pilot the role of a Cultural Liaison Officer in enhancing viral hepatitis management in CALD populations.</p> <p>Establish collaborations with local service providers to enhance cascade of care for viral hepatitis.</p>

# Pillar 4

## Cultivating a thriving public health workforce



**Intent:** We will collaborate with stakeholders to build a workforce where knowledge is shared, evidence drives decision making, talent flourishes and innovation thrives.

Objective	Goals	Initiatives
4.1 Provide continuous learning, research, quality improvement and development opportunities.	4.1.1 Deliver formal and informal training together with external organisations and within SEPHU.	<p>Partner with universities, research and other agencies to access specialised courses, workshops and micro-credentialled programs.</p> <p>Trial informal capability development sessions (e.g., table top sessions) to encourage knowledge sharing.</p> <p>Continue to implement the SEPHU academic framework, which provides opportunities for SEPHU to deliver education and training to the future public health medical and PhD workforce.</p> <p>Implement a structure for delivering education and training for public health, allied health and nursing students.</p>
	4.1.2. Establish supervision / mentorship programs to facilitate knowledge transfer, networking and career development.	<p>Review the existing supervision structure for staff.</p> <p>Explore possibility of a mentorship program across the LPHU network.</p> <p>Source leadership training / supervision training.</p>
	4.1.3 Provide time and resources to support employees to undertake development opportunities.	<p>Review the SEPHU organisational continuous development plan.</p> <p>Explore secondment opportunities internally within SEPHU and with external organisations.</p>
	4.1.4 Encourage and support research and quality improvement initiatives.	<p>Develop a SEPHU research plan with topics identified for research and potential for publication.</p> <p>Develop a process for quality improvement opportunities to be identified and allocated to employees to lead.</p>
4.2. Foster a positive organisational culture.	4.2.1 Align SEPHU with the organisation's workforce strategy to promote a positive culture.	<p>Conduct regular reviews of employees' experience working in SEPHU to understand opportunities for improvement.</p> <p>Review and design new organisation policies, procedures and guidelines that support a positive organisational culture.</p>



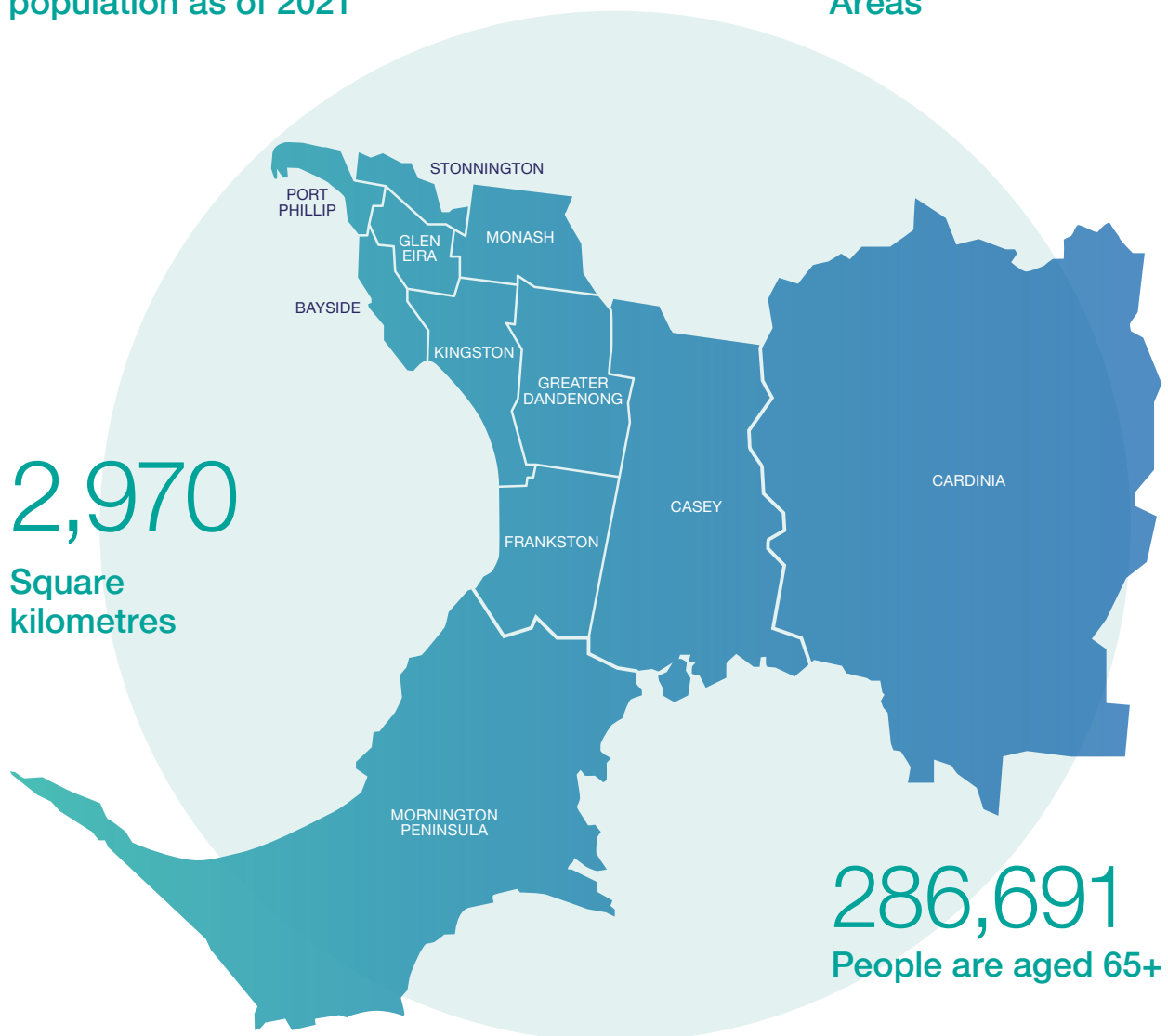
# Our Catchment

1.8 million  
population

One quarter of the Victorian  
population as of 2021

11

Local  
Government  
Areas



Culturally and  
Linguistically  
Diverse

533,925

People speak  
a language other  
than English

649,400

People are  
born overseas

# Monitoring and Evaluation Plan for the SEPHU Strategy

	 <b>Pillar 1</b> Strengthening community connection and capability	 <b>Pillar 2</b> Advancing equity in health and wellbeing
<b>Intent</b>	We will work together with communities so they can prepare, respond and recover effectively from a wide range of health challenges.	We will partner with communities and stakeholders to promote access to better health and wellbeing for all people.
<b>Objectives</b>	1.1 Build our reputation and presence. 1.2 Develop tailored engagement strategies for target populations and stakeholders. 1.3 Strengthen partnerships and build shared priorities with stakeholders.	2.1 Measure and report progress on equity in health outcomes. 2.2 Advocate for systemic change for our priority populations. 2.3 Strengthen and improve access to care and opportunities for advancing wellbeing. 2.4 Promote and support health education in our community.
<b>Initiatives</b>	1.1 Refresh website, review branding, implement health alert processes, lead governance, and host networking events. 1.2 Develop strategies for priority groups, expand relationships, and maintain stakeholder directory. 1.3 Partner for public health projects, support community engagement, and collaborate with other LPHUs and national organisations.	2.1 Review catchment data, establish inclusive health outcome reporting and a collaborative data platform. 2.2 Promote priority campaigns and strengthen engagement with stakeholder organisations. 2.3 Coordinate local action planning, improve health system navigation, and address commercial determinants of health. 2.4 Deliver health promotion activities and develop tools to measure collective impact.
<b>Overall Measures of Success</b>	Demonstrated recognition and visibility of SEPHU as a trusted public health leader in Victoria with effective engagement with priority populations and strong partnerships with stakeholders aligned with SEPHU's strategy and priority areas.	Demonstrated success in advancing equity in health and wellbeing through comprehensive baseline data, regular health outcome reports, increased campaign engagement, strong stakeholder collaboration, improved access to care, and measurable health promotion activities aligned with SEPHU priorities.
<b>Outputs</b> <b>Short Term</b> Year 1-June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase website visits and referrals.</li> <li>• Improve timeliness and accuracy of health alerts and communications.</li> <li>• Increase engagement strategies developed and implemented.</li> <li>• Increase partnerships and collaborations.</li> <li>• Increase event attendance and participation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completion and comprehensiveness of baseline data review.</li> <li>• Increase in number, reach and engagement metrics of public health campaigns and health promotion and prevention activities.</li> <li>• Increase in stakeholder meetings and collaborative initiatives including activity and participation records.</li> <li>• Increase in partner organisations involved in campaign delivery.</li> </ul>
<b>Outputs</b> <b>Medium Term</b> Year 3-June 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve brand identity and recognition from survey results.</li> <li>• Increase number and types of new communication channels.</li> <li>• Increase frequency and improve quality of interactions with priority populations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in frequency of health outcomes reports and local action plans implemented.</li> <li>• Improve stakeholder feedback on engagement and collaboration efforts and measurement tools.</li> <li>• Improve quality and strength of relationships with government bodies, organisations, and professional unions.</li> </ul>
<b>Impacts</b> <b>Long Term</b> Year 5-June 2029	Increase impact of partnerships and collaborations with stakeholders and priority populations including feedback on partnership strength and alignment, trust and satisfaction.	Increase equitable access to health services, increase healthy behaviours (active living, immunisation, screening), increase sexual and reproductive health, reduce harmful behaviours (tobacco, e-cigarette use) and decrease hospitalisations due to falls in target populations.

**VISION****Where every person can live their healthiest life.****PURPOSE****We will listen to our communities and work together in strong partnerships to improve the health and wellbeing of all individuals.**

**Pillar 3**  
Ensuring timely and coordinated  
responses to public health threats

We will work with partners to detect, communicate and respond to threats to the health, safety and wellbeing of our communities.

- 3.1 Improve and implement new processes for monitoring threats and early hazard detection.
- 3.2 Improve communication methods and processes when responding to public health concerns.
- 3.3 Identify and respond to key public health threats that impact the SEPHU catchment.

- 3.1 Review and automate workflows, enhance urgent notification practices, and identify new data collection areas.
- 3.2 Review barriers for stakeholder engagement, establish data sharing processes, and update communication resources.
- 3.3 Develop plans for communicable disease risks, pilot a Cultural Liaison Officer role, and collaborate with service providers for viral hepatitis care.

Demonstrated ability for SEPHU to accurately detect and respond to public health threats in a timely manner, maintain effective local preparedness and response plans, ensure stakeholder satisfaction with communication during public health responses, implement a comprehensive catchment plan for communicable diseases, and lead in managing viral hepatitis and STIs.

- Maintain proportion of urgent notifiable conditions responded to within 24 hours and number of after-action reviews conducted.
- Improve identification and prioritisation of communicable disease risks and priority populations.
- Increase in number and effectiveness of collaborations with local service providers.
- Completion and implementation status of each plan.

- Improve identification and resolution of key communication barriers.
- Increase accuracy of threat detection reports, decrease average time to detect and respond to public health threats and increase effectiveness of plans to address public health threats.

Decrease incidence rates of key communicable diseases and improve management metrics of viral hepatitis and STIs in priority populations.



**Pillar 4**  
Cultivating a thriving  
public health workforce

We will collaborate with stakeholders to build a workforce where knowledge is shared, evidence drives decision making, talent flourishes and innovation thrives.

- 4.1 Provide continuous learning, research, quality improvement and development opportunities.
- 4.2 Foster a positive organisational culture.

- 4.1 Partner with universities for specialised courses, implement academic framework, deliver education and training, review supervision structure, explore mentorship and secondment opportunities, develop research and quality improvement plans.
- 4.2 Conduct regular employee experience reviews and design new policies to support a positive organisational culture.

Demonstrated ability for SEPHU to cultivate a thriving public health workforce through active participation in programs, effective knowledge transfer, career advancement, engagement in development opportunities, contributions to research, quality improvement initiatives and fostering a positive work culture with high employee satisfaction.

- Increase participation rates in formal and informal training sessions including leadership and supervision training.
- Increase number of development/secondment opportunities.
- Increase number of research projects initiated and number of publications.
- Increase number of quality improvement initiatives identified and completed.

- Increase number of policies, procedures and guidelines reviewed and updated.
- Improve outcomes of quality improvement projects.

Improve key metrics related to organisational culture including retention rates, engagement scores, employee satisfaction with working at SEPHU, effectiveness of development plans and supervision structure.

