



Teton County



Health Department Strategic Plan

2025

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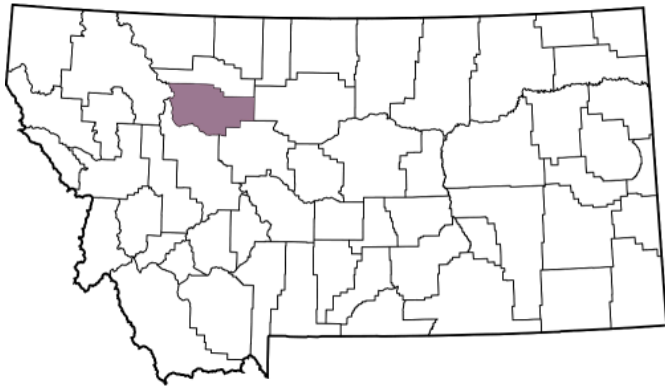
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ABOUT TETON COUNTY



Teton County, Montana, is located along the eastern edge of the Rocky Mountains, with the Lewis and Clark National Forest forming its western border. The landscape transitions from forested mountains to plains further east. The Teton River flows through the center of the county, and the Sun River marks its southern boundary.

The county covers about 2,293 square miles, with a population of approximately 6,300 people (as of 2023). This results in a low population density of about 2.8 people per square mile. Major communities include Choteau (the county seat), Fairfield, Dutton, Power, Bynum, and Pendroy.

Agriculture is central to Teton County's economy, with about 61% of the land dedicated to farming. Key crops include winter and spring wheat, barley (Fairfield is known as the "Malting Barley Capital of the World"), chickpeas, and lentils. Ranching is also a significant part of the economy, with cattle and sheep outnumbering the human population. The Greenfields Irrigation District supports a large portion of the cropland. Beyond agriculture, some diversification exists in areas like telecommunications and tourism, with the county serving as a gateway to the Rocky Mountain Front, Bob Marshall Wilderness, and Glacier National Park. Outdoor recreation is a growing economic driver.

Teton County is considered a safe community with low crime rates, particularly for violent crime. Demographically, the population is predominantly White (around 92%), with smaller percentages of individuals identifying as American Indian/Alaska Native or two or more races. The median age is higher than the national average, at approximately 43 years old.

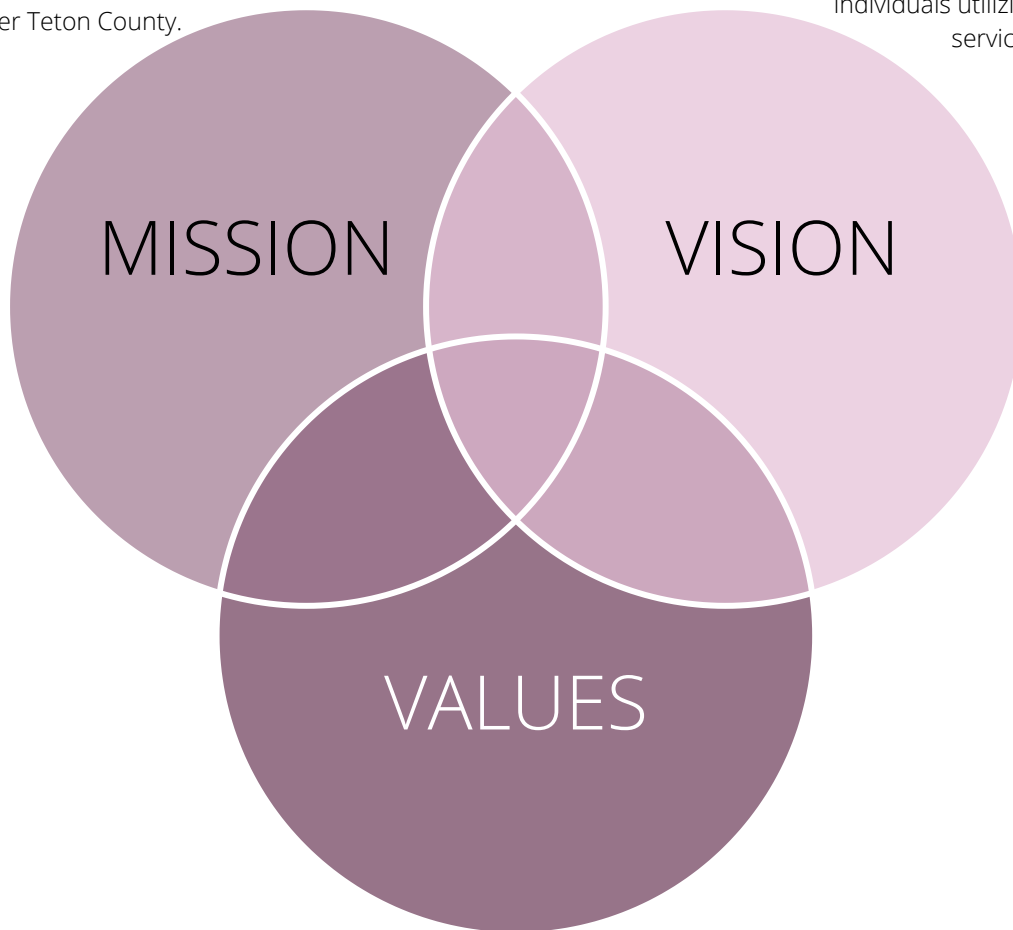
Key community health concerns in Teton County largely revolve around behavioral health. A significant concern is addiction and substance abuse (including alcohol and prescription drugs), followed closely by mental illness. Access to mental health services is a challenge due to limited providers and the stigma associated with seeking care in rural areas. Other health issues include chronic diseases, healthy aging for seniors (including daily activities and isolation), and access to social support services. The county actively works on initiatives to address these concerns, focusing on prevention, education, and improving access to resources.



TETON COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

Be curious, be empathetic, be evidence-based for a healthier Teton County.

By 2030, increase the number of individuals utilizing health department services by 20%.



Integrity – We are responsible, dependable, transparent, and trustworthy

Collaboration – We work with partners to achieve a coordinated and sustainable response to community health issues.

Credibility – We foster an environment that is rooted in science, accuracy, and effectiveness.

Advocacy – We strive to serve and support our community with inclusivity, respect, and equity.

OVERVIEW OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN PROCESS

In July 2025, the Teton County Public Health team successfully conducted their in-person strategy plan facilitation. This effort was guided by staff from the Montana Department of Health and Human Services Public Health System Improvement Office. The Teton team held four workshops to shape their plan, which involved creating a practical vision, identifying obstacles that hinder their goals, formulating strategic directions to navigate these barriers, and developing implementation strategies to realize their vision. The workshops utilized the Technology of Participation (ToP) facilitation method. Before the workshops, the staff engaged in an activity to clarify their mission, vision, and values. Additionally, a review of Teton County's Community Health Improvement Plan took place prior to the meeting, which aided in informing the objectives and strategies outlined below.

UNDERLYING CONTRADICTIONS ACTIVITY FINDINGS

What is blocking us from our vision?

1. Public Trust Key Issues:

- Low levels of trust post-pandemic
- Public confusion or lack of awareness about available programs
- Ineffective communication with both partners and the broader community

2. Capacity for Change Key Issues:

- Insufficient resources and planning for new roles and programs
- Lack of time and bandwidth to implement change
- Integration of new methods, including technology integration
- Balancing quality services with a need for new partnerships and relationships

3. Marketing Challenges Key Issues:

- Limited social media and marketing knowledge
- Lack of expertise in engaging the community via digital platforms
- Underused programs due to poor communication and visibility

4. Workload and Burnout Key Issues:

- Workload imbalance and staff burnout
- Insufficient capacity to add new events and services
- Lack of representation in community activities and events
- Difficulty balancing day-to-day responsibilities with strategic priorities

5. Distance and Geographic Barriers Key Issues:

- Geographic barriers to service delivery in outlying communities
- Weather and logistics hinder outreach and travel
- Increased costs and time commitments for out-of-town services

6. Relationship with the Community Key Issues:

- Minimal community engagement and event participation
- Lack of awareness and involvement in key community activities
- Difficulty reaching younger families and new residents
- Slow integration into communities due to internal focus and logistical challenges

These underlying contradictions represent key barriers to achieving the Health Department's goals of outreach, capacity building, and community engagement. While some of these barriers may fall outside the influence of Teton County Public Health, the Health Department will focus their efforts on addressing those that feasibly can be changed to rebuilding public trust, improving marketing and communication strategies, understanding workload, and developing the necessary infrastructure (both human and technological) to meet the needs of the diverse Teton County communities.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND STRATEGIES

Outlined below are the strategic directions and measurable objectives, along with a series of strategies designed to effectively achieve each objective. Strategic directions are broad, long-term goals or priority areas that guide Teton County Public Health's decision, actions, and allocation of resources. It sets the overall focus for where our health department is headed and helps ensure that all efforts are aligned toward achieving our mission and vision.

REACHING OUTWARD TO BUILD TRUST, PARTNERSHIP & AWARENESS

GOAL: IMPROVE VISIBILITY, TRUST, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH TARGETED OUTREACH AND PARTNERSHIPS.

OBJECTIVES

Be Seen	1.1	By June 2026, increase community engagement by attending or hosting at least 6 activities and events that are public facing, ensuring that we participate in at least one event in each community outside the county seat each year.
	1.2	By Summer 2026, launch a grand opening event of the new health department building, and invite at least 2 media outlets.
Be Heard	1.3	By January 2026, develop a process and plan for publishing monthly newspaper articles, PSAs, or press releases in the Choteau Acantha
	1.4	Develop a organizational communications plan, and utilize it to promote at least 3 existing services and resources within the next year, including 1 that targets young families.
Make Friends	1.5	By December 2027, identify at least 1 new key partner to build or strengthen relationships in each of our communities
	1.6	Increase referrals by 20% within the next three years by effectively utilizing the CONNECT Referral System. <i>(CHIP Objective)</i>
	1.7	By December 2028, facilitate partnerships between programs that provide support to families to increase access to services for at least 10 families in the community. Recommend policy to continue programs and see if expansion is needed. <i>(CHIP Objective)</i>

KEY STRATEGIES

- Develop a communication plan using newspaper, social media, and events.
- Use community calendars to co-host or attend local events (schools, fairs, community centers).
- Increase targeted outreach strategies to engage underrepresented populations in existing services (e.g., Hutterite colonies, young families).
- Include intentional partner outreach and collaboration as part of our routine communications plan.
- Collect and use a list of babies born in the county to offer early childhood services.
- Promote the co-location of services and strengthen cross-sector referrals.
- Increase utilization of Health Department branded items to increase general visibility and public awareness.
- Explore feasibility of utilizing sanitarian services as a form of public outreach and communication to increase engagement.

ENHANCING INTERNAL CAPACITY

GOAL: STRENGTHEN SYSTEMS, STREAMLINE WORKFLOWS, AND INVEST IN STAFF DEVELOPMENT TO SUSTAIN QUALITY SERVICES.

OBJECTIVES

Be Efficient	2.1	By December 2026, create and implement at least 5 SOPs for core functions and train 100% of staff.
	2.2	By June 2026, identify meaningful ways to discuss the integration of new technologies and systems into our day-to-day work and start to utilize them.
	2.3	By January 2027, assess staff workload and discuss rebalancing along with development of new positions/hires such as a Marketing/Outreach Coordinator, Community Health Worker, or Front Desk.
Be Knowledgeable	2.4	By March 2026, conduct a workforce assessment and develop individual development plans (IDPs) for all staff.
	2.5	By June 2026, create a workforce development plan, including individualized goals and identify corresponding training opportunities, certificates, or continuing education resources that align with those goals.
	2.6	By December 2027, identify opportunities to collaborate with key partners for shared professional development opportunities for community professionals. (CHIP Objective)

KEY STRATEGIES

- Review and balance staff workload based on skills and interests.
- Establish regular blocks for staff training and team development, leverage staff meeting time if possible.
- Utilize the VMSG tool for goal alignment and performance tracking.
- Integrate Microsoft Teams for communication and collaboration.
- Provide marketing and technology training to staff.
- Simplify operations by developing clear SOPs for phones, referrals, walk-ins, and internal communication.
- Use staff-to-staff accountability teams and regular check-ins while implementing new technologies and processes.



INTEGRATING DATA & PERFORMANCE

GOAL: USE DATA AND EVALUATION TO IMPROVE PROGRAMS, INFORM THE PUBLIC, AND DRIVE DECISION-MAKING.

OBJECTIVES

Be Data-Driven	3.1	By February 2026, implement VMSG tracking for 5+ goals and review progress quarterly.
	3.2	By July 2026, include data analysis in our organizational communication plan, and make 3 data-driven outreach improvements.

KEY STRATEGIES

- Track community outreach, engagement, and program usage.
- Monitor social media metrics (reach, impressions, shares, followers).
- Train staff on how to use data to adjust programs and messaging.
- Benchmark against what’s working in other health departments to inform local improvements.



UNDERLYING CONTRADICTIONS AND PLAN ALIGNMENT

CONTRADICTION	RESPONSE IN PLAN
Public Trust	Community visibility, strengthen new & existing partnerships, communications plan
Capacity for Change	Workforce development, SOPs, staff training, use of new tools, VMSG
Marketing	Potentially hire marketing lead, social media tracking, campaign-based outreach, training, communications plan
Workload	IDPs, workload rebalancing, realistic staffing, structured time for events, new positions
Distance	Regular outreach to communities outside of county seat, identify new partners in all communities, co-location of services
Community Relationships	Grand opening, localized outreach, school events, family-specific programming

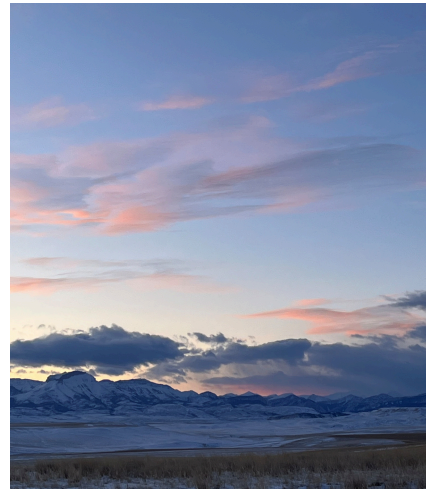
FIRST-YEAR MILESTONES (BY JULY 2026)

- ✓ Moved into new building and host a grand opening with community celebration.
- ✓ Communications plan developed and launched.
- ✓ Identify and connect with key partners in each of the communities in Teton County, and work with those individuals to identify opportunities for outreach, including participation in at least 1 public-facing events per community.
- ✓ VMSG implementation with baseline data collection.
- ✓ Completed workforce development assessment and WFD Plan.
- ✓ Created 5+ SOPs and trained staff.
- ✓ Microsoft Teams adopted and integrated.
- ✓ Begin community-specific strategy adaptations.



NEXT STEPS: EVALUATION & MONITORING

- Monthly review of communication efforts and engagement metrics
- Quarterly staff check-ins and training review
- Collect partner feedback by utilizing AAR or informal reviews after events/activities, track in VMSG
- Annual performance review using VMSG



Thank you for your continued support.

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