The Wisconsin Partnership Program is committed to supporting community, education and research partnerships to improve health and advance health equity. Cover photos (pictured left to right): Black Men Run, Brown Boys Read; Wisconsin Center for Infectious Disease (WisCID); UW School of Medicine and Public Health medical students, this photo by Todd Brown/Media Solutions
DEAN GOLDEN’S MESSAGE

I am pleased to present the Wisconsin Partnership Program’s 2019-2024 Five-Year Plan. It has evolved from 15 years of experience in grantmaking, intensive planning, assessing a wide range of outcomes and ongoing conversations with our community partners — all driven toward improving health and health equity in Wisconsin through investments in community partnerships, education and research.

Since the substantial investment of resources from the Blue Cross Blue Shield conversion fifteen years ago, our understanding of what creates health, and how we can apply these resources to attain it, has evolved. The goals and strategies within this plan bring us to the forefront of innovative approaches informed by current science and evidence; and they depend on a broader view of health with an explicit focus on health equity.

The Wisconsin Partnership Program defines health equity as the attainment of the highest level of health for all people.1 This requires addressing obstacles to health, such as poverty, discrimination and their consequences (including lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments and healthcare.)2 Public health experts across the country now understand that if we are to improve health, this work must be done through a health equity lens.

The Wisconsin Partnership Program’s approach to achieving health and well-being for all Wisconsinites has evolved over the years in concert with both the science that illuminates new pathways, as well as the values and goals you will find in the pages of this plan. We are excited to bring this new vision to our work and hope this plan illustrates our strong commitment and enduring drive to improve health throughout our state.

Sincerely,

Robert N. Golden, MD
Robert Turell Professor in Medical Leadership
Dean, UW School of Medicine and Public Health
Vice Chancellor for Medical Affairs
University of Wisconsin-Madison

INTRODUCTION

A New Perspective on a Century-Old Pledge:

UW President Van Hise’s famous 1904 statement became the basis for the Wisconsin Idea and remains the foundation for the missions of the university, the School of Medicine and Public Health and the Wisconsin Partnership Program.

The Wisconsin Partnership Program is committed to improving the health of every family of the state by supporting community partnerships, education and research that fuel knowledge, scientific discovery and innovations in health and healthcare delivery.

We know that communities across our state experience health in different ways, and have different paths towards achieving health. To improve health for all, we must expand our definition of health to include health equity, recognizing that factors such as racism and toxic stress, healthy food environments, safe and stable housing and community safety all have significant impact on health and well-being over the course of a lifetime.

This five-year plan represents a transition in the Wisconsin Partnership Program’s approach to improving health and reducing health disparities. We know that moving the needle on health outcomes requires an expanded view of public health that experts nationally and internationally have embraced. We are moving to where the science is taking us:

“Despite challenges, controversies, and unanswered questions, the tremendous advances in knowledge that have occurred in the past 25 years leave little room for doubt that social factors are powerful determinants of health. The consistency and reproducibility of strong associations between social (including socioeconomic) factors and a multitude of health outcomes in diverse settings and populations have been well documented, and the biological plausibility of the influence of social factors on health has been established.”


“...I shall never be content until the beneficent influence of the University reaches every family of the state.”

- Charles R. Van Hise, President, University of Wisconsin - Madison 1903-1918
THE VISION
Everyone in Wisconsin will live healthy and full lives.

OUR MISSION
To bring about lasting improvements in health and well-being and advance health equity in Wisconsin through investments in community partnerships, education and research.

OUR VALUES
- Academic Leadership
- Community Voice
- Creativity and Flexibility
- Multi-Sector Partnerships
- Sustainability

OUR GOALS
- Promote Innovation
- Advance Health Equity
- Build Capacity and Leadership
- Catalyze Systems Change

OUR STRATEGIES
- Generate new ideas
- Encourage collaboration
- Address social determinants of health
- Engage multiple perspectives
- Invest in a broad range of initiatives
- Increase diversity in healthcare delivery
- Invest in community-led ideas
- Cultivate new relationships to achieve health equity
- Use data to catalyze systems change

OUR FOUNDATION
- Community Partnerships
- Education
- Research
FIVE-YEAR PLAN FRAMEWORK

The 2019-2024 Plan is the fourth since the Wisconsin Partnership Program’s inception. It is based on a set of core values that form a foundation for all of our efforts. Our goals address what we believe are the critical elements to achieving greater health in our state. Each strategy directly connects to one or more of our four main goals.

THE VISION

Everyone in Wisconsin will live healthy and full lives.

OUR MISSION

To bring about lasting improvements in health and well-being and advance health equity in Wisconsin through investments in community partnerships, education and research.

OUR VALUES

In our pursuit of health, well-being and health equity for everyone in Wisconsin, the Partnership Program will prioritize:

- **Academic Leadership** – We hold ourselves to high standards and strive for excellence and rigor in research and education.
- **Community Voice** – We partner with communities and draw on local expertise to make decisions.
- **Creativity and Flexibility** – We challenge ourselves to stay nimble in our approaches, curious in our thinking, and open to opportunities that lead to sustainable improvements in health.
- **Multi-Sector Partnerships** – We know the best solutions to our most challenging issues come from drawing on diverse perspectives and the knowledge and assets of interdisciplinary teams.
- **Sustainability** – We understand that to be impactful, our work must endure beyond any specific investment.

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Dr. Dustin Deming is using a New Investigator Program Grant from the Wisconsin Partnership Program to further his research on developing treatments for subtypes of colorectal cancer. Through his research, Dr. Deming is striving to advance the treatment of colorectal cancer and develop innovative, personalized treatment for patients with cancer.
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OUR GOALS

The Wisconsin Partnership Program’s investments in community partnerships, education and research efforts will focus on the following goals:

• **Promote Innovation** – To address complex health challenges, we will invest in new and evolving ideas and discoveries and their successful introduction into practice.

• **Advance Health Equity** – To achieve health equity, we will address the root causes of health inequities and the roles played by social determinants of health.

• **Build Capacity and Leadership** – To meet emerging health and healthcare needs, we will enhance the knowledge, skills and abilities of our community partners, applicants and grantees, as we learn from them as well.

• **Catalyze Systems Change** – To improve the health and well-being of the people of Wisconsin, we will work to improve policies and practices within the many diverse systems influencing health.

**Social Determinants of Health**

are the conditions and environments in which people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning and quality-of-life outcomes.

Transforming Medical Education (TME) is an innovative education model supported by the Wisconsin Partnership Program. Funding for TME supported the development of the ForWard Curriculum, which infuses public health principles and practices into the School of Medicine and Public Health medical curriculum. Students graduate better prepared to think beyond the exam room and consider how social, economic and policy issues influence the health of the patients and populations they serve.
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OUR STRATEGIES

In alignment with the Wisconsin Idea, the Partnership Program will extend its resources—funding, expertise, staff and relationship building—to our partners across communities, health systems and campuses through the following strategies:

• We will support the generation of new ideas and discoveries and their successful introduction into systems and practice.

• We will continue to invest in a broad range of programs and initiatives that cover the spectrum from basic science to clinical, translational and applied public health research and education.

• We will encourage collaboration across disciplines and communities to stimulate innovative approaches to health challenges.

• We will increase diversity in our health professions by building the capacity of health and public health professionals from underrepresented populations.

• We will address the social determinants of health and root causes of complex health challenges.

• We engage multiple sectors and perspectives with a common focus toward health, health equity and sustainable systems change.

• We will invest in community partnerships, education and research led by, or in authentic collaboration with, communities experiencing health inequities.

• We will identify and cultivate relationships with community-based organizations committed to achieving health equity in order to support grassroots capacity and leadership.

• We will invest in generating, organizing, applying and disseminating health and health equity related data to ensure that our staff, leadership, grantees and partners have the information needed to advance health equity, innovate and catalyze systems change.

• We will objectively measure the results and outcomes of our projects and programs and adjust our tactics accordingly.

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The Wisconsin Partnership Program's community grant programs support innovative, community-led approaches to achieve health and health equity throughout Wisconsin. Black Men Run, Brown Boys Read is a component of the Black Men’s Wellness Sustainable Initiative, a Community Collaboration Grant, which is taking innovative approaches to address and improve the health of African American men in Dane County.
The Wisconsin Partnership Program’s community grant programs support innovative, community-led approaches to achieve health and health equity throughout Wisconsin. Black Men Run, Brown Boys Read is a component of the Black Men’s Wellness Sustainable Initiative, a Community Collaboration Grant, which is taking innovative approaches to address and improve the health of African American men in Dane County.
The Wisconsin Partnership Program's grant programs, the primary mechanism for achieving our goals, include:

**Community Catalyst Grant**: Two-year grants to support community-driven, innovative health equity approaches, designed to reduce gaps in access, outcomes or opportunities.

**Community Collaboration Grant**: Four-year grants that provide training and technical assistance to applicants addressing health inequities. Grantees receive support as they strengthen and expand assets and partnerships, develop community-driven plans and take action toward systems change.

**Community Impact Grant**: Five-year grants to support large-scale, evidence-based, community-academic partnerships designed to achieve sustainable systems change that will improve health, health equity and well-being.

**Collaborative Health Sciences Program**: Three-year funding to support collaborative teams that propose novel ideas and new approaches to interdisciplinary research or education to advance health, healthcare and health equity.

**New Investigator Program**: Two-year funding to support early-career faculty in initiating innovative research or educational approaches that address Wisconsin’s health issues. The program seeks innovative proposals from new faculty to support efforts to acquire external funding.

**Opportunity Grants Program**: Designed to be strategic, flexible and timely, these two-year grants provide start-up funding to support high-risk, high-profile, high-impact, state-of-the-art education and research projects.

**Strategic Education and Research Grant Program**: Typically three-year renewable grants, the Wisconsin Partnership Program supports novel education and research infrastructure and programs vital to advancing population health and healthcare delivery in Wisconsin and beyond.

**HOW WE WILL IMPLEMENT OUR STRATEGIES**

Since its beginning in 2004, the Wisconsin Partnership Program has primarily used grant funding to improve health; however, we are committed to doing more than simply funding good work. As the program has grown in experience, knowledge and partnerships, we better understand the importance and potential impact of offering more options to our grantees and partners. This evolution will help us achieve our goals of advancing health equity, building capacity and leadership, catalyzing systems change and promoting innovation.

- Continuous Quality Improvement in all Grant Programs
- Expansion of Partnerships and Collaborations
- Expansion of Communications and Outreach
- Convening Foundations and Other Funders
- Enhanced Technical Assistance and Collaborative Learning
- Increased Staff Training
- Continuous Evaluation of all Programs and Outcomes
- Increased Training and Support for Review Panels and Oversight Committees
- Organizing Conferences and Convening Stakeholders
MEASURING PROGRESS AND SUCCESS

With this Five-Year Plan, we are positing that we will achieve greater health in our state if we make strong commitments to promoting innovation, building capacity and leadership, catalyzing systems change and explicitly addressing health equity. Many of our efforts toward these goals have proven effective (please see pages 16-19 of Highlighted Accomplishments).

Our changes in approach are grounded in an evolving understanding of what creates health. Led by organizations such as the Public Health Institute, the County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, the federal government’s Centers for Disease Control, Healthy People 2020, and the World Health Organization, we now understand that health is created by factors beyond what happens within a doctor’s office. Health is complex; our approach to achieving it and our evaluation plan will address that complexity.

The Wisconsin Partnership Program deeply values evidence as a way to ensure we are meeting our goals. The program’s core beliefs rest on testing and assessing theories and outcomes. For this Five-Year Plan, we will adhere to an evaluation plan based on the extensive research and literature behind systems change and systems thinking. Our evaluation will assess how, by shifting problems in place (such as health disparities), we will improve health.

This graphic is adapted from “Shifting the Systems that Hold Problems in Place.”

SIX CONDITIONS OF SYSTEMS CHANGE

1. Policies
2. Practices
3. Flow of Resources
4. Relationships & Connections
5. Power Dynamics
6. Individual Understanding of How Things Work

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4: http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/what-is-health  
5: https://www.cdc.gov/socialdeterminants/  
6: https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-of-health  
7: http://www.who.int/hia/evidence/doh/en/  
8: https://www.fsg.org/publications/water_of_systems_change
FIVE YEARS FROM NOW

Striving to improve the health of a state is a bold and daunting undertaking. Health, by its very nature, is complex and there is no single causal path to achieving it. We are confident that if our expanded approach is successful, in five years:

- We will have found and implemented new ways to bridge the “beneficent” influence of the university with the voices, perspectives and leadership of those living in communities throughout Wisconsin who are also striving to achieve health and health equity.
- We will continue to evolve in our understanding of how to improve health and health equity.
- We will become a leader in addressing, answering and evaluating questions about how to improve the health and well-being of a diverse array of communities.
- We will have contributed to the understanding and acceptance that to achieve sustainable and lasting improvements in health, we must do more than simply fund good work.

The Wisconsin Partnership Program is more than a transactional funder of projects and programs. We exist to create change. Our role is to spearhead innovation, share expertise, build bridges and catalyze partnerships — among the university and Wisconsin communities, visionary experts who look at health challenges from different perspectives, and government and private sector entities with shared missions to improve health.

We believe that by maintaining existing partnerships and forging new ones, by bringing together people with diverse backgrounds and viewpoints, by closely monitoring where we have succeeded and where we have not, we can improve health in our state. We consider this an ongoing goal, one requiring vision, energy and purpose, for the benefit of the people of Wisconsin.

FIDUCIARY AND STEWARDSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

The Wisconsin Partnership Program was created in 2004 as a result of the conversion of Blue Cross/Blue Shield United of Wisconsin to a for-profit enterprise. The Partnership Program expresses its continued appreciation and gratitude to Blue Cross/Blue Shield United of Wisconsin for these resources to benefit the people of the state and for its foresight in allowing the Wisconsin Partnership Program to put forward the remarkable resources, talent and expertise within the university and extend these to a network of partners working to improve health in Wisconsin.

In its stewardship of the endowment, the Wisconsin Partnership Program has closely adhered to its foundational documents — the Insurance Commissioner’s Order, the grant agreement and the Five-Year Plan.

Two committees govern the program’s compliance and allocation of resources: the Oversight and Advisory Committee (OAC) and the Partnership Education and Research Committee (PERC), which ensure that our efforts are aligned with the mission and vision of the Partnership Program.

As outlined in its founding documents, the OAC annually reviews and assesses the allocation percentage for public health initiatives and for education and research initiatives. The OAC took up the matter on October 24, 2018. It was moved to retain the allocation of 35 percent for public health initiatives and 65 percent for education and research initiatives, and the motion was unanimously passed.
BUILDING EDUCATIONAL CAPACITY AND LEADERSHIP

INCREASING HEALTH PROFESSIONALS IN RURAL WISCONSIN

The Wisconsin Academy for Rural Medicine (WARM) is a rural education program within the MD Program curriculum at the SMPH, first funded by the Partnership Program in 2004 and sustained through grants in 2005 and 2007. WARM students receive unique training in this four-year program to focus on rural practice and health care issues, with an emphasis on health disparities in rural populations. The goal of the program is to admit students who intend to practice rural medicine and ultimately help increase the number of physicians who practice medicine in rural Wisconsin to help improve the health of rural Wisconsin communities. To date, WARM has succeeded in placing 89% of its graduates in Wisconsin, including 47% in rural Wisconsin.

TRANSFORMING MEDICAL EDUCATION

From 2014-2019, the Wisconsin Partnership Program supported the third and final phase of Transforming Medical Education, an education initiative that fully integrates the school of medicine to include public health. The innovative curriculum ensures that graduates are prepared to work in both complex health systems and communities across the state to meet Wisconsin’s evolving health needs.

TRAINING FUTURE PUBLIC HEALTH WORKFORCE

The Wisconsin Population Health Service Fellowship Program trains a new generation of public health leaders by combining workforce development with community service. The program deploys early-career professionals to community-based organizations across the state. Since 2004, 72 fellows have provided service to more than 40 organizations to address a diverse range of public health issues.

PROMOTING INNOVATION

ASSESSING OPTIMAL BREAST CANCER THERAPY

A team of researchers from engineering, medical oncology and surgery successfully developed the first-ever implantable device that both enables sustained local drug delivery and assessment of tumor response to determine the most effective anticancer drug combination for breast cancer patients. The small, implantable device allows efficient, minimally invasive delivery of drugs within a tumor, sparing future patients from unnecessary drug toxicity. With this device, specific drugs or drug combinations are delivered to different areas of the tumor; then surgical removal of the tumor with the devices in place enables assessment of drug effectiveness on affected cells. Researchers successfully demonstrated the technical capabilities of the device in mouse tumor models and are positioned to seek extramural funding to initiate human trials. The technology has been awarded a US patent and the team is applying for extramural funding to support studies of the device in human patients.
COMBATING INFECTIOUS DISEASE

The Wisconsin Center for Infectious Disease (WisCID) created a cross-campus effort to address the alarming rise of drug-resistant infections and helped leverage a five-year $16 million National Institutes of Health grant at UW-Madison to find new sources of antibiotics. To date, the research team has discovered more than 400 candidate compounds. They are moving rapidly to determine which compounds could be developed as clinical drugs.

IMPROVING HEALTHCARE DELIVERY FOR AMISH INFANTS

A partnership between UW SMPH and La Farge Medical Clinic in Viroqua, Wisconsin is improving health for Amish infants through expanded newborn screenings. As a result of their grant activities, specific variant genetic tests are now available for affordable clinical testing for 22 genetic diseases, with many more in research phase for validation.

TACKLING THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Screening in Trauma for Opioid Misuse Prevention (STOMP) is developing a screening tool to predict risk for opioid misuse and related complications after traumatic injury, when people are at greater risk for misusing opioids. Researchers will pilot the implementation of the tool at 5 Wisconsin trauma centers, including University Hospital in Madison. This work is expected to result in better screening and early intervention for opioid misuse.

WEIGHING IN BY ZIP CODES

In 2018, health researchers from the Obesity Prevention Initiative (OPI) released a detailed ZIP code-level obesity map based on electronic health record data, meaning it is based on height and weight measurements taken when people are at their doctors’ offices, rather than self-reported heights and weights. Wisconsin is the first state with a detailed ZIP code-level obesity map, which is an important step in identifying communities most affected by obesity and will allow for better targeting of resources for health improvement.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS TO ACHIEVE HEALTH EQUITY

EXPANDING NURSING EDUCATION IN NATIVE COMMUNITIES

Increasing Cultural Congruence Among Nurses in Wisconsin was a collaborative partnership, led by The Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council with the UW-Madison School of Nursing, UW-Stevens Point and the UW SMPH to improve the quality of nursing care received by Native American patients in Wisconsin. They accomplished this by improving cultural competence and establishing a support system and pipeline for Native high school students interested in nursing. The researchers have since obtained $1.6 million in federal funding to expand the enrollment of Native American nursing students at UW-Madison.

IMPROVING HEALTH IN LATINO COMMUNITIES

Led by leaders and teachers at the United Community Center (UCC) in Milwaukee, and in partnership with faculty from UW SMPH, this initiative improved healthy eating and physical activity habits among its Latino youth, a community where more than 50 percent reported obesity or overweight. The team provided educational activities and physical activity opportunities to families over a three-year period. The project was extended through a collaboration with students at Carroll University’s Health Sciences Program.

LIFECOURSE INITIATIVE FOR HEALTHY FAMILIES

Over the past five years, the Lifecourse Initiative for Healthy Families (LIHF) implemented a multi-sector health equity approach to promote healthy birth outcomes in African American communities. LIHF focuses its efforts in Kenosha, Milwaukee and Racine counties, where 85 percent of the state’s African American babies are born, and where an African American infant is three times more likely to die than a white infant. The Milwaukee-based LIHF Program Office, along with providing technical
assistance, leadership and community engagement training to support the community-based LIHF collaboratives, has connected and convened other external partners who are critical to this work. The collaboratives’ innovative approaches to addressing the disparities in infant mortality have been instrumental in efforts to improve prenatal care, increase family and community support, and improve community conditions for African American women and their families to achieve healthier birth outcomes. Highlights include:

Systems Change: Racine LIHF is working towards creating citywide breastfeeding-friendly worksites.

Capacity Building: Milwaukee LIHF obtained a grant from the Best Baby Zone, which will build the capacity of neighborhoods to improve health and well-being in families leading to healthier babies.

Sustainability: Kenosha LIHF has leveraged commitments totaling $6.5 million dollars over the past five years; a dramatic investment in multiple infant mortality programs in Kenosha County.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Grantees have leveraged $600 million from organizations and funders outside the UW System to sustain their efforts and impacts. Grantees have sustained their projects through awards from external funders by almost three times the Partnership Program’s investment.
The Wisconsin Partnership Program’s mission is to bring about lasting improvements in health and well-being and advance health equity through investments in community partnerships, education and research. To date, our funding has supported work in EVERY county of our state. Below are a few highlights of what our partners are saying throughout the state.

Without the Wisconsin Partnership Program funding, it would not be possible to expand programming intended to screen for and address needs related to the social determinants of health, incorporate the voices of the directly affected, and demonstrate the impact of this work on clinical outcomes, healthcare use patterns, and the satisfaction of patients, providers, community organizations, and campus and community volunteers. Wisconsin Partnership Program’s focus on authentic engagement of the directly affected in solutions to promote health equity ensures that the programs it funds are truly community-driven and promotes effective, sustainable, long-term change. Opportunities for ongoing learning, collaboration, and technical assistance offered by the Wisconsin Partnership Program are unmatched by any other funder and ensure that grantees can work across traditional boundaries between geographies, municipalities, and sectors to have the greatest possible impact in Wisconsin communities.

– Jay Shrader, Vice President Community Health and Wellness, Marshfield Clinic

Because of severe economic and social pressures combined with the absence of providers, our rural farming communities in southwestern Wisconsin are experiencing an epidemic of opioid abuse disorders. The resources made available to us by the Partnership Program are all that we have to help us provide services to support persons with addictions to recover and live normal lives.

– Walter Orzechowski, Executive Director Southwest Community Action Program

In 2013, the African American Breastfeeding Network (AABN) received a grant from the Wisconsin Partnership Program as part of its Lifecourse Initiative for Healthy Families to help reduce infant mortality. Funding supported program structure and evaluation, and led us to develop a promising breastfeeding support model. This partnership propelled the organization into the local, state and national spotlight resulting in Center for Disease Control recognition and an Associated Press article of the organization’s impact. Our work has been sustained beyond the grant to expand educational services. The community voice and families experiencing infant mortality have a direct link and pathway for honest dialogue that we optimistically foresee will reverse the landscape and tragedy of not only infant mortality but Black health.

– Dalvery Blackwell, Executive Director African American Breastfeeding Network, Inc.

To learn more about what our partners are saying, visit med.wisc.edu/wisconsin-partnership-program/publications-and-reports/