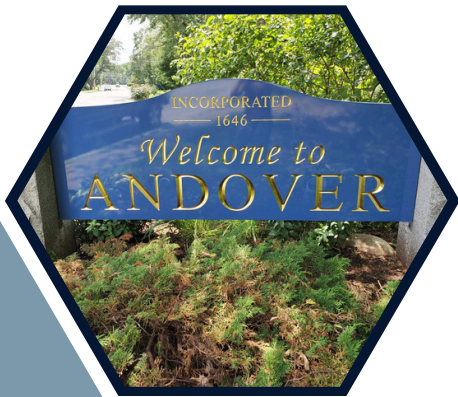


FY25 Annual Report



Middlesex-Essex
Public Health Collaborative



About Us

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), Office of Local and Regional Health (OLRH), launched the Massachusetts Municipal Public Health Shared Services grant program in January 2020. It has since been renamed the State Action for Public Health Excellence (SAPHE) Grant Program after the passage of the SAPHE Act.

The SAPHE Grant Program aims to improve the service delivery capacities of local health departments through increased cross-jurisdictional sharing of public health services.

In January 2023 the North Andover, Andover, Reading, North Reading, Haverhill, and Lynnfield health departments were awarded the SAPHE Grant and formed the Middlesex-Essex Public Health Collaborative. The Town of North Andover currently serves as the Collaborative's fiscal agent and houses all shared services staff.





Meet Our Team



ANNETTE GARCIA, MPH
SHARED SERVICES COORDINATOR

Annette joined the Middlesex-Essex Public Health Collaborative as the Shared Services Coordinator in June 2023. Annette has a strong background in local public health inspection services and program management. As the shared services coordinator, she manages the grant and shared staff in addition to providing direct support to participating health departments.



LEA ANNE PERO, MPH, BSN, RN
SHARED PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE

Lea Anne joined the Middlesex-Essex Public Health Collaborative as the shared services public health nurse in January 2024. Lea Anne has over 9 years of experience as a registered nurse. As the shared services public health nurse, Lea Anne supports the nursing needs of the communities.



SHANENE PIERCE
SHARED HEALTH INSPECTOR

Shanene has 7+ years of experience working as a health inspector for local health departments and state regulatory agencies. She is a certified soil evaluator, CPO, and carries the National RE HS/RS credential. As the shared services health inspector, she supports regional efforts by conducting inspections, creating/revising policies and standard operating procedures, and assisting in the FDA's standards program for participating communities.



Vision and Mission

Vision

The Middlesex-Essex Public Health Collaborative envisions a future where every health department is equipped to build healthier, more equitable communities. Through collaboration, we set the standard for innovation and excellence in public health

Mission

The mission of the Middlesex-Essex Public Health Collaborative is to support member communities in achieving the highest quality of public health by collaborating to increase equity, share knowledge, and enhance the capacity of public health staff and service delivery.

Core Values



Data Driven: Decisions are guided by accurate, timely, and evidence-based data to ensure effective policies, interventions, and resource allocation.



Equity: We are committed to ensuring that all individuals and communities have access to the resources, opportunities, and care they need to achieve optimal health.



Sustainability: We are committed to creating long-term, lasting impacts by utilizing resources responsibly, building workforce capacity, and developing resilience.



Collaboration: Focused on partnering to create collective solutions that maximize access to resources and knowledge for participating municipalities and improve population health outcomes.



Transparency: Openly sharing data, decision-making processes, and policies to build trust, foster accountability, and empower communities with accurate information.

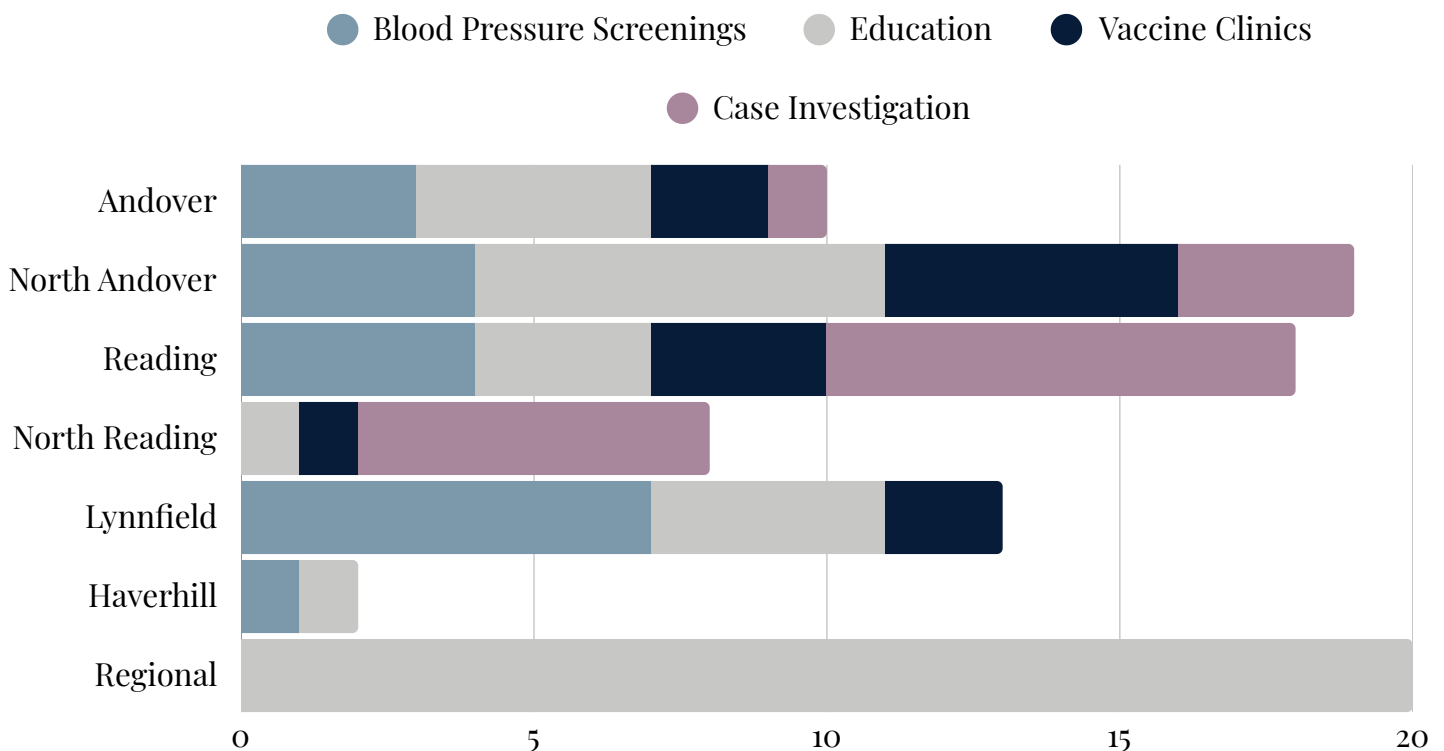


Nursing Services

The Shared Services Public Health Nurse plays a role in improving community health outcomes by:

- Assisting with blood pressure screenings.
- Initiating blood glucose screenings and providing diabetes information.
- Facilitating health education events on topics like:
 - Stop the Bleed
 - Hands-only CPR/Choking relief
 - Diabetes and Older Adults
 - Impaired Driving/Medication Management
- Offering CPR certification courses for health department members.
- Developing health education resources.
- Coordinating Narcan training and distribution program meetings.
- Arranging an Adult Mental Health First Aid course for staff.
- Leading monthly meetings with local public health nurses.
- Assisted with vaccination clinics across the region.
- Supporting MAVEN coverage and disease investigation.

Activities completed by the shared public health nurse during FY25



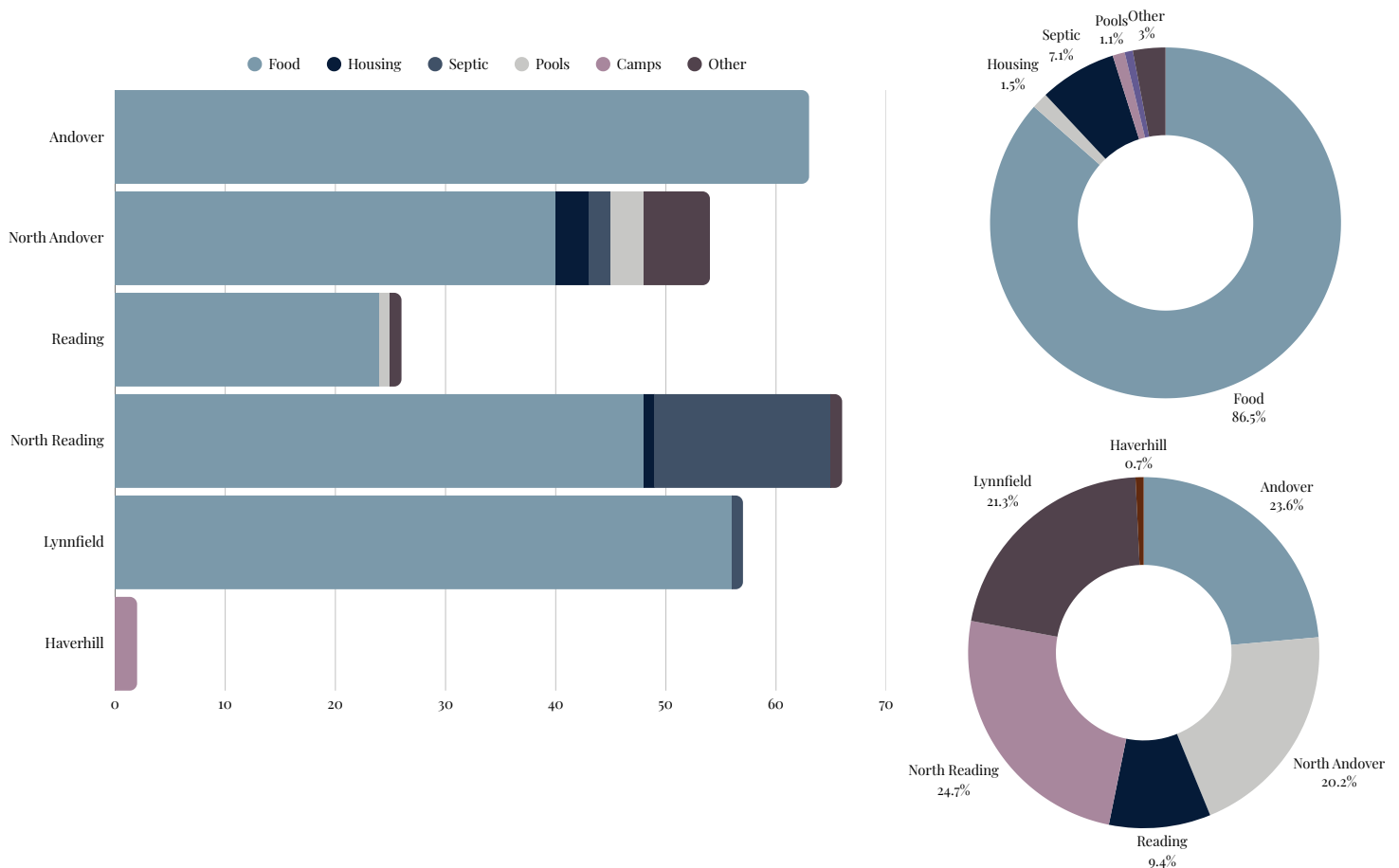


Environmental Health

This fiscal year, the MEPHC employed a full-time health inspector who was available to local health departments for assignment. In addition to inspections, shared staff helped develop the following policies and procedures to aid local health departments in meeting the performance standards and workforce standards set forth by the state.

- Created a Cease and Desist template
- Developed internal standard operating guides for shared services health inspectors
- Provided onsite assistance and resources to bring operators into compliance
- Reviewed and modified policies and procedures for FDA Standard 3
- Carried out Standard 1 verification audits
- Evaluated establishment HACCP plans
- Conducted food establishment plan reviews
- Developed a noise investigation standard operating guide
- Developed a health inspector onboarding standard operating guide

Inspections completed by the shared inspector during FY25





Strategic Planning

From March to June of 2025, MEPHC underwent a comprehensive strategic planning process to establish the Collaboratives' FY2026-FY2030 priorities. With the support of the BME Strategies consulting team, the Strategic Planning work group set goals that will aid in leadership and staff decision-making as MEPHC continues to expand its programmatic and staffing capacity.

Public Health Collaborative STRATEGIC PLAN 2026 - 2030



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

3

CONTEXT

The Middlesex-Essex Public Health Collaborative (MEPHC) engaged in a comprehensive strategic planning process from March - June 2025. This strategic plan establishes the Shared Services Arrangement's (SSA) 2026 - 2030 priorities, supports implementation of its Public Health Excellence (PHE) Grant requirements, and is a tool to aid leadership and staff decision-making. The process was led by the MEPHC Advisory Board and supported by the consulting team of BME Strategies.

VISION, MISSION, & CORE VALUES

The Middlesex-Essex Public Health Collaborative considered its existing vision, mission, and core values at its March 2025 and April 2025 strategic planning sessions. Based on discussions, the vision, mission, and core values were updated to best serve the collaborative and its goals over the coming five years.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The following five strategic priorities will guide the work of the collaborative:

Ensure MEPHC Organizational Sustainability and Continuity



Strengthening long-term viability and resilience through sustainable funding models, optimizing resource management, and enhancing operational efficiency.

Maximize Workforce Capacity & Development



Enhancing shared and municipal staff competencies to ensure the region is well-equipped to meet current and emerging public health challenges.

Expand and Standardize Services and Procedures



Developing standardized protocols and service offerings to improve consistency and reduce administrative burden across the region.

Elevate Visibility and Community Engagement



Strengthening the collaborating health departments' presence and building trust through proactive communication, partnerships, and outreach.

Advanced Data Use and Regional Insight



Leveraging available data systems and fostering regional data sharing to generate actionable insights, track trends, and support evidence-based public health practice.

SECTION 1: PLANNING

A. PARTICIPANTS

MEPHC's strategic planning process was directed by the MEPHC Advisory Board (see below) as well as shared services staff, and supported by the consulting team of BME Strategies. The planning team represented knowledge and perspectives from across the collaborating Public Health Departments.

The group met monthly and conducted work in between meetings. The process began in March 2025 and concluded in June 2025.

MEPHC Advisory Board:

Thomas Carbone, Public Health Director, Andover
Mary Connelly, Public Health Director, Haverhill
Bonnie Dufresne, ISD Deputy Director, Haverhill
Coral Hope, Public Health Director, Lynnfield

Brian LaGrasse, Public Health Director, North Andover
Pam Merrill, Public Health Nurse, North Reading
Ade Solarin, Public Health Director, Reading

B. SEQUENCE OF THE PROCESS

The MEPHC Advisory Board identified a desired process, and core components of the strategic plan were established based on the strategic planning RFP specifications. From there, the Advisory Board, with support from BME Consulting, built out sections of the plan according to the following sequence:



Community Health Outreach

During FY25, MEPHC emphasized a commitment to increasing community health outreach to our member communities. Key activities included:

- Hosting tabling events at the Lynnfield High School Health Fair, Reading Health Fair, and Healthy Lynnfield
- Hosted a medication management and distracted driving presentation at the North Andover Senior Center Conference
- Developed MEMOs and fact sheets on emerging health topics like avian influenza and measles





Regional Website

In FY25, MEPHC launched a website designed to share and distribute resources throughout the region. This platform serves to organize various information, including details about our organization, event specifics, blog entries, health education materials, contact information, standard operating procedures, and newsletters.



The screenshot displays the website's layout. At the top, the Middlesex-Essex Public Health Collaborative logo is on the left, and navigation links for 'ABOUT US', 'NURSING SERVICES', 'ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH', 'CALENDAR', and 'CONTACT US' are on the right. Below the navigation is a large graphic featuring a central hexagonal arrangement of local town signs: SYMFIELD TOWN HALL, Welcome to ANDOVER (INCORPORATED 1646), Welcome to DOWNTOWN HAVERHILL, Welcome to North Andover (FOUNDED 1640), Welcome to READING, and NORTH READING. Below this graphic are three main content sections: 'Blog' with articles on National Stress Awareness Month, Measles PSA, and National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month; a grid of health topics including Mental Health, Nutrition, Summer Health, Communicable Disease, Vector-borne Disease, Chronic Disease, Miscellaneous, Substance Misuse, and Monthly Health Observations; and 'Calendar of Events' listing a Local Public Health Webinar (April 10, 2025 - April 9, 2026) and Recovery Coach Academy Training (April 21, 2025 to April 24, 2025).



Health Communications

In FY25, MEPHC continued its commitment to providing timely and accurate health communications. In addition to social media messaging provided in FY24, MEPHC expanded its reach by creating public service announcements, fact sheets and booklets for industry partners.

April is **Stress Awareness Month**

Signs of High Stress

- Difficulty sleeping
- Feeling anxious or worried
- Feeling irritable or moody
- Lack of energy
- Headaches
- Muscle tension or pain
- Stomach problems
- Racing thoughts

Ways to Reduce Stress

- Exercise
- Get fresh air
- Deep breathing exercises
- Eat a balanced diet
- Mindfulness and meditation
- Prioritize sleep
- Listen to music
- Talk with a friend or counselor

Mental Health Resources

If you are finding your stress is difficult to manage on your own, reach out for help. You are not alone!

Scan the QR code for help finding mental health supports in Massachusetts.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE.
It's okay not to be okay.

May is **Mental Health Awareness Month.**

MAY 2021

MEPHC Newsletter

Remote Hybrid Meeting Extension

On March 28, 2022 Governor Healey extended the COVID-era remote and hybrid meeting allowances for public bodies. This extension allows for public bodies, including Boards of Health and Shared Services Advisory Boards, to hold meetings virtually or in hybrid formats. This extension is set to expire on June 30, 2027.

Upcoming Events
[Check out the training calendar!](#)

- MEPHC Advisory Board Meeting May 7 Virtual
- MEPHC Nurses Meeting May 8 Virtual
- MEPHC Annual Seminar May 28 / SouthAndover
- MEPHC Training Seminar Series May 25, 26, 27 Virtual
- Public Health System Fund and May 29 North Andover

3rd Annual Local Public Health Partner Survey!

Please help support OGBH by completing the third annual Local Public Health Partner Survey. This survey assesses your understanding of and satisfaction with our services and programs and helps improve the Office's support for local public health. This year's survey has been streamlined with fewer, more relevant questions.

Complete the survey by Friday, May 23rd. For questions, please contact our evaluation partner, Health Resources in Action, by email at hr@healthresourcesinaction.com.

Online Trainings
MEPHC has developed a catalog of online trainings covered by regional funds! Check it out and register!

Middlesex-Essex Public Health Collaborative
mephc@northandoverma.gov
www.mephc.org

SUN SAFETY TIPS

Always wear sunscreen.

Wear protective clothing.

Don't stay out in the sun too long.

Know your own skin.



Food Handler's Manual

A guide to safe & healthy food handling for food establishments



February is **NATIONAL HEART MONTH**

For heart disease awareness

Take care of your heart: Eat healthy, stay active, get regular checkups!

March is National Nutrition Month

This March, take charge of your health through your gut!

Find out great tips on how to supercharge your meals by scanning this QR code

Measles: What Parents Need to Know

What is Measles?
Measles is a highly contagious virus that spreads through the air when someone coughs or sneezes. It starts like a cold—fever, cough, runny nose, red eyes—then a rash appears.

Why It's Serious:
Measles can cause ear infections, pneumonia, brain swelling, and even death—especially in young kids, pregnant women, and people with weak immune systems.

How It Spreads:

- Through the air and on surfaces
- Contagious 4 days before and after the rash
- It can linger in a room for 2 hours

The MMR Vaccine Works!

- 2 doses = 97% protection
- Safe and effective
- First dose at 12-15 months
- Second dose at 4-6 years

Check Your Child's Records:
Call your provider, check with your school nurse, or visit www.myvaxrecords.mass.gov

Stay Protected. Get Vaccinated.
More info: www.mass.gov/info-details/measles



@MEPHC_MA
@AndoverMAHealth

[View all Newsletters](#)

[View Inspector Resources](#)

[View all Health Topics](#)

MEPHC Events & Training

Narcan Training of the Trainer

The Middlesex-Essex Public Health Collaborative (MEPHC) partnered with Health Resources in Action to host a Narcan Training of the Trainer event. Thirteen staff members representing all six communities were trained on how to deliver an opioid overdose intervention training to municipal staff and the public. This group of individuals continues to meet quarterly to discuss ongoing programming related to opioid overdose prevention



Biohazard Safety

Trauma Services Inc. delivered a biohazard safety training for local and regional staff. This workshop provided safety information to 14 inspectors, nurses and directors.



CPR Certifications

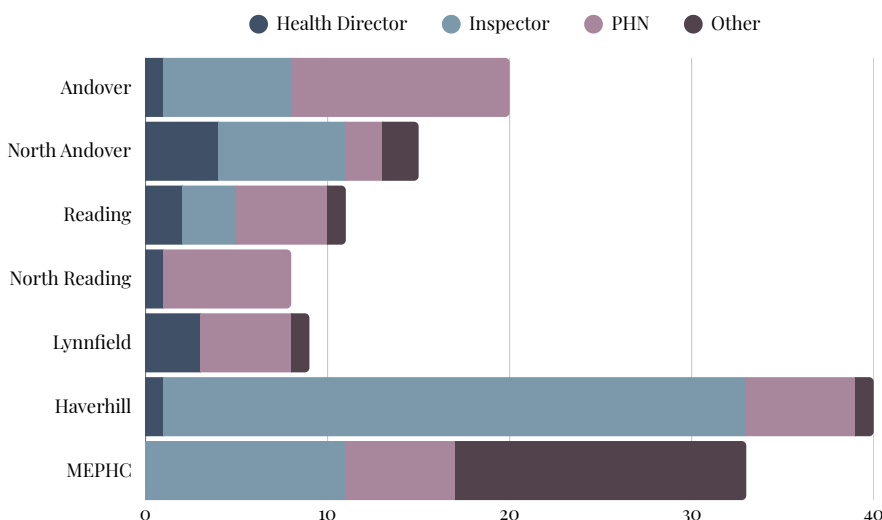
Lea Anne Pero held CPR certification opportunities across the region. This allowed us to certify 15 staff members in the delivery of CPR and provide CPR Instructor training to one of our public health nurses.



Adult Mental Health First Aid

MEPHC coordinated Adult Mental Health First Aid training for member health department staff, providing skills to recognize and respond to mental health challenges while promoting early intervention and reducing stigma.

FY25 Training Uptake



Training & Career Development

MEPHC regional and local staff participated in numerous conferences and training sessions in FY25, including, but not limited to:

- MHOA Conference & Seminars
- REHS Exam
- Title 5 Certifications
- MAPHN Annual Conference
- MAHB Certificate Program
- Certified Pool Operator Certification
- ServeSafe Certification
- Mock Noise Investigations
- Professional Grant Writing

Workgroups



Public Health Nurses

Led by Lea Anne Pero, public health nurses meet monthly in a virtual workgroup to discuss ongoing nursing challenges, opportunities for collaboration, and priority program areas. During FY25, key achievements of this group included:

- Established a MAVEN coverage request standard operating procedure
- Established a standard operating procedure for referring individuals to the Haverhill VFC program for required childhood vaccines



Health Inspectors

Health inspectors from participating municipalities meet monthly to share knowledge. Key activities completed by this workgroup include:

- Writing policies and procedures that meet FDA Standard 3 criteria
- Discuss challenging inspectional cases such as freeze-drying in residential kitchen operations, standards for lobster tanks and more
- Working to meet the FDA Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards

Opioid Workgroup

Leveraging new relationships established during the Narcan ToT event, MEPHC hosts a quarterly meeting for those who are working with opioid settlement funds and other substance use prevention programs in participating municipalities.



Implementation Plan for Naloxone Education and Distribution

Introduction	2
Phase 1: Planning and Coordination	2
Phase 2: Apply for Community Naloxone Program (CNP)	3
Phase 3: Educational Program Development	5
Phase 4: Naloxone Kit Creation	5
Phase 5: Distribution and Access	6
Phase 6: Public Health Awareness Campaign	6
Phase 7: Monitoring and Evaluation	7
Conclusion & How MEPHC Can Help	8



This group has met twice since its development and includes nurses, EMS Coordinators, Community Outreach workers, and Town Leadership. This space allows the sharing of ideas and resources like the Narcan Education & Distribution program toolkit.



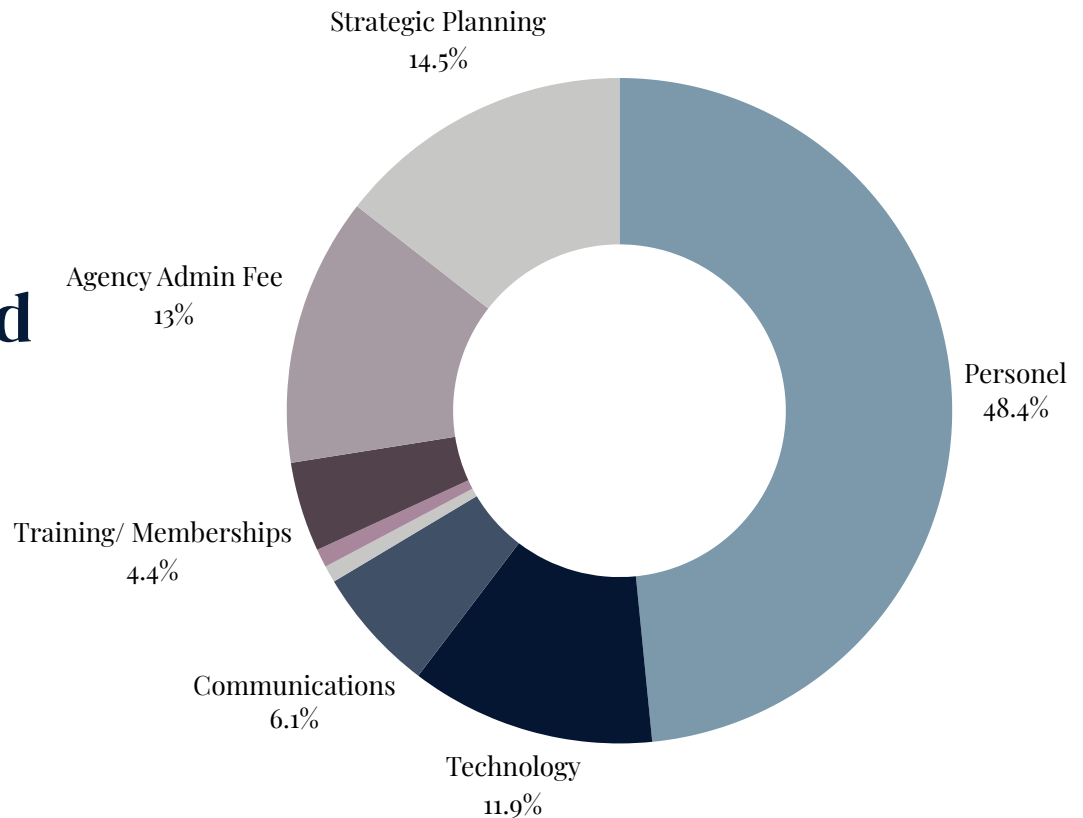
Join our next meeting!

July 24, 2025 | 10:00 am - 11:30 am
North Andover Police Department
1475 Osgood St., North Andover



Spending Overview

FY25 Award
\$532,564



In FY25, the Middlesex-Essex Public Health Collaborative was awarded \$532,564.71. At the conclusion of FY25, MEPHC spent a total of \$512,564.71 of the grant award. The primary reason for not spending the total award amount was due to staff vacancies at various points throughout the fiscal year.

As highlighted earlier in the report, funds were used to send staff across all six municipalities to training opportunities in food safety, Title V, nursing, and more. Additionally, we purchased the Relavent software for food inspections, housing inspections, and pool inspections. With all six communities using the same software, the regional inspector can easily complete inspections and provide the local municipality with seamless digital copies of the inspections. Over time, this software will help us establish uniform inspections across the region.

We also invested in a strategic planning initiative by hiring BME Consulting Services to lead us through this process. This investment will be the roadmap to the future success of the MEPHC collaborative.