

2025-2028



DELAWARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES  
Division of Public Health  
Physical Activity, Nutrition and Obesity Prevention Program

# MOVING FORWARD

Physical Activity,  
Nutrition, and  
Obesity Prevention  
in Delaware



**The Division of Public Health’s Physical Activity, Nutrition, and Obesity Prevention Program (PANO)**, positioned within the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Section, promotes healthier lifestyles in Delaware by focusing on the critical roles of physical activity and nutrition in preventing obesity. This plan, a result of collaborative efforts with PANO’s committed partners, outlines a strategic path forward to support healthier communities and guide future obesity prevention efforts across the state.



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## VISION STATEMENT

**All Delawareans will lead healthy lifestyles.**

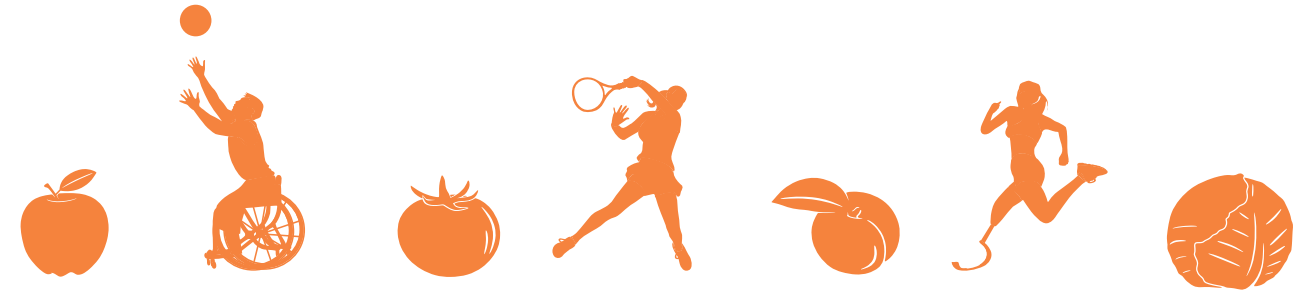
## MISSION

**To prevent obesity among Delawareans** by promoting physical activity and healthy eating through cross-sector collaboration and implementation of policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) changes statewide.

## VALUES, BELIEFS, AND PRINCIPLES

- > Collaborating with cross-sector partners through an equitable approach.
- > Closing gaps in PANO services by leveraging collaborative partnerships.
- > Simplifying culturally appropriate communications and programming.
- > Focusing on PSE changes.
- > Identifying and promoting evidence-based practices.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Moving Forward: Physical Activity, Nutrition, and Obesity Prevention in Delaware 2025–2028 outlines a comprehensive approach to addressing rising obesity rates in our state. Obesity rates have been trending upward nationally and in Delaware over the last decade. In 2023, 35.7% of Delaware adults reported being obese, and another 35.6% reported being overweight.<sup>1</sup> Delaware is one of 23 states with an obesity rate at or above 35%, or more than one in three adults.<sup>1</sup>

Obese individuals are at higher risk for poor quality of life, a shorter lifespan, and many chronic diseases, including diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. Obesity can be prevented, and engaging in physical activity and eating a healthy diet play a large role in maintaining a healthy weight. But many Delawareans are not meeting the recommended physical activity and dietary guidelines.

In 2023, 40.1% of Delaware adults did not participate in 150 minutes of aerobic physical activity per week, and 61.4% did not participate in muscle-strengthening exercises two or more times per week.<sup>1</sup> In 2021, 39.7% of Delaware adults consumed fruit less than once a day, and 20.5% consumed vegetables less than once a day.<sup>1</sup>

There are various factors that impact levels of nutrition and physical activity, including access to affordable, healthy foods and safe, convenient places to be physically active. In Delaware, 11.8% of residents are food insecure, and 42% have limited food access.<sup>2,3</sup> Additionally, only 15% of Delawareans live within a five-minute walk of outdoor recreational facilities.<sup>4</sup> Thus, a multisector, equity-focused approach is required to make systemic and environmental changes that promote healthy lifestyles for all.

With the help of partners, PANO underwent a diligent strategic planning process to assess needs, enhance current efforts, and identify new strategies to address the alarming rates of obesity in our state. Through a participant survey, key stakeholder interviews, and two group sessions, partners completed an environmental scan and a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis to identify critical issues, unmet needs, and potential solutions and strategies. Recognizing the individual and systemic-level factors as well as the health, social, and economic impacts of obesity, this plan establishes a multisector framework to promote healthy behaviors, create supportive environments, and ensure equitable access to resources and services for all Delaware residents. The plan identifies three key strategic goal areas in promoting healthy lifestyles and preventing obesity: Access and Affordability, Collaborative Stakeholder Engagement, and PANO Elevation. Each goal is supported by objectives, tactics, and success measures that will guide efforts and show impact through implementation.

This plan highlights the importance of cross-sector collaboration and partnerships to successfully implement this work. The implementation partners outlined include but are not limited to the responsible parties identified for each tactic. To further support implementation and strengthen obesity prevention efforts, PANO will continue to identify and engage new partners over the next three years.

The collaborative strategic planning process emphasized the importance of this work and the need for an ongoing commitment to these efforts. PANO is committed to implementing this plan and working with our partners to address obesity and related chronic illnesses in Delaware.

KEY STRATEGIC GOAL AREA:

**Access and Affordability**

KEY STRATEGIC GOAL AREA:

**Collaborative Stakeholder Engagement**

KEY STRATEGIC GOAL AREA:

**PANO Elevation**

## Sources:

- <sup>1</sup> Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Behavioral Risk Factor Survey, 2013–2023
- <sup>2</sup> Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap, Hunger & Poverty in Delaware (Hunger & Poverty in Delaware | Map the Meal Gap)
- <sup>3</sup> Healthy Communities Delaware, Vital Conditions for Well-Being Report, Vital Conditions Data (Vital Conditions Data)
- <sup>4</sup> 2025–2030 Delaware Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, Expanding Outdoor Recreation for All, Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2023

# DATA TRENDS

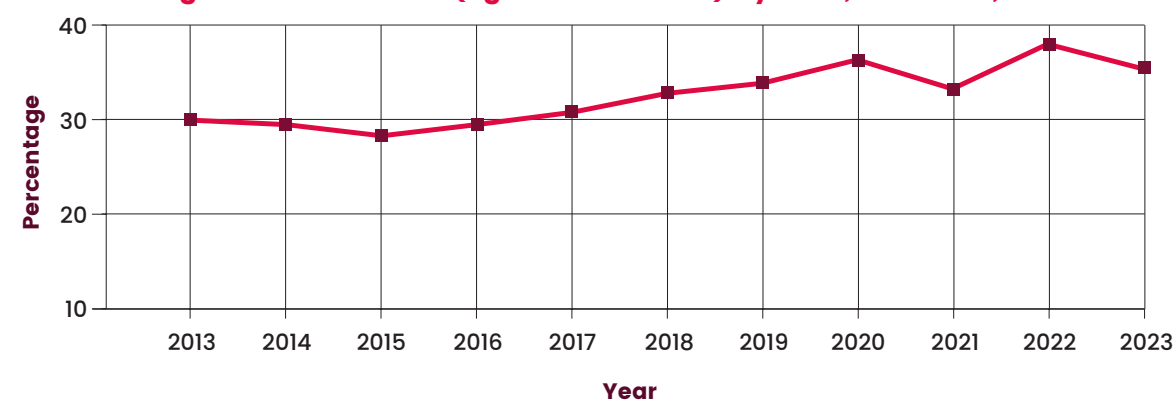


## OBESITY

### ADULT TREND LINE

The prevalence of obesity among adults has been trending upward over the past decade. According to the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey, obesity among Delaware adults has increased 14.7%, from 31.1% in 2013 to 35.7% in 2023.

Percentage of Obese Adults (ages 18 and older) by Year, Delaware, 2013-2023

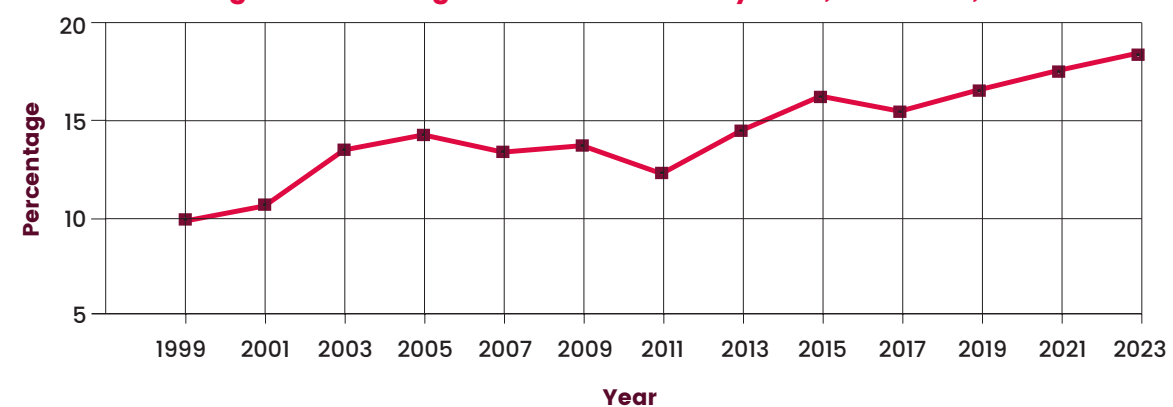


Source: Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey (BRFSS), 2023

### YOUTH TREND LINE

The prevalence of obesity among high school students has increased over the past two decades. According to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, obesity among Delaware high school students has increased 78.0%, from 10.0% in 1999 to 17.8% in 2023.

Percentage of Obese High School Students by Year, Delaware, 1999-2023



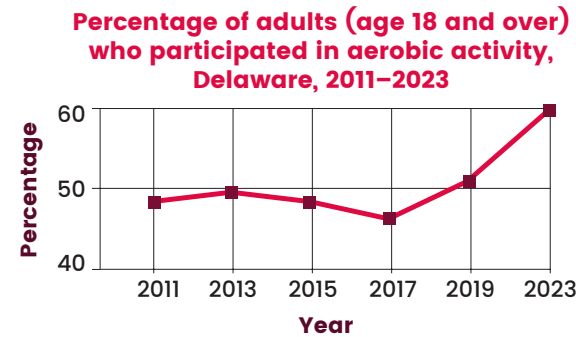
Source: Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), 2023

# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVELS

## ADULT TREND LINE

**AEROBIC ACTIVITY** – participated in 150 minutes or more of aerobic physical activity per week.

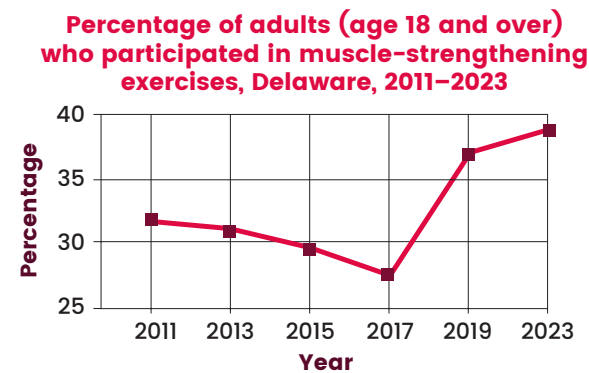
In 2023, 59.9% of Delaware adults participated in 150 minutes or more of aerobic physical activity per week. The percentage of Delaware adults participating in aerobic activity has slightly increased over the past decade.



Source: Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey (BRFSS), 2023

**STRENGTH ACTIVITY** – participated in muscle-strengthening exercises two or more times per week.

In 2023, 38.6% of Delaware adults participated in muscle-strengthening exercises two or more times per week. Participation in muscle-strengthening exercises has remained relatively stable over the past decade.

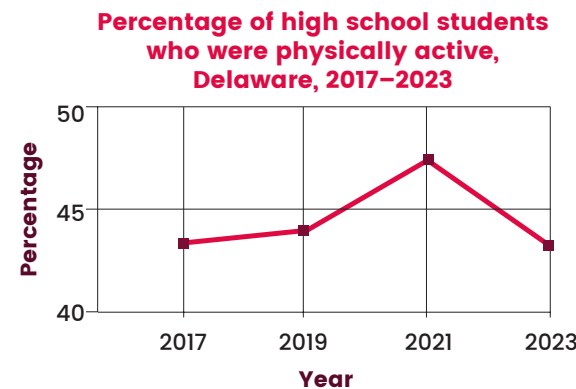


Source: Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey (BRFSS), 2023

## YOUTH TREND LINE

**PHYSICAL ACTIVITY** – Delaware high school students who were physically active by percentage of the population.

In 2023, 43.4% of Delaware high school students reported being physically active for at least 60 minutes per day for at least five days per week.



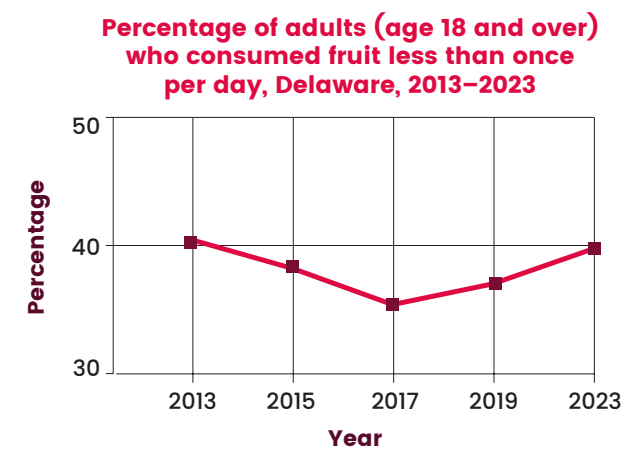
Source: Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), 2023

# NUTRITION LEVELS

## ADULT TREND LINE

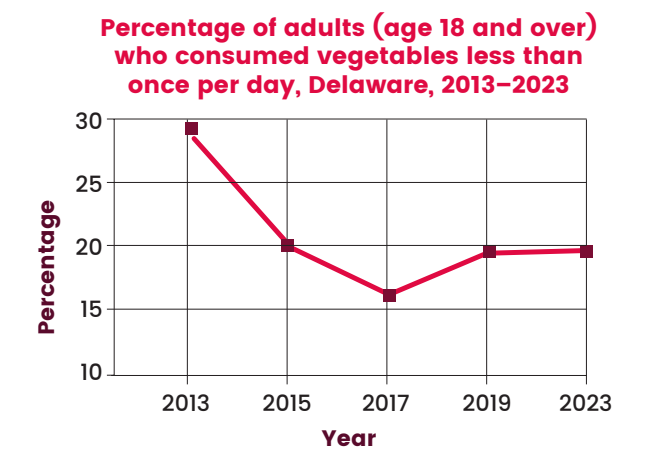
According to the 2021 Delaware Behavioral Risk Factor Survey (BRFS), 39.7% of Delaware adults consumed fruit less than once per day, and 20.5% consumed vegetables less than once per day.

**FRUIT CONSUMPTION** – consumed fruit less than once per day.



Source: Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey (BRFSS), 2023

**VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION** – consumed vegetables less than once per day.



Source: Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey (BRFSS), 2023

## YOUTH DATA (no trend data available)

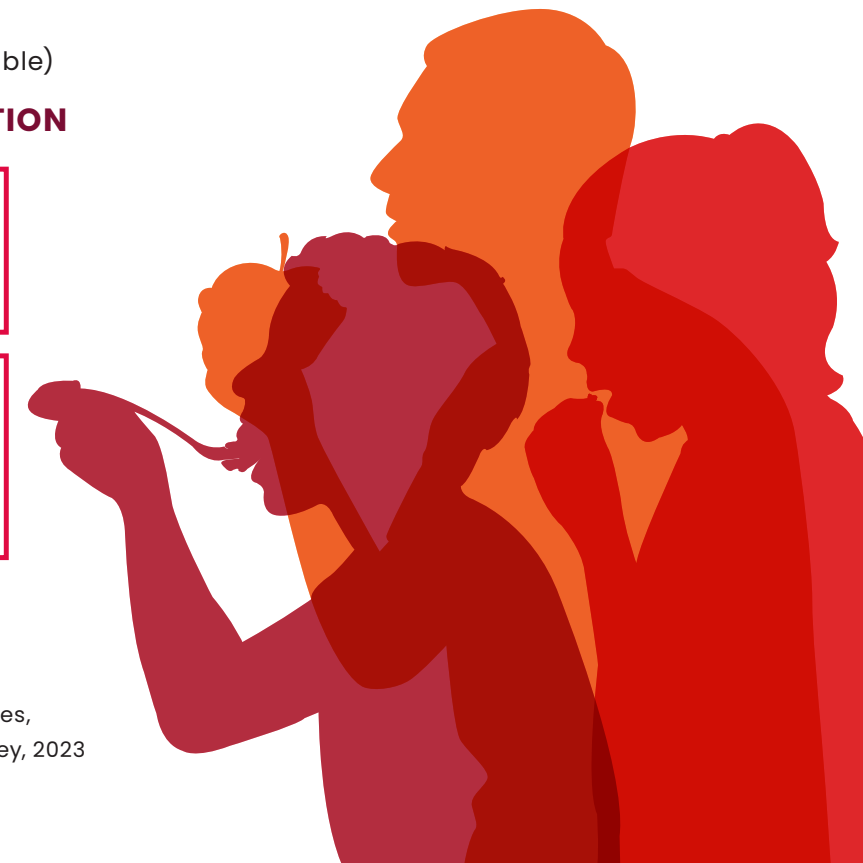
### FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION

In 2023, 10.6% of Delaware high school students did not eat fruit in the week prior to the survey.<sup>1</sup>

In 2023, 16.1% of Delaware high school students did not eat vegetables or salad in the week prior to the survey.<sup>1</sup>

Source:

<sup>1</sup> Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2023





# GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND TACTICS



1

**GOAL:**  
**ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY**

Drive PSE changes to reduce barriers and make physical activity and healthy eating opportunities more accessible and affordable.

2

**GOAL:**  
**COLLABORATIVE STAKEHOLDER  
ENGAGEMENT**

Engage partners to work innovatively and collaboratively to develop solutions that increase opportunities for greater community engagement.

3

**GOAL:**  
**PANO ELEVATION**

Elevate PANO initiatives as a priority for Delaware and provide adequate funding and resources in alignment with other plans and resources.

# 1

## GOAL:

# ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY.

Drive PSE changes to reduce barriers and make physical activity and healthy eating opportunities more accessible and affordable.

## OBJECTIVE 1

Facilitate at least 10 PSE changes that address barriers to healthy eating and active living.

## OBJECTIVE 2

Provide culturally appropriate, equitable communications that promote physical activity and healthy eating in vulnerable and high-priority populations.

## OBJECTIVE 3

Provide capacity-building support — including funding, training, and development opportunities — to at least 15 community organizations annually.

## SUCCESS MEASURES

- ✓ Number of PSE changes implemented and/or recognized.
- ✓ Metrics from social media campaigns of targeted audiences.
- ✓ Number of organizations and individuals supported through funding, training, and development opportunities, including number of mini-grant programs, number of training opportunities, and training participation.

## TACTICS:

- OBJECTIVE 1**
- › Address the social determinants of health and the vital conditions for health and well-being to address barriers to healthy eating and active living opportunities, such as providing support for low-income families who are not eligible for federal assistance with the cost of healthy food.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** PANO COMMUNITY PARTNERS, AHL MINI-GRANT RECIPIENTS
  - › Identify and collaborate on built environment and development plans to promote a healthy community design.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL, CITY AND COUNTY GOVERNMENTS, METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS
  - › Identify and align existing GIS maps related to access to food, parks, and green space, as well as other social determinants of health (safe parks, food deserts, crime by ZIP code).  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** DELAWARE COUNCIL ON FARM AND FOOD POLICY, DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL
  - › Build partnerships with multisector organizations such as the Food Bank, grocery stores, public safety, and city and county planning.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** NONPROFITS, CITY AND STATE POLICE, METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS, FOOD RETAIL PARTNERS, UNIVERSITIES, YOUTH-SERVING ORGANIZATIONS, SENIOR ASSOCIATIONS, DELAWARE HEALTH SYSTEMS, FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS
  - › Expand prescription programs for physical activity and healthy foods.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTY:** DELAWARE HEALTH SYSTEMS
  - › Continue Advancing Healthy Lifestyles Initiative to facilitate PSE change strategies in a variety of settings, including schools, communities, and workplaces.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** PANO CONTRACTORS, AHL MINI-GRANT RECIPIENTS
- OBJECTIVE 2**
- › Design and implement media campaigns using simplified language (e.g., movement, healthy eating) that are culturally appropriate, multilingual, and equitable — and reach people who are nondigital.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTY:** PANO CONTRACTOR
  - › Provide specialized outreach to vulnerable populations such as Haitian-Creole and Spanish-speaking communities, by leveraging Community Health Workers as a resource.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** DELAWARE HEALTH SYSTEMS, MANAGED CARE ORGANIZATIONS, COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER ASSOCIATION
  - › Promote health literacy in all communications.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** HEALTH LITERACY COUNCIL OF DELAWARE, PANO CONTRACTOR
  - › Implement annual social marketing campaigns that promote physical activity and healthy eating.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTY:** PANO CONTRACTOR
- OBJECTIVE 3**
- › Provide funding and support to organizations to implement evidenced-based initiatives to increase healthy lifestyles and obesity prevention efforts.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** PANO, AHL MINI-GRANT RECIPIENTS
  - › Provide training for the public health community on PSE change strategies.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** PANO, PANO CONTRACTOR
  - › Recognize individuals and organizations implementing PSE change strategies to encourage healthy lifestyles and support obesity prevention efforts.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** PANO CONTRACTORS, OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
  - › Provide information to the community on programs and services that are available.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** AHL COALITION, PANO COMMUNITY PARTNERS

# 2

## GOAL:

# COLLABORATIVE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Engage partners to work innovatively and collaboratively to develop solutions that increase opportunities for greater community engagement.

## OBJECTIVE 1

Annually, host a minimum of four community events across Delaware to expand awareness and knowledge of the PANO community.

## OBJECTIVE 2

Strengthen capacity for evidence-based physical activity, nutrition, and obesity prevention efforts.

## SUCCESS MEASURES

- ✓ Improvements in physical activity, nutrition, and obesity trend data.
- ✓ Number of PANO partners, Advancing Healthy Lifestyles Coalition members, and cross-sector projects.
- ✓ Number of hosted community conferences and events, and number of people in attendance.

## TACTICS:

- OBJECTIVE 1**
- > Engage new partners for programs and funding (e.g., restaurant and food industry, health care systems, urgent care facilities, transportation, and environmental organizations).  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** AHL COALITION, PANO COMMUNITY PARTNERS
  - > Convene stakeholders to develop creative solutions to address the social determinants of health and vital conditions that impact one's ability to engage in physical activity and healthy eating.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** AHL COALITION, PANO CONTRACTORS, PANO COMMUNITY PARTNERS
  - > Convene annual Advancing Healthy Lifestyles Conference.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** PANO CONTRACTORS, AHL COALITION
  - > Host quarterly Advancing Healthy Lifestyles Coalition meetings.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** PANO CONTRACTORS, AHL COALITION
  - > Ensure PANO partners and stakeholders represent all vulnerable populations.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** PANO COMMUNITY PARTNERS, AHL COALITION
  - > Co-host and participate in community events related to physical activity, healthy eating, obesity prevention, social determinants of health, and vital conditions.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** PANO, PANO CONTRACTORS, PANO COMMUNITY PARTNERS, AHL COALITION
  - > Collaborate with partners to identify gaps and needs related to obesity prevention.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** PANO, PANO CONTRACTORS, PANO COMMUNITY PARTNERS, AHL COALITION
  - > Share resources with key stakeholders.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** PANO, PANO CONTRACTORS, PANO COMMUNITY PARTNERS, AHL COALITION
- OBJECTIVE 2**
- > Promote data sharing and data-based decision-making among state agencies, partners, and stakeholders.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** DELAWARE STATE AGENCIES, PANO PARTNERS
  - > Encourage more participation in the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey and Youth Risk Behavior Survey for comprehensive data collection.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH, OFFICE OF HEALTH EDUCATION
  - > Create a centralized hub of information for public health professionals.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** AHL COALITION, PANO CONTRACTORS
  - > Identify mini-grant programs that can be scalable for statewide implementation.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTY:** AHL MINI-GRANT RECIPIENTS
  - > Identify and engage new funding and programmatic partners to leverage statewide capacity and resources.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** PANO, PANO COMMUNITY PARTNERS



# 3

## GOAL:

# PANO ELEVATION

Elevate PANO initiatives as a priority for Delaware and provide adequate funding and resources in alignment with other plans and resources.

## OBJECTIVE 1

Strengthen and cultivate partnerships with state agencies and key stakeholders to ensure PANO is embedded into statewide strategic planning efforts.

## SUCCESS MEASURES

- ✓ New funding dollars aligned and matched.
- ✓ Number of state-level reports with PANO data integration.
- ✓ Participation in councils, advisory groups, and ambassador programs on a statewide and national scale.

## TACTICS:

- OBJECTIVE 1**
- > Participate in opportunities that emphasize the importance of PANO.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTY:** PANO
  - > Align PANO with statewide community plans and efforts around the social determinants of health and vital conditions.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** PANO, DELAWARE STATE AGENCIES
  - > Identify opportunities for cross-funding and shared resources.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** PANO, DELAWARE STATE AGENCIES, PANO PARTNERS
  - > Seek funding opportunities to support physical activity, nutrition, and obesity prevention efforts.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTY:** PANO
  - > Address gaps and identify partnerships to build strategic capacity.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** PANO, PANO PARTNERS
  - > Present the impact of PANO initiatives to key stakeholders.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** PANO, AHL COALITION, PANO PARTNERS
  - > Integrate PANO components into new and existing state reports.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** PANO, DELAWARE CANCER CONSORTIUM, DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL, DELAWARE COUNCIL ON FARM AND FOOD POLICY
  - > Participate in local, regional, and national councils, coalitions, and conferences, to highlight the role and impact of PANO.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** PANO, CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION, DELAWARE BIKE COUNCIL, DELAWARE COUNCIL ON FARM AND FOOD POLICY
  - > Develop, publicize, and evaluate a PANO strategic plan.  
**RESPONSIBLE PARTIES:** PANO, PANO CONTRACTORS, PANO PARTNERS

# THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

We thank this dedicated group of partners for their participation in the development of this strategic plan.

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*DELAWARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES*

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Division of Public Health

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