



Equity Community Builders Connection Meet up at Wapato Park Tacoma, WA  
Photo by Angel Goudeau

# DOH Secretary's Initial 100 Days:

## Listen, Learn, and Lead

*With Secretary of Health, Dennis Worsham*

**As I begin my time in my new role as Secretary of Health, I'm approaching the first months with thoughtfulness and intention.**

To guide this onboarding period, I've developed a 100-day plan centered on listening first, building relationships, and translating learning into meaningful action. It's not a complex plan—it's a purposeful one. It creates space to listen, learn, and co-create together, uncover shared paths forward, and strengthen the core of our work, our mission, and our collective purpose.

I will not only listen across the Department of Health, but also within our broader governmental public health and health care systems, as well as to community members. I'll be joined by others from DOH through a variety of channels, because collaboration is how we'll begin moving forward together. My hope is that we turn listening and learning into actions that support our workforce, strengthen relationships with communities, advance our public health and health care systems, and improve health outcomes by more effectively confronting the inequities that shape them.

As I listen and learn, I anticipate complex and layered themes to surface. We won't solve everything at once, but we will prioritize issues that will create the greatest positive impact when solved. For these, I will bring together diverse voices—including those from governmental public health partners, health care, community, workforce, and other contributors—to help shape both the conversations and the solutions in

## 100-Day Plan Outline

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Listening  
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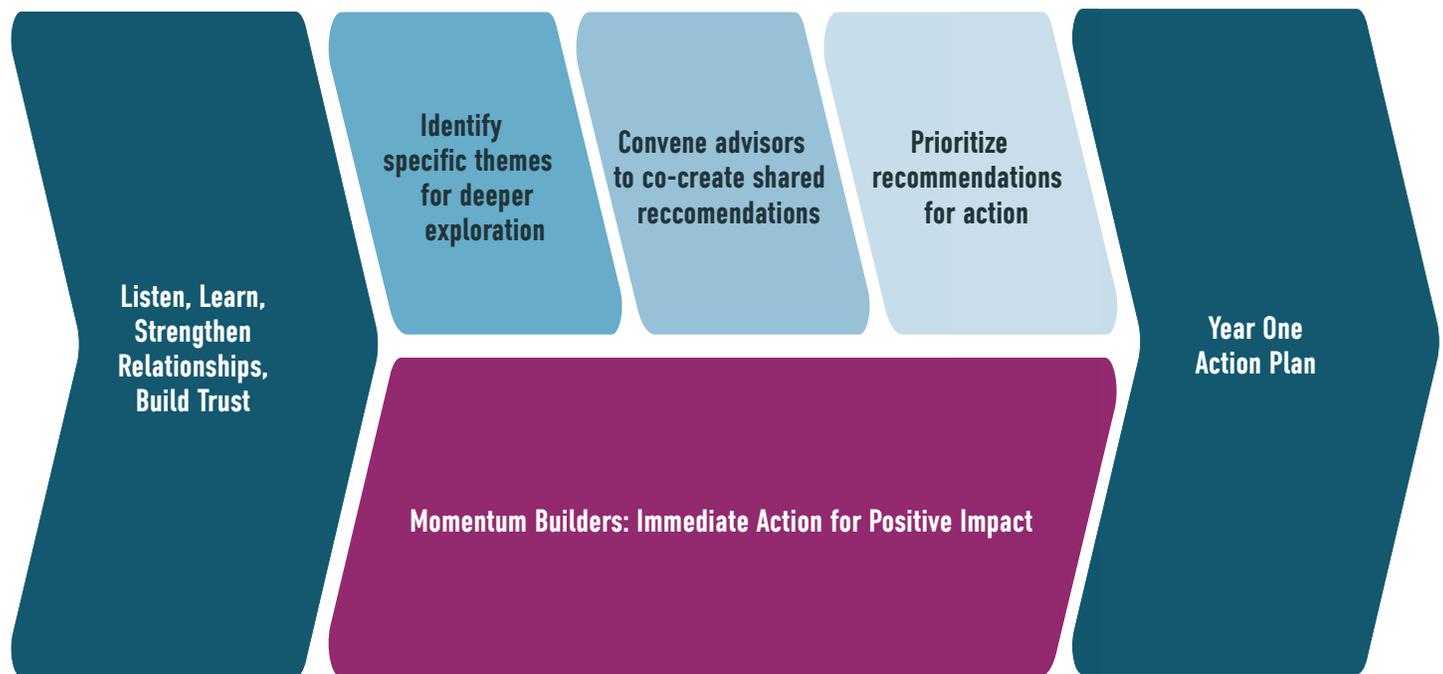
Moving  
Forward

alignment with our shared work. My intent is to co-create thoughtful, actionable recommendations, and I hope these 100 days reflect both timely responsiveness and intentional, collaborative solution-making.

The first 100 days will focus on listening, curiosity, and building relationships—laying the groundwork for learning that leads to action. This has already begun through early engagement with the Governor’s Office, key partners, and DOH team members—through conversations, messages, meetings, and other meaningful inputs. These initial steps are helping to foster trust and strengthen systemwide collaboration as we navigate the complexity of today’s environment together.

## 100-Day Plan Outline

*The Transition From Listening to Leading During the 100-Day Plan*



### 1 Listening and Learning

We are gathering insights from a wide range of strategic partners to inform this assessment. The Community Collaborative, for example, has helped shape a community-centered onboarding plan. Internally, DOH programs have shared overview materials that offer valuable insight into their work, accomplishments, and challenges. A brief pulse survey will soon be launched to give DOH team members a direct way to share early reflections and ideas. In parallel, we are coordinating meetings, engagements, and site visits to help ground me in the lived experiences of our internal workforce, external local and Tribal partners, and the broader public health, health care, and community networks. I'm planning trips across the state and look forward to connecting with local and Tribal leaders, community, and DOH team members where they live and work.



Cultural Night at Suquamish Old Tribal Center  
*(Photo by Lydia Guy Ortiz)*

## Listening and Learning Focus Areas

Beyond listening, I won't enter these meetings with a specific agenda; but in every conversation I hope to explore four foundational areas of our collective work:

### 1 Health Justice:

How might we deepen our shared commitment to health justice and address health inequities?

### 2 Public Health Workforce:

How might we support and strengthen the people engaged in this work?

### 3 Public Health System:

How might we support and strengthen this system?

### 4 Health Care System:

How might we support and strengthen this system?

Health Justice

Workforce

Public Health System

Health Care System

I want to foster a spirit of joint action. In these conversations, I'll be joined by others from DOH through a variety of channels because collaboration is how we'll begin moving forward together. My hope is that we turn listening and learning into actions that support our workforce, strengthen relationships with communities, advance our public health and health care systems, and improve health outcomes by more effectively confronting the inequities that shape them.

Some of what I hear will be early impact opportunities—practical actions I can take right away that make a positive difference. I intend to pursue these momentum-builders throughout my first 100 days, and I'll communicate transparently about them.

## 2 Momentum Builders

I want to foster a spirit of joint action. Together—in DOH and across the partnerships and systems we're part of—we can make meaningful changes that improve effectiveness, deepen trust, and strengthen resilience. When opportunities arise to quickly enhance internal processes, strengthen communications, or improve outcomes across our broader system, I intend to act—guided by what I am learning from across DOH and our external partners. I'll share these decisions openly, so it is clear what changes are being made and why. The goal is to lead with positive change and, when possible, to minimize harm or unintended impacts.

Based on experience, I know that some ideas will emerge that I may not be able to act on. I remain committed to listening and exploring what's possible—but sometimes, deeper learning during the discovery process leads to a final decision not to advance a suggested change. If that's the case, I'll do my best to share the reasoning behind the decision. I hope there will be grace in this space and recognition that choices are made with care and consideration, informed by a range of insights. My commitment is to be transparent—even if the answer, for now, is simply "not at this time."

In the spirit of continuous improvement, some momentum building actions may benefit from additional input. Iteration and flexibility will be essential as I work to fully understand both the opportunity and the intent behind each idea. By living into the value of fostering a culture of inclusion and belonging, I hope we can co-create the right path forward—focusing not on perfection, but on meaningful progress toward better outcomes.

### 3 Key Themes

Some actions will require deeper exploration. That's why I've committed to examining complex and emerging topics that surface on my listening and learning tour. As insights emerge, I'll work to identify and confirm a set of key themes. Clearly defining challenges and opportunities is essential to crafting the right solutions. These themes will then be prioritized and given focused attention to support meaningful progress.

There will likely be more themes identified than we can fully address within the first year, so we will prioritize to inform our Year One Action Plan. The plan will focus on what we believe is achievable in the first year—while staying accountable by monitoring progress and making thoughtful adjustments as we learn.

For each selected topic, I'll convene short-duration advisory teams composed of DOH staff, partners, Tribes, community, and others, as appropriate for the topic. These cross-sectional groups will bring diverse perspectives to deepen understanding and co-create recommendations for shared action.

My hope is that these advisory teams foster inclusion, spark meaningful dialogue, and strengthen our collective capacity for collaborative problem-solving: modeling the kind of united, adaptive leadership that helps us better serve everyone.



Hiking Guillemot Cove Estuary, Hood Canal  
*(Photo by Laura Heinse)*



The DOH SNAP-Ed team met at Songbird Haven to learn about USDA programs and sustainable farming practices.

*(Photo by Morgan Hartline)*

### 4 Year One Action Plan

I will use the recommendations from the theme-focused advisory teams and general feedback to build our action plan. From the collaboratively developed recommendations, we will identify key actions we can take both as an agency and as a system to move us forward. I imagine this plan will include internal DOH agency actions, cross-sectional actions for broader system support, and everything in between.

I don't expect this process to identify every challenge and opportunity. But I do hope it will help us to find creative and collaborative ways to strengthen our department and partnerships, while cultivating an environment of inclusion, belonging, and trust. I do believe that we need to be stronger as a team, and a system, to bring our best work (and selves) forward. The plan is intended to encompass a select set of actions, crafted by our listening and learning recommendations, to co-create positive impact.

For DOH, this plan will be one to help identify some key strategic work. I hope it will enhance other bodies of work such as the State Health Improvement Plan, incorporate Results Based Accountability systems, and aid the stand-up of our Customer Experience and Delivery Office.

This plan will serve as a roadmap for DOH's role as a partner with the health care system and with community, Tribal, and public health partners.



## 5 Moving Forward

I carry a strong commitment to the concept of teamwork—grounded in the values of belonging and inclusion. Over the course of my career, I've learned that we are stronger as a collective than any one individual navigating the system alone. Especially now, as our environment continues to challenge us, communities are counting on us to come together: to find solutions, be a strong voice, and take clear, meaningful action that improves systems, advances health outcomes, and works to reduce inequities.

I hope these first 100 days set a tone rooted in the values we share—values of listening, learning, and co-creating. The path ahead demands not only courage but unity. We face a choice: to come together and collectively succeed, or to maintain the status quo and risk losing what matters most. I remain committed to walking a shared path with you—with purpose, resolve, a sense of wonder, and, dare I say, hope in our eyes.

I look forward to sharing updates along the way—from the people and places I've been honored to learn from, to the momentum builders that emerge, the themes that we discover, and the collaborative work of our advisory groups. Ultimately, I will share the Year One Action Plan as a guide for our next steps toward better health and a more connected, inclusive future.

Thank you in advance for your partnership, your care, and your commitment. I look forward to hearing what you have to say and taking this journey together.



**Dennis Worsham,**  
*Washington State Secretary of Health*