

2017  
ANNUAL REPORT



## MESSAGE FROM THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT

On reflecting on our activities over the past year, we believe a defining feature of our health department was a commitment to the communities we serve. As you review the annual report, we hope that this is demonstrated in the programs we offer.

This year presented many positive changes at the health department, including new program offerings. These programs included dental screening expansion, healthcare emergency preparedness, and preventing violence. We are now one year into our fiscal transition, which means we are doing accounting in-house and are able to manage expenses and introduce cost savings to a higher degree.

As a snapshot, these are some of the new programs this year:

- Financial Transition
- TRIMRS
- Disrupting the Pathway to Violence
- Nebraska Teeth Forever

Our biggest asset at Two Rivers Public Health Department is our people. Nothing can replace the motivation and passion they have for safeguarding the health and wellness of the public. Whether they are conducting a community-wide preparedness drill, investigating emerging diseases, or providing dental screenings, our staff at TRPHD are committed to delivering the best services. We are very lucky to have such a strong team at TRPHD.

What can you expect to see from the health department this year? We will be undergoing our Strategic Planning process, in which we will be engaging residents, community partners and internal staff as we set our direction for the coming years. In order to capture the suggestions of community members, we will be issuing a Community Health Assessment in the spring. This is an opportunity for community members to identify the most pressing health needs in the community. You can also expect us to develop new programs and services over the next year as we align our direction with community needs.

# DISEASE SURVEILLANCE



TRPHD is committed to promoting healthy communities, families and individuals through communicable disease surveillance. The intention of surveillance is to identify, promptly investigate, and monitor each incident of a reported communicable disease. Timely recognition of the disease within the community enables the proper implementation of prevention and control activities. This action can contain the spread of the disease before the illness becomes a major public health crisis.

A good surveillance system also identifies emerging infectious diseases, acts of bioterrorism, and potential influenza pandemics, as well as providing a basis for evaluating the outcome of public health prevention programs.

Communicable disease can be identified as by being contracted from the human living environment, including disease passed from person to person, food or water, animals, or insects.

## Disease Surveillance and Investigation

We work diligently in the early detection, intervention, prevention and education of communicable diseases. Our public health department is notified of communicable disease laboratory results through the National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (NEDSS). The community health nurse investigates each report, which may include patient interviews and physician consultations. Recommendations are made to patients to prevent, promote, and protect the health of community members.

Below is a list of examples of some of the diseases/illness we monitor and investigate in our jurisdiction:

- Enteric/Foodborne illnesses: Salmonella, Shiga toxin producing E. Coli, enteropathogenic E. Coli, Campylobacter, Cryptosporidium, Shigella, etc.
- Vaccine Preventable Diseases: Pertussis, Measles, Rotavirus, Varicella, Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, etc.
- Vectorborne/Arboviral diseases: Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Dengue, West Nile, Tularemia, Zika, etc.
- Zoonotic Diseases: Rabies, Brucella, Toxoplasmosis, etc.
- Environmental: Lead poisoning, carbon monoxide poisoning, ricin poisoning
- Miscellaneous category: TB, Hepatitis C, Bacterial Meningitis, Legionella, Histoplasmosis, Influenza, etc.

## Tuberculosis Investigation and Case Management

Our health department is contracted by the State of Nebraska Tuberculosis (TB) Program to conduct investigations of active TB cases, including investigating case contacts. TRPHD case manages active TB diagnoses. This involves working closely with the patient's physician to observe the patient through Direct Observation Therapy (DOT), ensuring compliance with the prescribed treatment. You can find more information on TB on the Nebraska Tuberculosis Prevention and Control Program website.

## School Surveillance Program

This program tracks and reports the absenteeism of ill students for all counties in the health district throughout the school year. School surveillance is done on a weekly basis and is reported to Nebraska Health and Human Services every Wednesday. Tracking of specific symptoms and illnesses in children enables public health to determine if there is an outbreak or a public health emergency in a timely manner.

## Seasonal Influenza Surveillance

Weekly tracking of influenza and influenza like illness in our jurisdiction is done using the following methods:

### Hospital Surveillance:

Influenza and influenza like illness related hospitalizations are tracked weekly by the nine hospitals in our district. Their admissions are reported to Nebraska Health and Human Services every week and help public health monitor influenza outbreaks.

### Sentinel Surveillance:

TRPHD recruits a sentinel provider in our health district. This program tracks influenza like illness with a local healthcare provider on a weekly basis. The physician reports all influenza cases seen in their clinic to the Center for Disease Control.

### Laboratory Reporting:

Laboratories in our district report weekly with Influenza A, Influenza B, and RSV testing performed and results.

### Outbreak reports:

Long term care facilities, schools, and other facilities report outbreaks of influenza and influenza like illness to help monitor influenza in our communities.

## CASE IN POINT ON THE IMPORTANCE OF DISEASE INVESTIGATIONS

Measles has made a reappearance in the TRPHD jurisdiction in the spring of 2017. Measles was officially eliminated in the United States in 2000, which was declared after the absence of continuous disease transmission for more than 12 months. This was due to the highly effective Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR) vaccination. Before the measles vaccination was introduced in the United States, 3-4 million people contracted measles each year, with 400 – 500 deaths and 48,000 hospitalizations per year. In addition, 4,000 developed encephalitis, as reported by the Center for Disease Control.

At a local level, there are pockets of unvaccinated people, which makes individuals more susceptible to measles exposure. There are diverse reasons why individuals may choose to forgo vaccinations, however, this makes them susceptible to measles and they could potentially spread measles. A driving factor nationwide against vaccination is related to fears of adverse health effects associated with vaccinations, however, the current consensus in the field of health practitioners and researchers is that vaccinations against disease are necessary to protect individual and population based health. In addition to misinformation about vaccinations, most people who were born after the introduction of the measles vaccination do not recall the devastating health effects of measles, and may not take the threat of measles as seriously without that experience. At TRPHD, we are dedicated to educating the public on the health risks of measles, to enable to be good decision makers on matters of protecting their health.

The importance of the MMR vaccination was reinforced when TRPHD tracked potential exposures to Measles during the spring. An individual with Measles had potential contact at area events, where a large number of people were potentially exposed. The risk of exposure included unvaccinated individuals, and individuals with compromised immune systems who were unable to receive a vaccination. TRPHD tracked potential measles exposure throughout the jurisdiction. This enabled us to provide education on possible exposure sites to help protect the public.

Vaccinations serve the following purpose:

- Protection against vaccine-preventable diseases, such as Measles and Chicken Pox
- When enough community members are vaccinated, they serve as a buffer for individuals who have compromised immune systems and who are unable to be vaccinated. Vaccination not only protects individual health, but community health.

# EMERGENCY RESPONSE



TRPHD works to advance preparedness activities, by working with communities and hospitals in order to prepare and recover from a potential disaster.

Emergency Response activities include assisting healthcare, long-term care, and communities with preparedness plans and policies on preparedness. This includes collaborating with area partners to design and execute exercises which are intended to test preparedness. Preparedness activities can inform the response time of the community to provide lifesaving help and resources to individuals who are in need. Through collaboration with community partners, clinics, and hospitals, TRPHD has coordinated assistance in the event of a real life disaster.

Highlights during the 2016-2017 period included participation in the statewide patient surge exercise in May. Local partners, including CHI Health Good Samaritan, Kearney Regional Medical Center, and the Buffalo and Dawson County emergency managers also participated. The patient surge exercise tested the ability of all partners to effectively resource first response needs in the event of a mass causality event.

The Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) was also updated at TRPHD. The new TRPHD Kearney office was one of the major additions to the plan. A COOP is an internal TRPHD plan for defining roles and responsibilities in the event of an emergency.

## TRI-CITIES MEDICAL RESPONSE SYSTEM

TRPHD serves as the coordinator for the Tri-Cities Medical Response System (TRIMRS), which helps to strengthen emergency response through collaboration.

As the coordinator for TRIMRS, TRPHD has written or facilitated community-wide disaster drills and table-top exercises. The community-wide drills have included tornado, mass fatality, and earthquake drills. These exercises test a community's ability to respond to a disaster, including testing incident command, patient tracking, and communications. As a result of a drill, TRPHD has observed hospitals and community organizations form new partnerships for responding to a disaster and policy updates to encourage preparedness.

### Partner Quote:

TRPHD also helps to facilitate table-top exercises, in which a scenario of a disaster is presented to a group, in order to encourage ideas in how to respond. Table-top exercises conducted within the last year have included Ebola, Tuberculosis, and tornado scenarios.

**“This year the TRIMRS organization has provided services in assisting Harlan County Health System in reaching our CMS requirements and fulfilling our goals. Earlier this year we hosted an Infectious Diseases Tabletop exercise that discussed in the event that a person would come to our facility with active Tuberculosis what would be our course of action. As the exercise ensued TRIMRS made sure we had our policies in place and that we are not only protecting ourselves, but the entire community. Later on in the year, CMS came out with requirements for Emergency Preparedness. In compliance with the new regulations, TRIMRS designed a tabletop exercise on 10/2/17 and a Community Wide Disaster Drill on 10/13/17 that demonstrated a catastrophic yet realistic event for our community, a tornado. There were 2 meetings prior to this that were organized by TRIMRS for community communication for planning these events. It took many hours of planning, logistics, and participation from many entities. New MOU's and allocation of resources available were discovered, partnerships were created, patient tracking record forms created, and policies were revisited. This promoted community and internal awareness of our driving desire to provide quality care. This year we had record numbers of participants with over 25 in the tabletop exercise and 60-70 in the full scale drill. I do not believe it could have been achieved without teamwork. Through this process Harlan County Health System could not be more grateful to TRIMRS for Dustin Handley and his team for leading the exercises this 2017 year for our facility.”**

– Elizabeth Miller,  
Director of Nursing, Harlan County Health System

# LIFESMILES PROGRAM



Good oral health is crucial to overall health. Research has shown that poor oral health is a risk factor for;

- Heart and lung disease
- Dementia
- Diabetes
- Cancer
- Autoimmune diseases
- Premature-low Birth weight babies
- Reduced ability for children to thrive
- Complications with children's education experience

The signs and symptoms of many potentially life-threatening diseases may appear in the mouth first.

The Lifesmiles Dental Health Program's objective is to collaborate with community based groups, healthcare providers, and organizations to provide preventive dental services with goals of improving access to dental care. Lifesmiles provides services in preschools, Head Starts, schools, WIC clinics, and long-term care facilities in the Two Rivers Public Health Service area. Dental/ Oral Health education presentations are available for community events or business assemblies per request.

A major highlight of the 2016 – 2017 period was the LifeSmiles Care Project, which took place the week of March 13th. This event addressed extreme dental disease and dental needs, with an estimated \$40,000 of free dental services provided for the event! The event was held at Central Community College with the help from West Central Health Department, Henry Schein Dental Supply, Benco Dental Supply, and many businesses in the Lexington community. In addition to the LifeSmiles Care Project, the dental team continued to provide services in 17 school, preschools, and Headstarts, as well as WIC clinics in Lexington, Holdrege, and Gibbon.

### WHERE WE ARE:

**Woman, Infant, and Children Clinics:** Lifesmiles has provided services at the Woman, Infant, and Children (WIC) clinics in Gibbon, Holdrege, and Lexington. Our Public Health Registered Dental Health and Community Health Worker has provided education services, and also connected with those that are non-English speaking to provide interpreting services. Many of those participating in WIC are of low socioeconomic status so, for many, there are limited resources for pursuance of dental care. Time spent with those at WIC is focused on family health education and connection with a dental home. Other services provided are oral and dental screenings, oral cancer screenings, fluoride treatments, and providing home care supplies. We will provide sealants with future site visits as well.

**Preschools and Schools:** Lifesmiles also provides services to preschools and schools, and headstarts with expansion this year. The services provided include screenings, sealants, fluoride treatments, education, providing home care supplies, and referral assistance.

**Long-term Care Facilities:** Lifesmiles has expanded services to long-term care facilities at Elwood Care Center in Elwood, Brookdale Senior Living in Lexington, Cozad Care and Rehabilitation Center in Cozad, Holdrege Memorial Homes, and Mount Carmel Home. Services include prophies, denture/partial inspection and cleanings, oral cancer screenings, general dental and periodontal screenings, oral health education, fluoride treatments, providing home care supplies, antimicrobial applications, and referral assistance. All sites have both Assisted and Nursing care residents.

**Community and Peer Education and other Services:** The Lifesmiles team has provided education in many venues such as health fairs, agency and organizational meetings, and professional in-services. Some venues have also offered us the opportunity to provide general oral screenings to enhance this outreach. Lifesmiles also provides education via media such as TV or radio.

# CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION



## WALKABILITY

As part of TRPHD's commitment to creating sustainable, healthy, and vibrant communities in our district, we are working with partners Lexington and Kearney to increase biking and walking in these communities.

## BODY

Increasing biking and walking makes a community more livable, attracting young adults and the elderly to communities. This is part of TRPHD's overall effort to help communities base their economies, and in turn increase health overall. Some of the program accomplishments in 2017 included:

- Hosted the Kearney Active Living Summit, bringing a total of 60 people into a conversation around increasing biking and walking, which also resulted in a strong action plan to guide our work over the coming years.
- Worked with our partners to host events relating to increasing biking and walking, that educate the community and encourage people to consider adding these modes of transportation to their lifestyle.
- Convening a group of citizens, activists, and partners that can fight for advancements in biking and walking across Kearney and Lexington.
- Building relationships with city officials and other key partners to ensure that this critical work to create more sustainable and vibrant cities is able to continue in the coming years.

A big thanks to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services and the CDC for making this work possible. A thanks also goes out to community partners and participants who are working with us to create healthier communities

# ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

## RADON

TRPHD is dedicated to creating healthier home environments by lowering radon in the homes of our jurisdiction.

Radon is a radioactive gas that is the number one cause of lung cancer in non-smokers. In Nebraska, the concentration of radon radiation in homes is frequently higher than the EPA recommends. It is important to test every home for radon. The reason it is important to test for radon is that it is odorless, tasteless, and invisible to the human eye. A very small amount of radon can have a large health effect.

This year Two Rivers Public Health Department received the Radon Awareness and Risk Reduction grant again. The objectives of this grant are to increase local awareness about the risk of long term exposure to radon and the methods in which to test and reduce radon in homes. We plan on educating the public through various means such as: television, presentations, and health fairs.



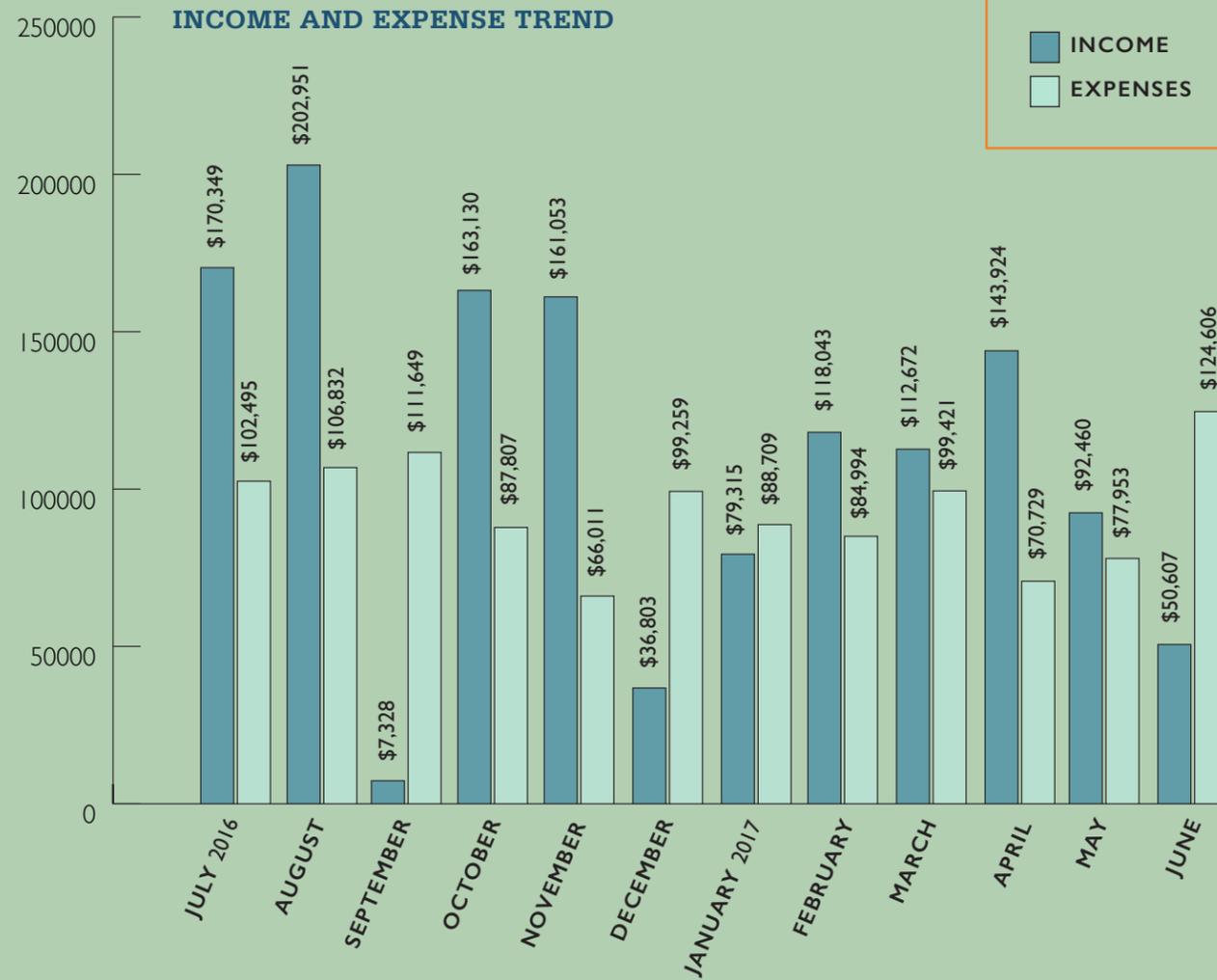
## INTRODUCING MARIA BAROCIO – COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER

Introducing Maria Barocio – Community Health Worker TRPHD is very lucky to have Maria Barocio, our Community Health Worker. Maria is integral in helping to connect individuals to community resources. Maria is bi-lingual in Spanish and English, and has been an asset as we ensure that all of our services are available to residents in the TRPHD jurisdiction. This year, Maria was able to intervene to provide positive health outcomes for at-need individuals.

From Maria: "Through the Life Smiles Dental program, over the last year, I have helped over 200 children with screenings. In addition to the dental program, This year, I also earned my Community Health Worker certificate. It has been a long journey and I am very happy to be working at Two Rivers, and being able to help so many people."

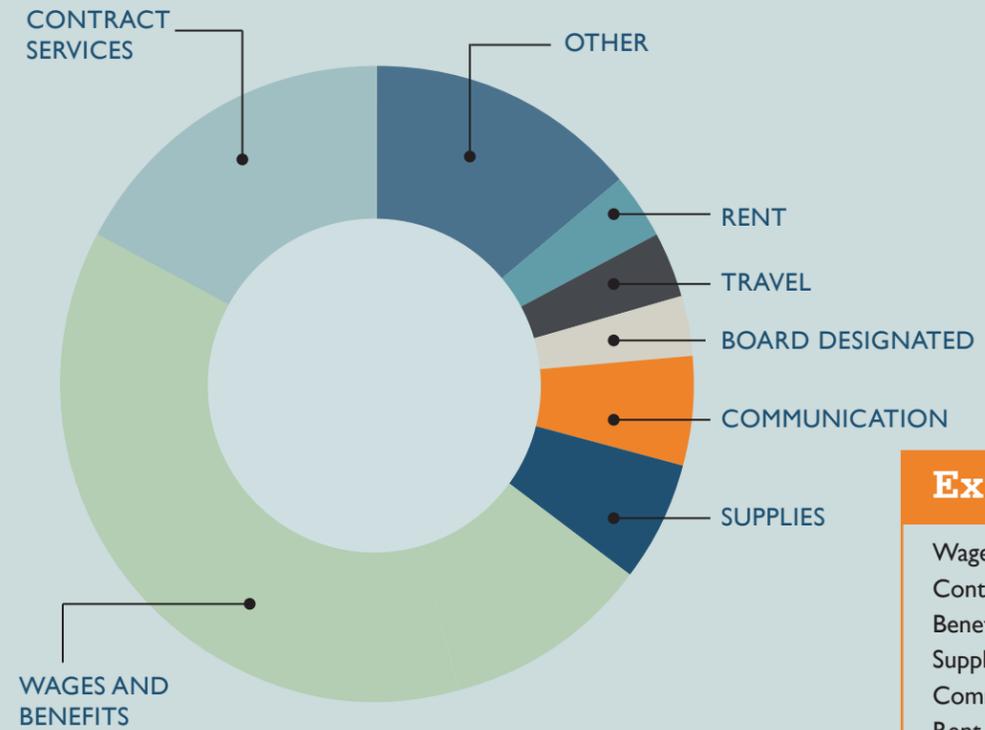
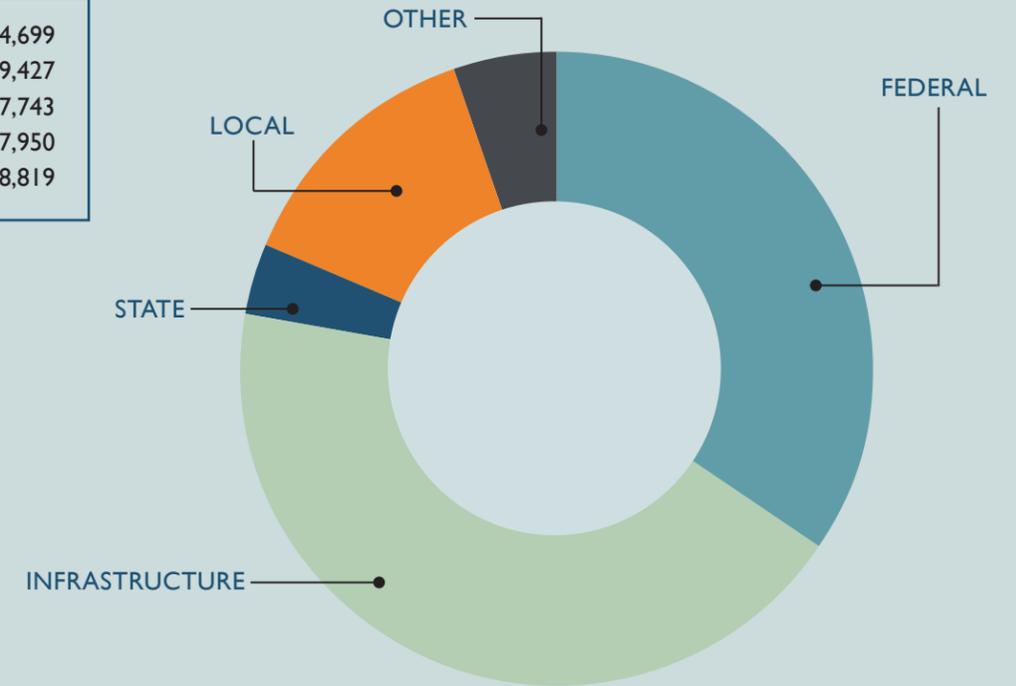
# FINANCES

This was TRPHD's first year as a fiscally independent entity. By being fiscally independent, TRPHD was able to introduce cost savings and efficiencies by keeping accounting in-house, allowing for improved management of expenses. The successful fiscal transition was supported by a new staff member, Jesse Valenti, as the Finance Manager.



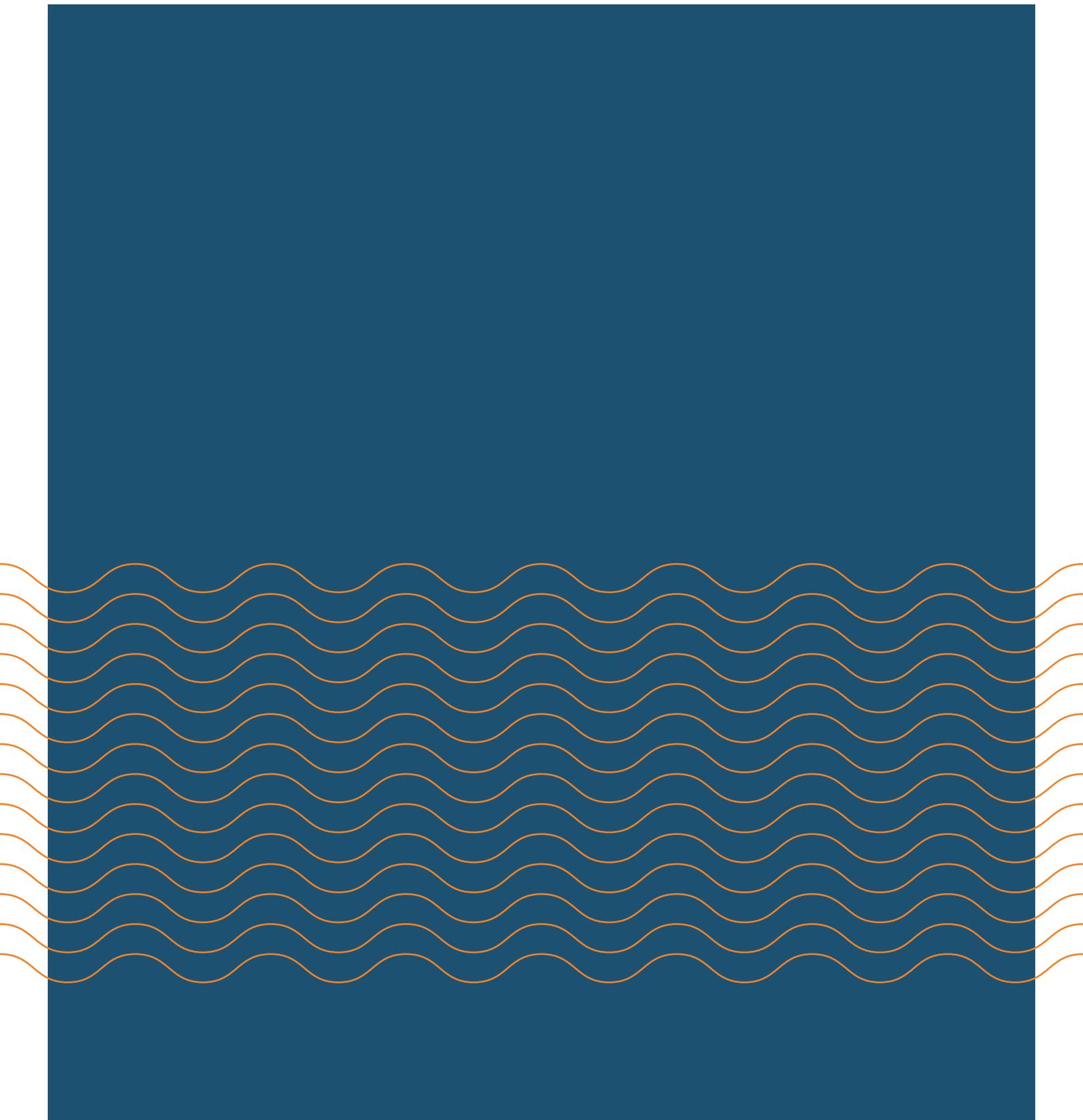
## Revenue 2016-17

Infrastructure	\$ 464,699
Federal	\$ 579,427
State	\$ 47,743
Local	\$ 177,950
Other	\$ 68,819



## Expenses 2016-17

Wages	\$ 416,176
Contract Services	\$ 192,482
Benefits	\$ 117,780
Supplies	\$ 68,298
Communication	\$ 61,946
Rent	\$ 36,294
Travel	\$ 36,281
Board Designated	\$ 35,834
Other	\$ 155,370



<http://www.trphd.org/>