

## 2012-2013 Accreditation Support Initiative (ASI) for Health Departments and Support Organizations

### FINAL REPORT

#### 1. **Community Description**

*Briefly characterize the community(ies) served by your health department or support organization (location, population served, jurisdiction type, organization structure, etc). The purpose of this section is to provide context to a reader who may be unfamiliar with your agency.*

**Ventura County, CA**, is a coastal county north of Los Angeles and ranks 12<sup>th</sup> out of 58 counties in total population (823,318; 2010 census). The Ventura County public health department is a division within the Ventura County Healthcare Agency and is responsible for communicable disease control, chronic disease and injury prevention, MCAH and WIC programs, emergency preparedness, emergency medical services, and animal services. Other agency divisions include Behavioral Health, Ambulatory Care, and County Hospital Services. The Environmental Health Agency, which performs several functions that are helpful for achieving LHD accreditation, is a stand-alone county agency outside of the healthcare agency.

**Long Beach, CA**, is located in the southwestern portion of Los Angeles County. The city is one of three within the State that funds and implements its own local health department – the City of Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services. The city's population is approximately 500,000 and is the 7<sup>th</sup> largest city in CA. The Department is one of 21 city departments and has 6 bureaus that are responsible for environmental health, community health, preventive health, physician services, housing authority, and support services.

#### 2. **Work Plan Overview**

*Provide an overview of the work you conducted with or because of this funding, including the significant accomplishments/deliverables completed between December 2012-May 2013 under the auspices of this grant, and the key activities you engaged in to achieve these accomplishments. This should result in a narrative summary of the chart you completed in Part 1, in a format that is easily understandable by others.*

The Public Health Institute (PHI) provided tailored technical assistance for accreditation preparation to two local health departments (LHDs) in the State of California: the County of Ventura and the City of Long Beach. In addition, a national webinar through the Dialogue 4 Health was held on May 15, 2013 to discuss the lessons learned about engaging other entities in the public health accreditation process.

**The County of Ventura Healthcare Agency** submitted its application to the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) in October 2012 with full support of their Healthcare Agency Director. Within the following few weeks, the Director announced that he accepted a promotion which resulted in a leadership vacancy for approximately six months. The Healthcare Agency requested specific technical assistance with PHAB Domains 2 and 6. Both domains involve a working relationship with the environmental health department which is located outside of the Healthcare

Agency. PHI provided technical review and input into the documentation process for these two measures with the understanding that neither PHI nor NACCHO represent PHAB and guidance provided was based on the PHAB's Standards and Measures Document version 1.0. A report of gaps with recommendations was provided to the Ventura County staff, and they have implemented many of the recommendations.

During the review process, Ventura staff identified a need for a current and comprehensive Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Healthcare Agency and the Department of Environmental Health. PHI provided technical review of the draft document to ensure that all aspects of the working relationship between the two departments was included as well as any documentation that the Healthcare Agency would be expected to maintain to meet PHAB's standards and measures in Domains 2 and 6. A finalized MOU to document the working relationship between the two departments was the product of this effort and will be submitted to PHAB for documentation of Domain 2 measures.

**The City of Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services** was finishing their Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan when this project began. They sought assistance with developing their health department Strategic Plan, specifically with facilitation of a full day strategic planning retreat with their staff. The Long Beach Accreditation Coordinator used NACCHO's *Developing a Local Health Department Strategic Plan: A How-To Guide* as a resource for the strategic planning process.

The retreat was held on April 19, 2013. There were 31 staff members in attendance. Based on feedback from staff collected during the strategic planning workshops held on Jan. 28 and 29 and from the pre-retreat meeting on April 9, draft core values with corresponding statements were presented to the group for discussion and consensus. Although the group worked to finalize their core values, they agreed that the core value statements needed more definition. The Strategic Plan Workgroup further refined the core values and proposed a final set of values are pending senior manager approval.

Based on feedback from staff collected during the strategic planning workshops held on Jan. 28 and 29 and from the pre-retreat meeting on April 9, draft vision and mission statements were presented to the group for discussion and consensus. The group reached consensus on a vision statement, mission statement, top 4 health issues, and top 3 organizational issues. These priorities were established using CompassPoint's Dual Bottom Line Matrix and a multi-voting technique.

The strategic planning team met on May 16, and will meet again on June 4<sup>th</sup> to continue working on the goals, strategies, and measureable objectives because there was not enough time during the retreat to finish this task.

The final product is a draft strategic plan that Long Beach department staff will continue to develop and finalize for approval by their City Council within the next 2-3 months.

### 3. **Challenges**

*Describe any challenges or barriers encountered during the implementation of your work plan. These can be challenges you may have anticipated at the start of the initiative or unexpected challenges that emerged during the course of implementing your proposed activities. If challenges were noted in your interim report, please **do** include them here as well.*

A few weeks after our project launched, the Ventura County project team notified us that their Department Director received a promotion to a County level executive position. He was the key champion for accreditation activities in the department.

The City of Long Beach has not encountered any challenges other than a need to extend their initial deadline for completing the department's strategic plan by a couple of months.

### 4. **Facilitators of Success**

*Describe factors or strategies that helped to facilitate completion of your work. These can be conditions at your organization that generally contributed to your successes or specific actions you took that helped make your project successful or mitigated challenges described above.*

The accreditation staff at the Ventura County Public Health Department sustained momentum for accreditation activities when their Director was suddenly promoted due to *successful and consistent communication* with internal and external partners about *the value of LHD accreditation*.

Each LHD had a dedicated accreditation coordinator and an organization-wide accreditation committee/Task Force that were given clear authority to move forward with accreditation activities, including seeking and securing outside funding. The Accreditation Coordinators are highly motivated individuals with strengths to engage, maintain, and build teamwork within their organizations to achieve the common goal of public health accreditation. For both LHDs, highly successful team building processes and change management skills are key to their accreditation preparation efforts.

Project staff were innovative and thought outside the box for the duration of the project, and with the technical assistance provided by PHI, they were able to identify other program areas to meet the needs of documentation specifically to Domain 6 (Ventura County). Silo walls between programs were penetrated to gain collaboration of staff efforts to attain their common goal: public health accreditation.

### 5. **Lessons Learned**

*Please describe your overall lessons learned from participating in the Accreditation Support Initiative. These can be things you might do differently if you could repeat the process and/or the kinds of advice you might give to other health departments or support organizations who are pursuing similar accreditation-related funding opportunities or technical assistance activities.*

One lesson learned is that there is more than one way to prepare and apply for public health accreditation. Approaches that work with one LHD may not be applicable to another. Tools developed to assist jurisdictions need to be flexible for adaptation.

Another lesson learned is that partner engagement early and throughout the entire in the process enables the Accreditation Coordinator to identify and obtain the necessary documents that demonstrate that the LHD meets PHAB's standards. The Accreditation Coordinator should be someone within the organization with enough organizational acumen to determine whom to contact to participate in accreditation and how to use his/her network to link to a key partner in the accreditation process. Partners can be internal or external to the organization depending upon the organizational structure.

A third lesson learned is that two departments within a local jurisdiction that work together such as public health and environmental health may take for granted that the partnership will always be there. To ensure that the partnership goes beyond the individuals in key positions, written policies, procedures, protocols, and MOUs should be in place to document the responsibilities and the delegated authorities.

Finally, the nature of public health accreditation provides a mechanism to penetrate silos and engage staff in dialogue about the essential functions of the LHD. Through this dialogue and analysis of PHAB's standards and measures, staff begins to identify areas to leverage resources across their departments and with their partners.

## 6. **Funding Impact**

*Describe the impact that this funding has had on your health department/support organization (and/or health departments you worked with as a support organization). In other words, thinking about the work you have done over the last six months:*

- *(Health departments) How has this funding advanced your own accreditation readiness or quality improvement efforts?*
- *(Support organizations) How has this funding advanced the technical assistance you provide to health departments? How has this funding advanced the accreditation readiness of the health departments you worked with?*

This project funding allowed the Public Health Institute to build capacity and gain practical experience in offering technical assistance for accreditation preparation to large, urban local health departments in our State. We have initiated conversations with LHD health officers and quality improvement directors to continue such work in larger jurisdictions as well as expand to offer technical assistance with smaller, rural counties in the future.

This project funding helped the Ventura County Department of Public Health identify documentation requirements for measures in PHAB domains 2 and 6. The funding also helped the City of Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services complete their last pre-requisite, the Strategic Plan, so that they can move forward with applying for accreditation in the near future.

7. **Next Steps**

*What are your organization's (and/or the health departments you worked with as a support organization) general plans for the next 12-24 months in terms of accreditation preparation and quality improvement?*

Ventura County – have all documentation in place for the PHAB submission and site visit in fall 2013.

City of Long Beach – finalize the department's strategic plan and obtain City Council approval. They are aiming to submit their Letter of Intent by the end of 2013 and formally apply for PHAB accreditation in Spring 2014.