



The Community Health Worker (CHW) Program Implementation Plan Tool

July 2026





INTRODUCTION

Community health workers (CHWs) play a vital role in educating their communities about public health issues by implementing culturally tailored health promotion and prevention programs. As trusted members of their communities, they can share information and encourage health behaviors on a range of issues that can help reduce health risks and adverse outcomes. A successful CHW program requires a structured implementation program which is crucial for maximizing their effectiveness and ensuring sustainability.

This tool emerges from a series of CHW tools developed by NACCHO and Umemba Health with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to support health departments in advancing their CHW programs. This tool was adapted from the *CHW Program Implementation Plan* of this series to guide teams in developing a plan to implement and sustain their CHW Program using best practices. An implementation plan should be collaboratively developed by the team who will be responsible for implementing the set of goals outlined and overall plan, along with the CHWs, community partners and community members of focus – all of whom have a key role to play in the implementation of your CHW Program. This plan, along with the *CHW Program Sustainability Compass*, can be used to strengthen and sustain an effective and community-centered CHW program for the long term.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

Overall, you should aim to use this tool to document the clearly defined goals you wish to accomplish and the progress that has been made throughout. Once your plan is complete, your CHW Program team will move into actual implementation where you will use this document as a foundation for monitoring, evaluation, and communicating progress to community members and leaders.

Since your community needs are at the forefront of what community health workers address, consider analyzing the results of your most recent community health assessments (CHAs). Once you have reviewed the specific needs of your community, you can work with your assembled team to identify your community's priorities and develop the implementation plan.

To make sure that your goals and strategies are reflective of your community's priorities, make sure to include CHWs in your implementation team as well as any representatives from community-based organizations, partners, residents, and your local health department. Aim to include people of various backgrounds that reflect your community's demographic makeup (race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, age, etc.) to ensure all voices are heard. Engaging key partners in this planning process will help in maintaining their commitment and involvement over the period of completion for this plan.

Depending on where you are at in your community health [needs] assessment (CH[N]A) and community health improvement plan (CHIP) processes, consider using NACCHO's [Mobilizing through Planning and Partnerships \(MAPP\) 2.0](#) suite of resources to guide your efforts with an approach that is community-driven. The MAPP framework will not only result in comprehensive CH[N]As and CHIPs but also a stronger network of partners and shared resources that can be leveraged to support your CHW program.

It's important to think of community engagement on a spectrum. As essential as community involvement is in our public health initiatives, we also have to be mindful of our readiness to engage with community members, concerning time, trust, personnel and resources necessary to build and strengthen relationships in your community. Consider using [The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership](#) tool from the Movement Strategy Center to assess where you are and move along the spectrum.

Once you have your CHW team together, you are ready to get started. Please note that the implementation plan may need to be adjusted frequently as implementation advances to review what has been accomplished and update goals and/or strategies as needed. Consider using the CHW Program Sustainability Compass for more guidance on what areas within your CHW program you need to strengthen.

GUIDANCE

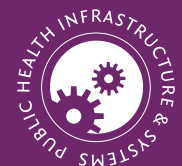
Planning is a critical exercise that will help you document clearly detailed implementation goals and identify specific activities to achieve these goals. These will be accompanied by timelines developed for completing each activity, which will include the people who will be responsible for each activity, resources needed, and program indicators which will allow you to determine progress made at each stage of implementation. In essence, an implementation plan should describe the logical sequence of events that will allow you to achieve the goal(s) set. It works similar to a logic model or strategy map, in that it allows you to hone in on concrete strategies and action steps.

For more information on logic models, refer to [NACCHO's W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide](#)

STEP 1: DEFINE YOUR GOALS (WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH?)

To start with, you will need to determine your goals. Again, where possible, these should be informed by any recent CH[N]As or CHIPs you've developed and should be driven by community needs. As you develop your goals, you want them to be SMART – that is: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-specific. This will be especially important as you start to measure your progress in accomplishing them.

<p>S</p> <p>Specific</p> <p>Be specific about what you want to achieve</p> 	<p>M</p> <p>Measurable</p> <p>Make sure your goal and progress is measurable</p> 	<p>A</p> <p>Achievable</p> <p>Ensure your goal is realistic and achievable</p> 	<p>R</p> <p>Relevant</p> <p>Your goal should align with your long term objective</p> 	<p>T</p> <p>Time-bound</p> <p>Set a deadline for achieving your goal to encourage yourself</p> 
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In most cases, our CHW programs are funded for set periods of time with the potential for future funding to sustain your program. In developing priorities, you should aim for a strong set of 3-4 program goals that you can accomplish within your funding period and 1-2 sustainability goals that will allow you to sustain your program in the long-term. For your sustainability goals, you might want to target outcomes that can impact one of the below areas. You'll notice that these also align with the domains of the CHW Program Sustainability Compass.

- Leadership Support: Internal and external champions support the program.
- Partnerships: Cultivating connections between the program and partners.
- Organizational Capacity: Having the internal infrastructure and operational resources needed to effectively manage your program and its activities.
- Program Evaluation: Assessing your program to inform planning and documenting results.
- Strategic Planning: Using processes that guide your program's direction, goals, and strategies.
- Funding Stability: Establishing a consistent financial base for your program

As you develop potential goals, you will also need to think about prioritization. It's good to brainstorm as many goals as are relevant, but the breadth of what you will be able to accomplish will be constrained by time, personnel, and even other initiatives that may be going on in the community.

Below are examples of SMART program and sustainability goals:

Goal	Domain	S	M	A	R	T
Program Goal: Increase the capacity and impact of CHWs in Washington, DC to improve chronic disease prevention and management by July 31st.	N/A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sustainability Goal: Increase the number of partner organizations supporting the program by at least two by February 1st	Partnership	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

To help you prioritize which goals you want to focus on for your implementation plan, use a [prioritization matrix](#) or other prioritization tool to narrow down your goals.



STEP 2: IDENTIFY YOUR ACTIVITIES

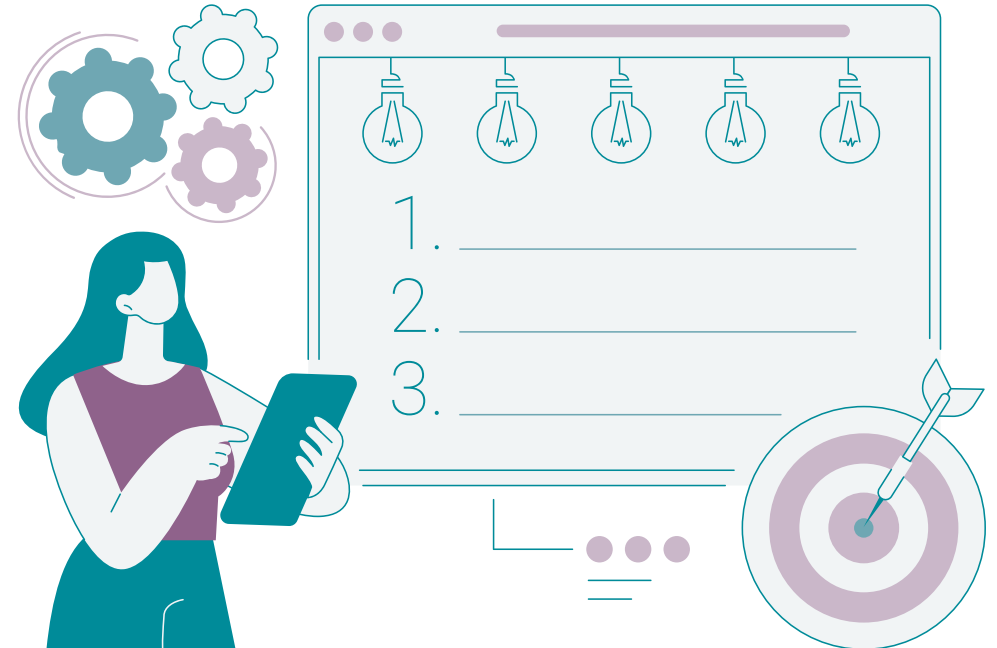
(HOW WILL YOU ACCOMPLISH YOUR GOALS?)

Once your goals have been identified, think about what activities you need to accomplish to meet your goals within the stated timeline. Each activity should also have a designated lead who is responsible for making sure that activity is done. Try to keep this to one person. While multiple people may be responsible for executing activity tasks, ideally one person is responsible for making sure it's complete.

STEP 3: DETERMINE YOUR TIMELINE

(WHEN DO YOUR ACTIVITIES NEED TO BE COMPLETED BY?)

For each activity, determine when you need to begin and end. As you go along, be mindful of your team's capacity and how other activities may impact your timeline. When possible, try to build some extra time as a cushion in case your timeline needs to shift due to unexpected circumstances.



STEP 4: NAME YOUR INTEREST HOLDERS

(WHO CAN IMPACT YOUR PROGRAM?)

There are a few different ways that we can think of our interest holders. These are people who can impact the success of the program. To start with, ask yourselves:



Who do we hope to benefit most from our program?



Presumably, this will be your community members, and, in many cases, these might be your strongest supporters. However, this will depend on how much effort you put into involving them at the start and at every stage of the program (see [The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership](#) resource linked above). Other types of partners who might benefit from a CHW program are:

- Health Department(s)
- Community-based organizations
- Training institutions
- Residents and community leaders
- Healthcare providers
- Existing CHWs

Just as important is to be mindful of those who can hurt your program. You don't need to list all of these potential detractors in your implementation plan, but you do want to consider if their support is one that can benefit your program. While it may not always be possible to change the mindsets of those who may not support your program, there are some who may be more amenable than others. Think through strategies you can use to garner their support.

Review these resources from the FrameWorks Institute for [5 Tips for Building Trust When Communicating About Health](#) and [Explaining the Value of Public Health](#).



STEP 5: IDENTIFY YOUR RESOURCES

(WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO WHAT YOU WANT?)

Consider the resources that you need to accomplish each of your activities and, ultimately, your goals. Focus on material resources that you have or can realistically acquire in time for implementation. For example:

- Financial resources
- Human/staff resources
- Training and educational materials
- Partnerships and interest holder support
- Operational resources

STEP 6: NAME YOUR ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES

(WHAT CAN STAND IN YOUR WAY?)

While unforeseen obstacles are always a possibility, it is crucial that you do your best to anticipate challenges before they are upon you. Proactivity in the face of potential challenges can allow you to minimize negative impacts. You might even want to incorporate goals or activities that directly address these challenges into your implementation plan.

STEP 7: DEFINE YOUR METRICS

(HOW WILL YOU MEASURE YOUR SUCCESS?)

Your SMART goals, established in the first step, will help in determining the best way to define and measure what your success looks like as you go along. You can think of metrics in three ways:

- Capacity Measures: your ability to accomplish your task or activity.
- Process Measures: the actual work you conduct to achieve your outcome, and
- Outcome measures: if your program did what it intended to do.

For additional support in developing specific performance measures, use Umemba Health's tool on [Performance Measures for CHW Programs](#).

Some examples of measures you might include are:

- Percentage increase in residents with knowledge of chronic disease prevention
- Percentage increase in preventative screenings
- CHW satisfaction and retention rates
- Number of partner meetings
- Number of funding streams in use
- Number of community referrals
- Percent of CHWs who have completed training or certification
- Number of policies adopted

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Below is a blank template for you to complete your implementation plan and an example to help illustrate how it will be used. After your team has come to an agreement on its priority goals, make sure to clearly detail them on the template. Once your team's goals have been finalized, take some time to think through the activities, timeline, interest holders who should be involved, resources needed, anticipated challenges, and program metrics for each activity. Feel free to add sections for additional goals if needed. Adapt this tool as you see fit for your community.

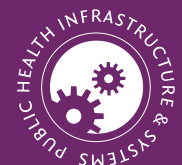
As you are getting ready to fill out the template below, keep the following in mind:

- 1. Start with small wins:** Base your plan on what is realistic and feasible. Consider your circle of influence, things you can control and influence versus things that others control and influence. Use an impact matrix to help you brainstorm some initial ideals.
- 2. Develop your plan:** Identify your goals, activities, timeline, interest holders, partners, key resources, anticipated challenges, and program indicators, which will allow you to see if you are making progress towards your goals.
- 3. Begin implementing your plan immediately:** Start implementing your activities immediately so you don't lose momentum or motivation.
- 4. Remember to update your plan:** Your implementation plan is a living document! Teams are encouraged to review and update implementation plans quarterly to assess progress, address barriers, and revise priorities as needed.

Goal: Increase the capacity and impact of CHWs in Washington, DC to improve chronic disease prevention and management by July 31st.

Example

Activities	Lead	Timeline	Interest Holders	Resources	Anticipated Challenges	Program Indicators
Train 25 new CHWs to deliver tailored chronic disease education and connect community members to local health and social services	Sam	November 2026 –July 2027 (9 months)	1. Local Health Department 2. Community-based organizations 3. Training institutions 4. Residents and community leaders	1. Financial resources 2. Human/staff resources 3. Training and educational materials 4. Partnerships and interest holder support	1. Recruitment and retention of CHWs 2. Training Accessibility and completion 3. Sustainable funding 4. Burnout and emotional toll	1. Percentage increase in residents with knowledge of chronic disease prevention 2. Percentage increase in preventative screenings 3. CHW satisfaction and retention rates



TEMPLATE

Activities <i>How will you accomplish this goal?</i>	Lead <i>Who is responsible?</i>	Timeline <i>Start - Finish</i>	Interest Holders <i>Person(s) Involved</i>	Resources	Anticipated Challenges	Program Indicators



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