1. **Project Overview**

This project was implemented by the Erie County Department of Health (ECDH). ECDH is a medium size local health department serving the residents of the County of Erie, Pennsylvania (population 280,566). Erie County is located in the northwestern-most corner of Pennsylvania. Within Erie County there are 38 municipalities, including 2 cities, 22 townships, and 14 boroughs. The City of Erie is the County’s largest city with 103,650 residents, accounting for 37.1% of the total county population.

Between November 2011 and May 2012, ECDH embarked on a number of activities intended to increase readiness to apply for Accreditation, including:

- Completion of a training needs assessment based on the Council on Linkages Core Competencies in Public Health
- Completion of a Workforce Development Plan for 2012
- Completion of a department-wide orientation to Accreditation, Performance Management, and Quality Improvement
- Formation of a multi-disciplinary Performance Management Team
- Intensive training of Performance Management Team in the principles of Performance Management, use of the Balanced Scorecard approach, and introduction to Lean process improvement.
- Quality Improvement activities related to STD clinic workflow (systematic review and documentation of problems and issues, time-study of workflow, identification of possible solutions)

Accreditation activities at ECDH are driven by the agency director, Andy Glass, along with an executive leadership team consisting of ten managers, who meet weekly. Activities associated with this NACCHO Accreditation Support grant were implemented with the help of expert consultants (Pennsylvania Public Health Training Center, AIM Consulting, Penn State Behrend continuing education department). Accreditation Coordinator Janet Vogt and Performance Management Coordinator Nicole Bolash scheduled meetings and trainings and acted as liaisons with the consultants.

Significant accomplishments:

- ECDH now has a Workforce Development Plan and an outline of a Performance Management System which will be further developed by the Performance Management Team. Neither of these two documents existed at ECDH prior to this project.
- ECDH now has a performance management team with representation from all levels—clerical/technical, management, and professional (nurses, restaurant inspectors, I.T.).
2. **Reflections: Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned**

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<th>Strategies for successful implementation of this project included knowledgeable leadership, competent and helpful consultants, support of the management team, and cooperation from Erie County Department of Health staff.</th>
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The two biggest challenges we faced with this project include:

a) Due to delays in the contracting process, we were unable to initiate most of the activities, because they depended on our ability to subcontract with outside consultants. We were unable to initiate subcontracts until we received an executed contract from NACCHO. We also had some delays in getting subcontracts executed between ECDH and the University of Pittsburgh. We addressed this challenge by doing what could be done without funds (Nov-Dec 2011), and working with PA Public Health Training Center to agree on a timetable that could be implemented quickly after a contract was implemented.

b) Responsibilities for accreditation over-all, as well as completion of grant activities are duties that have been added to existing full-time employees’ responsibilities, without corresponding reductions in other duties. We are still working on this issue, as it will continue to be an issue moving forward as we focus on performance improvement and all things related to accreditation.

Lessons learned: Most of the work related to this grant, and accreditation in general, requires the passage of TIME, because of the new concepts that need to be absorbed, the learning that needs to take place, and the changes that must take place both within the system as well as within people. We were forced to do most of the project between March and May—much too short of turn-around time for all the required changes to take place.

NACCHO was very helpful in the administration of this grant. The one thing that may have been helpful is quicker turn-around on execution of contracts; or changing the expectations and/or number of deliverables, or extend the end-date. The effect of late project start-up may be lower quality deliverables and/or ideas and plans that have not been fully thought-out or developed.

3. **Impact and Next Steps**

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<th>If the funding from NACCHO had not been available, it is questionable whether or not the Erie County Department of Health would have decided to move forward with Accreditation in 2012. This project and the funding provided enabled us to take action on two very big requirements of Accreditation—Workforce Development and Performance Improvement.</th>
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Because of this project, ECDH employees are becoming familiar and more comfortable with new concepts related to performance/quality improvement and accreditation.

In the next 12 months, we expect to update our Strategic Plan, complete our Community Health Assessment (which was already underway prior to the start of this project), complete our Community Health Improvement Plan, perform a thorough review and evaluation of our...
documentation compared to PHAB standards, submit our Statement of Intent, and submit our application to PHAB.

In the next 24 months, we expect to have all, or nearly all, of our documentation uploaded, the site visit scheduled, and perhaps, achieve Accreditation.