

Communication with Stakeholder of Public Health Accreditation: A Guide for Public Health Departments

Background

In September 2011, the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) launched national public health accreditation. Health departments across the country are learning more about PHAB and the accreditation process, and many will decide to pursue it. Public health accreditation will involve multiple stakeholders from within the organization as well as collaboration with other departments and community stakeholders. It is a process that should be considered carefully.

One strategy that may not be evident is the need to identify and engage stakeholder groups early in the accreditation process. Many times this step is an afterthought or it develops in tandem while doing the accreditation related work, such as collecting documents related to the PHAB standards and measures. A better approach would be to engage these stakeholder groups **before** embarking on public health accreditation. This guide serves as a tool for health departments to communicate with public health accreditation stakeholders. It serves to complement tools available directly from PHAB¹.

Steps to Effectively Engage Stakeholders

Step One: Determine the List of Stakeholders

Each organization will decide to pursue public health accreditation differently. The health department leadership may already be supportive and select an accreditation coordinator to begin the process. Other departments may have front line staff members that want to pursue accreditation, and they will need to reach out and establish leadership support. Alternately, the governing entity may be the group that is interested in pursuing accreditation, and they will direct the organization's leaders to move forward. Where the idea starts doesn't matter as much as ensuring that everyone understands what public health accreditation is, what needs to be done, and how the organization will accomplish it.

¹ This document was not created by PHAB and is not required to complete as part of the accreditation process. The content is based solely on experiences from accreditation coordinators in specific jurisdictions. It is meant to assist other jurisdictions in the process.

A common theme for any organization in its pursuit of accreditation is to obtain support from **all** of its stakeholders. Obvious stakeholders include the governing entity, organizational leadership, organizational staff, and community partners. An overall accreditation coordinator should be selected and once hired, this person should enter the list of key stakeholders in the [Accreditation Communication Tracking Form](#). This form allows the accreditation coordinator to keep track of presentations delivered to various groups and any follow-up activities that arise from those discussions.

Step Two: Determine What the Organization Needs from Each of the Stakeholders

Once the list of stakeholders is developed, the next step is to consider what the purpose of the presentation will be for each group. Consider the primary reasons why you are presenting to them about public health accreditation and what you need from them to successfully attain accreditation. The [Accreditation Communication Tracking Form](#) includes examples of questions to consider when developing the presentations.

Step Three: Schedule Presentation Dates

The accreditation coordinator should log the dates of presentations into the tracking form in order to develop a timeline for customizing the presentation PowerPoint tools and vetting them when necessary before the presentation date. Presentations to elected officials may need to comply with State laws that may require advance notice to the public. This is usually done as part of assuring the public's right to attend and participate in meetings of local legislative bodies. The Brown Act in California is one example of such a law.

Step Four: Assign Presenters and Deliver Tailored Presentations

The appropriate presenter for each stakeholder group may differ; the organization culture will dictate who will present to which groups. For example, the leadership team or its representative may be the person to conduct a presentation to the governing body. The accreditation coordinator might be the person to present to staff. The department director might want to present to his/her peers in other departments. The accreditation coordinator will log this information into the tracking form. When appropriate, it is recommended that the accreditation coordinator attend all meetings where he/she is not the presenter to make notes about any follow-up activities.

Step Five: Identify and Complete Follow-Up Activities

The accreditation coordinator will need to know if the stakeholder group requests more information or asks to see a specific document or form. Also, during some of the presentations, volunteers may be eager to get started. Anyone wishing to participate on the accreditation team should be contacted within one working day of the presentation to acknowledge that they will be included on the team. This person also should receive any pertinent information about the team (e.g. meetings dates, times, locations; domain teams; other subcommittees as appropriate).

Forms and Templates

Accreditation Communication Tracking Form

The Accreditation Communication Tracking Form (Attachment 1) is a tool that the accreditation coordinator can use to document this process.

Sample PowerPoint Presentations

Sample PowerPoint Presentations are located in Attachment 2. They can be adapted for any specifics that meet the organization's communication needs.

Accreditation Status Reports

The accreditation coordinator and department leadership should communicate about the current status of the accreditation efforts, including:

- Phase of accreditation
- Status of related projects
- Status of document collection
- Documents that should be revised to meet specific standards and measures
- Site visit preparation activities
- Report of findings
- Accreditation received (celebrate the hard work of all involved!)

After the organization is accredited, the accreditation coordinator should communicate the annual report content and any feedback from PHAB. As the organization approaches the end of its five-year accreditation status, there will be a need to modify the above communication approach to involve stakeholders in the renewal process.