

## 2015-2016 Accreditation Support Initiative (ASI) for Local Health Departments

### FINAL REPORT

1. **Community Description:** Briefly characterize the community(ies) served by your agency (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.

The Sarpy/Cass Department of Health and Wellness is a two-county local public health department located in eastern Nebraska. Sarpy is a mostly urban county with a population of 175,692. Cass county is primarily rural with a population of 25,512. There are 20 separate communities within our two counties.

Our Health Department consists of twelve employees and offers services including environmental health, community health education, public health nursing, disease investigations, and public health emergency preparedness.

2. **Project Overview:** Provide an overview of the work your agency conducted with or because of this funding, including the significant accomplishments/deliverables completed during the ASI project period and the key activities 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.

As a result of this funding, the Sarpy/Cass Department of Health and Wellness progressed towards developing an agency strategic plan. PHAB measure 5.3.1 was addressed through a collaborative planning effort between a contracted facilitator, agency staff and Board of Health members. A series of strategic planning meetings were held in December 2015 and January 2016. This collaboration resulted in an updated vision, mission, and a list of organizational values. Through an environmental scan, SWOT analysis, and assessment of blocks and barriers, the stakeholders set strategic directions and goals. Strategic planning continues in monthly staff meetings by further defining goals and identifying specific objectives, measures, tasks, and timelines.

PHAB measure 5.3.2 was addressed in February 2016 when the Board of Health approved the proposed three-year agency strategic plan.

3. **Challenges:** Describe any challenges or barriers encountered as your agency worked to complete the selected deliverables. These can be challenges your agency may have anticipated at the start of the initiative or unexpected challenges that emerged during the course of implementing your proposed activities and completing your deliverables. If challenges were noted in your interim report, please **do** include them here as well. Please include both tangible (e.g., natural disaster, leadership change) and intangible (e.g., lack of staff engagement) challenges.

At the time our Department started our strategic planning efforts, many of our staff and Board of Health members were relatively new. Fifty percent of our staff had been employed with the Department for less than 18 months, and four of the nine Board of Health members had been appointed for less than one year. The newness of so many stakeholders often made conversations regarding Department history, strengths, and weaknesses difficult.

Due to severe weather, the Board of Health meeting scheduled for January 25, 2016, was cancelled and rescheduled for February 8. This change of date postponed the final approval of all the Department's strategic planning efforts by two weeks. Other than this delay, the Department has not encountered any challenges.

4. **Facilitators of Success:** Describe factors or strategies that helped to facilitate completion of your agency's work. These can be conditions at your agency that contributed to your successes or specific actions you took that helped make your project successful or mitigated challenges described above. **Please include both tangible (e.g., influx of funds from another source) and intangible (e.g., staff or leadership engagement) facilitators.**

The primary factor of our success in this project was Department leadership. The Health Director of our Department was knowledgeable in strategic planning efforts, enthusiastic about the process, and successful at engaging staff and Board of Health members in all stages of the process. Through her leadership, Board of Health members were engaged at a higher level than in past planning efforts, and staff were motivated to bring ideas to the table.

5. **Impact of ASI:** To what extent do you feel your health department was more prepared for accreditation at the end of the ASI5 project as compared to the beginning? What specifically changed during that time that made your agency more prepared for accreditation? How did the ASI5 contribute to your health department's progress?

At the completion of this project, our Department has a usable strategic plan that was developed with input from all Department staff and Board of Health members. This project not only fulfilled requirements for PHAB measures 5.3.1 and 5.3.2, but lays the foundation for countless other PHAB measures that our Department will be expanding and developing. This project, and resulting projects, significantly advances our Department's accreditation readiness.

6. **Lessons Learned:** Please describe your agency's overall lessons learned from participating in the ASI. 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 who are pursuing similar accreditation-related funding opportunities or technical assistance activities.

Our Department's biggest lesson learned through this experience was to be patient and allow the process to unfold at a manageable pace. By separating the planning into smaller sessions

over the course of several weeks and months, sufficient time was allowed for stakeholders to ask questions and to build on previous actions.

The best advice we could pass along related to our experience centers around knowledgeable stakeholders. The time we took to educate our new staff and Board of Health members paid off in the long run.

7. **Funding Impact:** Describe the impact that this funding has had on your agency. How has this funding advanced your agency's accreditation readiness or quality improvement efforts?

Prior to the availability of this funding, our Department intended to complete the strategic planning process in 2016 on the heels of our completed community health needs assessment. Due to Department budget restrictions, our Department leadership was planning on facilitating the process internally. While we had been involved in strategic planning in the past, we were never in the position to lead the process. When this funding opportunity became available, we knew we would be embarking on a much more efficient process. This funding allowed for a trained facilitator to guide us through this process, resulting in a more thorough product.

8. **Next Steps and Sustainability:** What are your agency's general plans for the next 12-24 months in terms of accreditation preparation and quality improvement? How will the work completed as part of the ASI be sustained moving forward?

The agency strategic plan developed through this project will be used as the foundation for multiple projects and plans our Department will be revising and creating for years to come. Our Department has a timeline of PHAB standard implementation, and our goal is to submit our application for PHAB accreditation in the fall of 2017.