

# Maintaining Climate and Health Momentum in Public Health: Communication and Funding Strategies



## Introduction

Extreme weather events are increasing in frequency and intensity, impacting infrastructure and societies for generations to come. Local health departments have been at the forefront in preparing for, responding to, and managing the devastating impacts of longer and more intense heat waves, more powerful hurricanes, and rapid flooding. It is imperative that public health professionals, emergency managers, and policymakers ensure programmatic, and policy decisions are evidence-based and informed by science. In response, the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) Global Climate Change Workgroup (GCCWG) developed a guide to serve as a foundational resource for local health departments (LHDs) to engage in Emergent Environmental Hazard initiatives. Whether launching a new program or expanding existing efforts, this guide helps LHDs identify strategic pathways for action based on their current capacity, while maintaining adaptability to evolving external conditions. To inform this guide, the GCCWG conducted a comprehensive literature review, analyzing current events, communication strategies, and funding strategies to support the sustainability of future environmental health efforts.

This process highlighted the value of leveraging best practices from the Department of Defense, local emergency preparedness programs, and philanthropic partnerships to achieve shared objectives and enhance program resilience.

## Leveraging BRACE and Existing Assessments to Inform Communication Strategies

[The Building Resilience Against Climate Effects \(BRACE\)](#) supports health departments in partnering with communities to assess climate-health risks, develop strategies, and build resilience. Drawing on nationwide best practices, the first step in BRACE “Listen and Assess,” suggests LHDs analyze data from previous extreme weather events to project hazard vulnerability for long-term planning and decision making.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the United States endured a total of 403 extreme weather events between 1980 and 2024, each causing damages of \$1 billion or more (adjusted for inflation to 2024 dollars).

“Since the turn of the 20th century, the average annual temperature across the contiguous United States increased by 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit (1.0 degrees Celsius), and the country can expect to see it rise another 2.5 degrees Fahrenheit (1.4 degrees Celsius) over the next few decades, owing to past emissions.”

### - Climate Change & Health Assessing State Preparedness

This can be done by leveraging emergency management’s Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) using [S]pecific, [M]easurable, [A]chievable, [R]ealistic, [T]ime bound, [I]nclusive and [E]quitable objectives to implement scenario planning and community-based risk assessments.

Finally, once LHDs complete the six-part series of BRACE, they can take action by developing risk communication anchored in local climate impact data.

To effectively support community preparedness and drive meaningful action, it is essential to communicate environmental health risks in plain, accessible language. Risk messaging should clearly connect specific hazards—such as extreme heat, poor air quality, or flooding—to real health outcomes like heat-related illness, asthma attacks, or waterborne infections. These messages must be relevant to the local context and reflect the lived experiences of the communities being served.

Additionally, this literature review identified several terms that LHDs should use thoughtfully when advocating for climate action in today’s political climate. These communication strategies incorporate language that national public health professionals are currently using or have used in the past. See the word bank below for more information.

## Word Bank for Navigating Climate and A Changing Political Environment

- Consider referring to “extreme weather events” while listing specific hazards relevant to your LHD.
- Consider reframing resilience to adaptation while advocating for solutions in response to a changing environment.
- Talk about extreme weather being an “amplifier” or “threat multiplier.”

**Example:** “Extreme weather events such as floods and wildfires act as threat multipliers, amplifying existing vulnerabilities, enhancing regional instability, and generally fostering conditions conducive to conflict.”

## Funding Strategies

Chronic underfunding of public health continues to challenge timely action to identify, address, and manage the health effects of a changing climate. It is imperative for public health institutions at all levels of government to collaborate and identify opportunities and mechanisms through which to build climate resilience. Below are funding strategies that health departments are encouraged to explore as they navigate a shifting funding landscape. Departments may utilize communication strategies mentioned in the previous section in their pursuit of funds via the strategies below to avoid politicizing their programs.

| Funding Strategy  | Example   |
|---|---|
| <p>Research funding priorities for local and national philanthropic organizations for alignment.</p> <p><a href="#">The de Beaumont Foundation - The Role of Philanthropy in Public Health</a></p> <p><a href="#">CCS Fundraising - Understanding Foundation Types for Successful Engagement and Partnership</a></p>  | <p><i>If a local philanthropy is focused on housing stability, approach them with program ideas that would advance that goal, such as cost-coverage for home weatherization services that reduce energy burden for low-income families.</i></p>   |
| <p>Identify large local business contacts and pitch a project proposal with results that would enhance their reputation.</p> <p>Include project scope, budget, timeline and impact in proposal.</p> <p><a href="#">Wild Apricot - How to Get Donations From Companies</a></p>   | <p><i>If there is a large local business in your community, encourage them to utilize existing materials or funding for the development of cooling kits. Doing so will allow the business to fund and support a climate and health initiative that positively impacts their community while building trust and their reputation.</i></p>  |
| <p>Explore collaborative financing between philanthropic and business partners to fully fund a new program.</p> <p><a href="#">APHA - Public Health Funder Network</a></p>  | <p><i>If one entity can't provide comprehensive funding for a project, see if you can collect additional funding by approaching another entity and saying, "X entity has committed \$10k to this project, could you match their contribution?"</i></p>  |
| <p>Engage legislative bodies to support climate and health initiatives. Legislative bodies typically operate under structured agendas during each session. Proactively engaging with them at the start of each session enhances the opportunity to influence policy in alignment with your community's climate and health priorities.</p>   | <p><i>Support legislation that resources the expansion of adaptation and mitigation efforts and responds to the impacts of increasingly extreme weather.</i></p>  |
| <p>Collaborate across public health departments and other sectors to leverage synergies in scopes of work.</p>  | <p><i>If you cannot pursue external funding to support this work, see if there are efficiencies you can create by merging goals with other areas of public health or other departments within your agency, for example a city public works department may be interested in utilizing public health vulnerability data to determine where they should prioritize tree planting efforts to maximize cooling benefits.</i></p> |
| <p>Develop partnerships with community-based organizations to pursue philanthropic funding opportunities to implement new or sustain existing climate and health projects.</p> <p><a href="#">CDC Foundation - Strengthening Partnerships between Public Health and Community-Based Organizations</a></p> <p><a href="#">NACCHO - Collaborative Financing to Support the Social Determinants of Health: Tips for Local Health Departments</a></p> | <p><i>Provide data, encouragement and technical support to community-based organizations to secure funding and advance this work without municipal constraints.</i></p>   |

## Non-Government Funders

### Bloomberg Philanthropies

- Supports public health initiatives through evidence-based interventions and data-driven strategies.

### The Rockefeller Foundation

- Invests in *Food is Medicine* to address diet-related diseases and improve community health.

### Open Philanthropy Project

- Focuses on supporting charities that address neglected issues in global health and animal welfare.

### Grantmakers in Health

- The largest network of health funders in the U.S., advocating for public health-minded funding.



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