

Five Promising Strategies for Local Health Department Health in All Policies Initiatives



Overview

In February 2017, NACCHO released [Health in All Policies: Experiences from Local Health Departments](#),¹ developed from key informant interviews and focused discussions engaging with local health department (LHD) staff, community partners, and funders to learn more about challenges, opportunities, and the sustainability related to implementing Health in All Policies (HiAP) initiatives. The report explores five themes, promising strategies for health department practice, and recommendations for improving the field of HiAP at the local level. This fact sheet builds on NACCHO's 2014 fact sheet, [Local Health Department Strategies for Implementing Health in All Policies](#),² and provides an overview of the report recommendations and quotes from local health officials that capture why these promising strategies/recommendations are useful based on HiAP practitioner experiences.

Health in All Policies: A change in systems that determine how decisions are made and implemented by local, state, and federal governments to ensure that policy decisions have neutral or beneficial impacts on health determinants.³

Promising Strategies

The following strategies were developed based on interview and focused discussions with a diverse group of stakeholders engaged in HiAP planning and implementation. Each strategy is intended to inform health department staff interested in pursuing a HiAP approach in their jurisdiction.

1 Start small.

HiAP is a process and an investment in long-term outcomes. Setting achievable, scalable goals provides partners with the flexibility to test ideas and evaluate outcomes. It is important for local health officials to start somewhere, no matter how small. The work needs to take place across multiple fronts for HiAP efforts to be successful. While progress is neither

linear nor uniform, establishing a solid framework is important for scaling up future work across institutions and diverse communities.

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“In my department . . . we have to be very smart about how we dedicate the limited resources we have. When we get into a neighborhood, we do good stuff, but we can't be everywhere.” – Listening session participant

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2 Find champions at partner agencies or health departments.

Finding strong champions at partner organizations and making a commitment to building trust can fortify the organizational capacity and long-term sustainability of initiatives. The process of building HiAP is fundamentally based on cross-sector partnership; local health officials identified cross-sector relationships with champions as advancing their work.

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“You never know who your best partners are going to be. It's good to take a very cross-sector approach. Don't underestimate who could be a stakeholder.”

– Listening session participant

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3 Develop measurements for success.

The ability to evaluate changes in health determinants and outcomes can serve as a powerful tool to guide priorities. Understanding how to measure systems change and changes in outcomes are important for knowing whether progress is being made toward shared goals. Local health officials have used creative approaches to collecting data such as tracking the level of collaboration among cross sector partners over a specified time period, or tracking requests for the technical assistance from cross sector agencies. Considering meaningful

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indicators of progress can strategically inform approaches and increase access to funding, support and other resources.

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“We drill down to specific projects, like number of partners engaged, number of participants in a project—things helping us understand if we’re increasing impact or trending towards a more positive impact.” – Listening session participant

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4 Prepare for the unexpected.

Investing the time to prepare for unknown future circumstances is important for success in HiAP. Participants identified challenges with staff and leadership turnover and working with limited capacity and resources, which was prevalent in local government. While planning for all contingencies is impossible, it is important to consider ways to alleviate potential losses. HiAP can be an approach to mitigate potential risks of limited capacity and resources by facilitating the shared use of limited resources across agencies.

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“We can develop goals and health indicators but tomorrow something else comes up that is urgent.” – Listening session participant

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5 Organizational integration and institutionalization.

One strategy for embedding HiAP into current processes is to include integrating HiAP functions in job descriptions and develop an institutional home for cross-sector collaborations,

such as interagency councils or taskforces. Dedicating staff to HiAP initiatives ensures support for collaborative efforts through administration, reporting, and communication support. Additional efforts can be implemented to formalize or institutionalize the work, such as the adoption of local ordinances, executive orders, and resolutions.

References

1. NACCHO. (2017). *Health in All Policies: Experiences from Local Health Departments* [report]. Available at <http://bit.ly/NACCHOHiAPReport2017>
2. NACCHO. (2014). *Local Health Department Strategies for Implementing Health in All Policies*. Available at <http://bit.ly/2zUGlwr>
3. NACCHO. (2015). Statement of Policy: Health in All Policies. Available at <http://bit.ly/NACCHOHiAPPolicy>

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For more information and to read NACCHO's *Health in All Policies: Experiences from Local Health Departments* report, visit <http://bit.ly/2iwaUAV>

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