

2012-2013 Accreditation Support Initiative (ASI) for Health Departments and Support Organizations

FINAL REPORT

1. **Community Description**

Briefly characterize the community(ies) served by your health department or support organization (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 MidAmerica Center for Public Health Practice (MCPHP) collaborates with local, regional, and national partners to improve population health through public health workforce development. Located at the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health, MCPHP offers a continuum of consulting services and technical assistance for practice organizations. By linking workforce development initiatives to the strategic needs of partner organizations, MCPHP provides customized solutions to address the current challenges of public health practice. MCPHP worked with local health departments in the north, west and south of Illinois on the NACCHO ASI Project.

2. **Work Plan Overview**

Provide an overview of the work you conducted with or because of this funding, including the significant accomplishments/deliverables completed between December 2012-May 2013 under the auspices of this grant, and the key activities you 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.

Major national initiatives such as the National Prevention Strategy and Affordable Care Act call for expanded public health worker skill sets. Yet, local health department (LHD) capacity to address these changes is limited. Voluntary public health accreditation offers health departments the opportunity to meet these challenges, but more support is needed to help health departments prepare for and respond to accreditation standards. Academic and practice relationships can leverage resources and enhance health departments' readiness for accreditation by providing technical assistance for workforce development. The UIC School of Public Health MidAmerica Center for Public Health Practice, Illinois Department of Public Health, and three local health departments (LHDs) partnered to design tools to enhance LHDs' readiness for accreditation in a cost-effective manner. The partners' work will promote dialogue about workforce development infrastructure in Illinois. With funding from the NACCHO Accreditation Support Initiative, the partners convened a workgroup to: 1) write a report on factors shaping workforce development for accreditation, 2) assess worker competencies at the three partner LHDs, 3) develop workforce training plans for each LHD, and 4) create an online toolkit for competency assessment, workforce development planning, and training resources. The ASI workgroup's report will inform statewide policy discussions and may lead to new strategies to strengthen statewide infrastructure around workforce development. The online toolkit will offer a practical, step-by-step guide for how to assess worker competencies, create training plans, and train LHDs workers.

3. **Challenges**

*Describe any challenges or barriers encountered during the implementation of your work plan. These can be challenges you may have anticipated at the start of the initiative or unexpected challenges that emerged during the course of implementing your proposed activities. If challenges were noted in your interim report, please **do** include them here as well.*

There were a few minor hurdles that inhibited project implementation. Primarily, being part of a state level organization created challenges in regards to accepting and moving forward with the grant project, i.e. the final contract execution was delayed due to legal review and changes. Once the contract was signed, we were unexpectedly required to obtain IRB exception status for our interviews for the report. The only other factor that we had to keep in mind was working with our partner's time line.

4. **Facilitators of Success**

Describe factors or strategies that helped to facilitate completion of your work. These can be conditions at your organization that generally contributed to your successes or specific actions you took that helped make your project successful or mitigated challenges described above.

There were three primary facilitators of success. First, this project was successful because of the long standing relationship MCPHP has had with the partners on the project (prior to the start of the project). Their dedication and belief in accreditation made sure that we were able to help support them and move on this project.

Second, MCPHP also has a long standing understanding of workforce issues and concerns with the work that we have done in the past nearly 15 years. It is with this understanding and capacity that we were able to move on the quick timeline.

Third, MCPHP undertook strategic planning during the summer of 2013. This process allowed the organization to refocus its goals and activities, for which providing leadership in workforce development in Illinois is one. Moreover, this recent look at MCPHP's strengths aligned with NACCHO's funding helped to energize the staff and its partners toward a clear vision and what we hope will be an on-going discussion (rather than treating this grant as a one-time project).

5. **Lessons Learned**

Please describe your overall lessons learned from participating in the Accreditation Support Initiative. 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 or support organizations who are pursuing similar accreditation-related funding opportunities or technical assistance activities.

There were at least two lessons learned. First, it would have been ideal to have earlier support at the state-level (such as other organizations providing workforce development support to health departments) before grant execution so that products and results could be immediately used and adopted. Due to the short turnaround time, this was not possible. Second, MCPHP reached out to several other national, state and local partners to assess what others were doing in workforce

development. It would have been best if this process had occurred earlier in the grant or before the grant application so we would have known our options. However, it was a beneficial process nonetheless and we are now aware of other resources and options to achieve the same goal in the end.

6. **Funding Impact**

Describe the impact that this funding has had on your health department/support organization (and/or health departments you worked with as a support organization). In other words, thinking about the work you have done over the last six months:

- *(Health departments) How has this funding advanced your own accreditation readiness or quality improvement efforts?*
- *(Support organizations) How has this funding advanced the technical assistance you provide to health departments? How has this funding advanced the accreditation readiness of the health departments you worked with?*

As noted above, the timing of this project was ideal for MPHPC. MCPHP had just completed a strategic planning process and identified workforce development as a priority area. This seed money was vital to help catalyze a strategic goal, and hopefully a movement in the state of Illinois to promote a coordinated approach for workforce development and accreditation readiness.

7. **Next Steps**

What are your organization's (and/or the health departments you worked with as a support organization) general plans for the next 12-24 months in terms of accreditation preparation and quality improvement?

MCPHP is committed to help address what appears to be a fragmented public health workforce development system in Illinois. As noted above, this project helped to catalyze MCPHP's strategic goal of to help Illinois become a leader in public health workforce development. Grant activities will be continued in several ways, including but not limited to the following:

1. Each of the pilot sites that we worked with intend to submit for accreditation within the next year. We will continue to work with them to finalize and execute a workforce development plan that can possibly serve as a statewide model for the process.
2. Our workgroup will also continue to meet to discuss distribution for the report findings, pushing for the development of a state-wide workgroup.
3. Finally, we will present this overall project, the how-to of the process for workforce assessment and plan development, and the report findings both at a rural health conference in Illinois (along with the state health department) as well as at the American Public Health Association in November.