

Conducting a Local Health Department Strategic Planning Process

NACCHO's Accreditation Preparation & Quality Improvement (QI) Webinar Series
Wednesday, May 16, 2012 3:00PM ET

In May 2012, NACCHO hosted a webinar entitled "Conducting a Local Health Department Strategic Planning Process." This webinar featured Laurie Call of the Illinois Public Health Institute. She reviewed NACCHO's recently released Guide to Conducting a Local Health Department Strategic Planning Process and shared information about PHAB's requirements for the prerequisite.

The questions below were posed during the webinar.

Does the quality improvement plan need to be completed before application to PHAB?

The prerequisites for PHAB application are the community health assessment (CHA), the community health improvement plan (CHIP), and the agency strategic plan. The quality improvement (QI) plan does not have to be completed and submitted at the time of PHAB application, but is one of the required pieces of documentation specified in the Standards and Measures. Measure 9.2.1 A requires a quality improvement (QI) plan and measure 9.2.2 A requires documentation of QI activities based on the QI plan.

What is meant by linkages between the strategic plan and QI Plan?

The Guidance in the PHAB Standards and Measures Version 1.0 says health departments must "describe and demonstrate how improvement areas are identified," and "describe and demonstrate how the improvement projects align with the health department's strategic vision/mission." Laurie Call goes into details about these requirements in the webinar.

Should I wait to complete my CHA before I complete my Strategic Plan?

PHAB does not dictate a specific order in which the prerequisites should be completed. However, PHAB's guidance (in the Standards and Measures Version 1.0) indicates that the agency strategic plan should include "linkages with the health improvement plan and details on the health department's roles and responsibilities for implementing the health improvement plan." Therefore, in order to ensure linkages are present, it is advisable to complete the CHA and at least begin the CHIP process before embarking on the strategic plan. Please note that according to PHAB (Standards and Measures Version 1.0), "the strategic plan need not link to all elements of the health improvement plan or quality improvement plan, but it must show where linkages are appropriate for effective planning and implementation."

What about centralized health departments where counties are under the state health department and there is not a "governing body." How do we meet the requirement for governing body involvement?

The governing body is the entity to which the health department director is responsible. In centralized states, this could be an elected board of health, an appointed secretary of health, a governor, or another entity. It is encouraged that governing bodies be involved in the strategic planning process, with the understanding that in some situations direct involvement might not be possible. Contact PHAB with specific questions.

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We are an integrated Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) entity. DHHS Leadership just completed a new mission and vision statements, we plan on using this for our LHD, will this suffice for PHAB?

According to PHAB's Standards and Measures Version 1.0, "if the health department is part of super health agency or umbrella agency, the health department's strategic plan may be part of a larger organizational plan. If that is the case, the plan must include a section that addresses the health department and includes the required elements of the plan specific to the health department. Submitted documentation should include only the section(s) of the larger plan that addresses the health department and not the entire plan. If the plan of the super health agency or umbrella agency does not include the required elements for the health department, then the health department must conduct an internal planning process and adopt a health department specific strategic plan."

Do strategic goals need to relate to a particular program area, or can they be organization-wide?

Strategic goals and objectives can relate to the organization as a whole. Financial goals or large-scale community health improvement efforts often cross-cut several or all programs.

Is there a suggested number of goals and objectives to include in a strategic plan?

The number of goals should be manageable and realistic; some agencies choose between five and nine.