December 2013 Issue

Welcome to NACo’s fifth issue of Creating Healthy Counties!

Numerous factors impact health, such as access to care, diet and exercise, environmental influences and social and economic factors. These factors can present complex challenges for county officials seeking to implement initiatives to promote health.

With support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and in collaboration with the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute (UWPHI), NACo is providing counties with information and insights into how they can develop effective local programs and policies to create healthy counties.

The project, *Elected County Officials’ Guide to County Health Rankings & Roadmaps*, serves as a hub of information and resources for counties about community health improvement, and is designed to facilitate peer-to-peer learning among counties about ways to create healthier communities. Counties have the opportunity to utilize information from the annual *County Health Rankings* to learn how to address local health needs and to work toward improving health outcomes.

For more information, visit [www.naco.org/improvingcountyhealth](http://www.naco.org/improvingcountyhealth)

For more information about the *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps* program, visit [www.countyhealthrankings.org](http://www.countyhealthrankings.org)

For more information about the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, visit [www.rwjf.org/](http://www.rwjf.org/)

For more information about the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, visit [http://uwphi.pophealth.wisc.edu/](http://uwphi.pophealth.wisc.edu/)
Roadmaps to Health Forum: Sharing a Vision and Commitment to Improve County Health

The National Association of Counties (NACo) held a one and one-half day forum in Dane County (Madison), Wisconsin, on October 31 and November 1, 2013. The convening’s focus was on opportunities for developing, enhancing and sustaining community health outcomes in counties across the country. With an emphasis on health factors and health outcomes, NACo’s Roadmaps to Health Forum explored strategies for addressing local health needs by using the County Health Roadmaps Take Action Cycle as a guide. The Take Action Cycle provides evidence-based steps and resources that assist county leaders in identifying and mobilizing community health improvement efforts. County officials and key staff from counties and state associations that focus on health and human services as part of their daily responsibilities attended the forum.

Using the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps program as a resource, forum participants learned about tools for detecting a county’s assets, needs and gaps as a first step toward identifying priority actions and assessing potential measures and sources for new data that can help counties address questions about their community needs. To understand the available tools and resources through the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, Bridget Catlin, Director for the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps program, and Julie Willems Van Dijk, Deputy Director for the County Health Roadmaps program, provided an introduction to the information. They dissected the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps program, providing participants with an understanding of the county data that are currently available through the Rankings, and tools and resources available through the Roadmaps to guide local leaders in prioritizing community health needs.

The forum also examined opportunities to build, enhance and sustain a diverse multi-sector team of partners that work collaboratively to implement strategies that result in a healthy systems change. Peter Rumble, Deputy County Administrator in Sonoma County, California, Mary Kushion, Former Health Officer for the Central Michigan District Health Department in Clare County, Michigan and Janine Sinno, Healthy Communities Coordinator, Ingham County Health Department, Ingham County, Michigan, offered insights into how stakeholders were brought together in their communities to identify needs, strategize plans and lay the groundwork for a sustainable healthy county movement.

The forum also examined the role that public-private partnerships play in mobilizing community health improvement efforts. Panelists included Linda Langston, NACo President and Linn County, IA Supervisor, Cheryl DeMars, President and CEO of the Alliance and member of the National Business Coalition on Health (NBCH) Board of Governors, Jennifer Pagels, Director of Human Resources for Trek Bicycle Corporation; and Renee Moe, Vice President of Resource Development for the United Way of Dane County, WI. The panel members described how various groups outside of traditional public health partnerships are approaching the work of community health improvement.

In addition to the informative sessions, attendees participated in two social and interactive activities to create a cross-pollination of perspectives and ideas on significant issues. Through guiding questions, the activities offered participants an opportunity to engage in small group conversations with their peers concerning key issues and next steps to enhancing and sustaining county health improvement efforts. Conversations included moving beyond health behavior factors (e.g., smoking, underage drinking, healthy food options) and looking at underlying factors (e.g., poverty, education, access to housing, proximity of liquor stores) and the impact it has on overall health in communities.
Participants raised the importance of community collaboration and a shared vision among community stakeholders to address important issues in the county. There was a recurrent theme, “we need to ask the community what they need, and not what we think they need.” Participants also emphasized the importance of educating the community stakeholders and the public about the community needs and data in decision making.

The information gathered from the forum will be used to help NACo design future programming that best addresses the needs of counties across the country.

**Resource Spotlight: Acting on What’s Important**

In the October edition of *Creating Healthy Counties*, NACo put a spotlight on Choosing Effective Policies & Programs, a step in the *County Health Roadmaps Action Cycle*. The step provided valuable information, resources and tools that can assist communities in identifying policies/programs/strategies to address and resolve the important issues the county may be facing.

Once your county has researched and identified potential programs and/or policies that fit your community needs, the next step in the Action Cycle is to Act on What’s Important. How can you take you take the policy/program and implement it in your county? Since success and strategies to implement policy/programs can vary by county, this section provides information and resources on how to best build on your county’s inherent strengths, capitalize on available resources and respond to your communities unique needs.

It is important to involve a multi-sector, diverse team of stakeholders, making sure groups that directly represent vulnerable populations or those who may be impacted by the potential policy/program have a voice. It’s also important to have people present who can help assure that ordinances, local laws, policies, and programs are adopted, implemented, and/or enforced (if needed). It’s also key to have community members and the press/media that can inform the public about the program/policy.

**Defining your strategy - What do you want to achieve and why?**

It is imperative to clearly define what you want to achieve through the policy and program and why you want to achieve it. Communicating the strategy effectively can help you advocate for why the selected policy/program will impact the health of the community. A tool such as, *Answering the Three Key Questions for an Advocacy Campaign*, can help you keep the focus by answering three key questions – 1) What do you want? (2) Why do you want it? 3) Who has the power to give it to you?
On occasion, the chosen policy/program may not be considered a traditional health issue (e.g., housing development, jail diversion, education, environmental issues) and therefore gathering data to support the need and assist in explaining the “why” in your selection.

Additional Suggested Tools:
- Program Development & Evaluation Log Models
- Theory of Change: A Practical Tool for Action, Results, and Learning
- Community Balances Scorecards and MAPP

Identifying who you need to influence
Once you have clearly defined what you want to achieve and why you want to achieve it, the next step is to understand the population you want to inform and identify coalitions/groups that have or share a similar vision and those who may not share your vision, as there is something to learn from each group.

Who do you want to influence? A key part of considering whom you want to influence is to understand what individual decision makers or groups will or won’t do to assist your proposed achievable goals. The Decision-Maker Analysis can help you think through questions you’ll need to answer to have a better understanding of who you want to influence and a diagram, such as the Sphere to Influence, can help map relationships in order to have a better understanding of other individuals or groups that may help in influencing targeted decision-makers.

Who are your allies? Allies are groups or individuals who share your vision and who want to succeed in a way that you believe in. They are also people with whom you have a great deal of trust and help you clearly articulate the landscape. Using an Alley Power Grid and the Coalition Mapping Worksheet are tools to help identify potential allies and organizations interested in your policy, program, and/or systems change. Build your influence through meetings with community members and key leaders, making sure you keep track of their contact information.

Who are your opponents? Opponents are groups or individuals whom you trust a great deal, but who may disagree with your purpose, direction, goals and/or method. Identifying Opponents is a tool that can help you understand the power opponents have over the decision-maker and what they may do/spend to oppose you.

Additional Suggested Tools:
- Key Stakeholder Contract Tracker
- Sign-in Sheet for Community Meetings

Develop a communication plan
Develop a plan for communicating with key stakeholders and the public to keep them involved and to build support for your program, policy and/or systems change. Effective communication can also help fully inform decision makers. The County Health Roadmaps Action Cycle refers the Smart Chart 3.0 tool from Spitfire Strategies, to help create a communication strategy by outlining six major strategic decision steps.
Using the County Health Rankings data and personal stories from affected community members, can assist in putting together a strong communication strategy. Data for Action includes tips for finding the data your community may need and conveying the information in a simple, yet powerful way.

Sharing this information with the media can be beneficial to informing the community on the issue(s) impacting the community and the reason to Take Action! Tools such as Media Advocacy and the 27-9-3 Rule: Developing Your Persuasive Message Worksheet can help you plan your media advocacy strategy. Social media channels, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, may also assist in outreach, engagement, and communication strategies.

Additional Suggested Tools:
- How Do You Develop a Plan for Communication?
- Media Advocacy Templates
- Social Media Communication Strategies
- Prevention Speaks
- Introduction to Storytelling
- Storytelling Toolkit
- Center for Digital Storytelling

Creating an action plan
Creating a detailed action plan that contains a timeline of specific, measureable, achievable and realistic objectives can help the team members of the coalition understand their assigned roles and make sure there aren’t any gaps/overlaps in specific program/initiative deliverables. Each community is different and therefore the process and specific items in the community’s action plan will vary depending on the location. The County Health Roadmaps Action Center references a variety of tools/resources to assist you community to build specific action steps. Having an understanding and background on the skills, knowledge, passion and interests of each team member in the coalition can assist in developing specific action item deliverables. It’s also important to create a budget for your initiative. The County Health Rankings & Roadmaps provides a tool, Putting It All Together: Creating and Working with a Budget Document, to assist you in developing the budget for your plan. County Health Rankings Action Plan/Business Case Framework provides an example of how a community linked their goals and action plan together in the Greater Flint Health Coalition.

Additional Suggested Tools:
- Action Plan Worksheet
- Developing a Plan for Advocacy
- How to Create SMART Goals using a Tree Diagram
- SMART Tree Diagram Templates
Develop a fundraising plan

The County Health Roadmaps contains a tool, Guide to Funding your Community Health Initiative, which provides information on identifying and accessing funding opportunities. A worksheet such as, the Potential Donors Worksheet, can assist a coalition in identifying corporations, organizations, individuals, foundations and governmental bodies that share your coalitions mission and values. The County Health Roadmaps also recommends asking people in your own community to contribute to your effort.

Additional Suggested Tools:

- Your Board and Fundraising: An Introductory Course
- Funding Your Inner Fundraiser
- Identifying Potential House Party Hosts/Hostesses for Fundraising

Work together to implement the plan

The County Health Roadmaps Action Cycle provides helpful hints to maintain momentum when working together on the action plan. For example, continuously evaluate who is at the table and consider if you need to add anyone else to the mix of partners working on advocacy to be sure that your policy and program moves forward. A resource such as, Integrating Volunteers into a Campaign Plan, can help to think about opportunities to effectively involve community volunteers in all aspects of the action plan.

For a complete, detailed list of resources and information regarding the step, Act on What’s Important, visit the County Health Roadmaps Action Cycle.

Resource: County Health Rankings & Roadmaps Action Center – Act on What’s Important

National News

Public Health Accreditation Board Awards Five-Year Accreditation to Three Health Departments

Five-year accreditation status was awarded November 19 to the Kane County Health Department in Ill.; the Kenosha County Division of Health in Wis.; and the Licking County Health Department in Ohio. The Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) sets standards against which the nation’s more than 3,000 public health departments can continuously work to improve the quality of their services and overall performance. The PHAB provides a peer-reviewed process that offers feedback to inform health departments of their strengths and areas for improvement so they can better protect and promote the health of the people they serve in their communities. Read more
Katie B. Reynolds Trust to Fund McDowell County, NC Recreation Plan
Healthy Places, a Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust initiative aimed at improving the health and overall quality of life for people in rural areas of North Carolina, announced it will assist McDowell County by funding the development of a county-wide recreation plan to promote active living in the community. McDowell County has developed a number of active living activities and projects in an effort to improve the long-term health of their community. The county-wide recreation plan will assess the current state of the county’s parks and outdoor spaces, as well as provide recommendations for active living and recreation in the area moving forward. Read more

National Rural Health Day supports Community Rural Health grants in Kentucky
In recognition of National Rural Health Day that took place on Thursday, November 21, six rural health grants were given to rural health care coalition members, many who are with the counties. The initiative, Working Actively Toward Community Health (W.A.T.C.H.), located in Adair County, was one of the recipients of the Community Rural Health grant. The grant will support plans by the local hospital, district health department and the Columbia-Adair County Parks and Recreation Board to host a variety of activities, including a community walking club and the completion of the Community Health Improvement Plan for Adair County. Read more

Spartanburg County’s Road to a Better Health Initiative
The Road to Better Health (RTBH) initiative was formed in response to concerns about poor health outcomes in Spartanburg County, South Carolina. A Local Public Health System Assessment, including a comprehensive County Health Status Report highlighted a myriad of obstacles the county was facing to good health. Economic factors and lack of resources were certainly contributing, but with a collective power of community leaders, partners and community members, Spartanburg County has harnessed a healthy county movement by listening to diverse voices, inspiring each other and developing strategies for buy-in, decision-making and a coordinated action plan among groups. Visit the NACo Healthy Counties Database for more information about Spartan County’s initiative.

Share Your Story
NACo would like to hear about your county’s efforts to promote overall resident and community health. Share your county’s story so that it can be included in NACo's Healthy Counties Database or highlighted in our bi-monthly newsletter. Email Katie Bess at kбess@naco.org or click here to complete a county profile form.

Updates & Resources
- Webinar Archive
- Incorporating Health Outcomes with Making Planning Decisions in Your County - County populations face great health challenges, including obesity, asthma, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and access to care. These concerns can be aggravated by physical design, infrastructure and environmental pollution, increasing recreational spaces, and ensuring mobility of older citizens. Webinar attendees will discover the value of
incorporating health outcomes into planning policies by design professionals and experienced leaders. View Webinar Recording and PowerPoint Slides

- **Using the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps to Drive County Change** - Learn about tools and resources available through the *County Health Roadmaps* to address community needs. You'll also hear from Howard County, MD, who has used the *Rankings & Roadmaps* data and tools to implement their first county-wide health assessment that gave insight on local health behaviors and needs in the community. View Webinar Recording and PowerPoint Slides

**NACo County Solutions and Innovations Blog** – The CSI blog contains posts from NACo’s subject matter experts in the areas of community and economic development, health, human services, justice and public safety and resilience.

  - **New:** The [County by County Blog](#), part of the *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps*, put together a blog post, *Identifying Community Solutions in Clare and Sonoma Counties*, from the NACo Roadmaps to Health Forum last months in Dane County, Wis.
  - **New:** The [County by County Blog](#) put together a blog post, *Public-Private Partnerships: A Commitment to Improve Health*, from the NACo Roadmaps to Health Forum last month in Dane County, Wis.
  - Building Leadership Capacity in Counties through the Community Coalition Leadership Program. [Read more](#)
  - County Parks and Recreation offers a Proactive Prescription to a Healthy Community. [Read more](#)

- Check out the June 2013 Healthy Counties brochure on the *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps*. The special report is from the pages of County News. The report highlights the *County Health Rankings* model and stories of counties that have used the *Rankings* to spur improvement. View the report [here](#)

---

**Contact**

*County Health Rankings & Roadmaps Initiative*

Katie Bess
Health Associate
202.942.4215
kbess@naco.org