

Effective Strategies to Build Momentum and Realign Population Health Programs in a Changing Healthcare Landscape



A NEW APPROACH TO HEALTH

The United States' health landscape is rapidly changing. We have had time to prepare for some transitions, such as the shift to value-based care. Others, such as the prospect of new healthcare legislation replacing the ACA and the likelihood of decreases in funding available to the health sector, have created widespread uncertainty and unease.

One natural reaction to monumental change, or the looming threat of such change, is retrenchment and caution – even inaction. However, in the case of population health improvement, no one can afford to delay action.

Read on for strategies you can employ to successfully navigate this new playing field as well as specific actions you can take to prepare for a new health landscape.



CHANGING ROLES

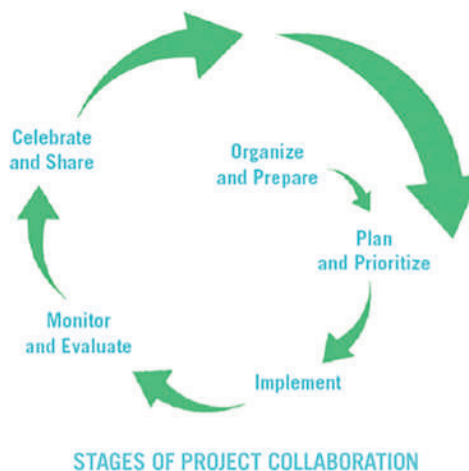
Although it is difficult, it is time to start reimagining the future. Decreasing budgets will force each sector to re-examine its priorities, determine its unique strengths, and identify ways in which its roles might change. Consider the following questions: What does your organization or sector do that no one

else can do? Of the services you provide, which are most important to preserve? For which of these services can you make a business case for funding? And which services might be performed more efficiently by partnering with another organization, or even transitioning responsibility elsewhere?

As each sector's responsibilities change, it will be essential to redefine success. We must not think in terms of the number of programs running or the amount of funding received. Instead, focus on preserving your organization's core functions, decreasing costs, and improving health outcomes to create value.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

It is not too early to start planning and assess options. You want to decide your organization's direction and not have it mandated for you. Planning is the best course of action and below are steps you can take now to prepare for the future. Many of these steps



are outlined in the Practical Playbook's [Stages of Collaboration](#), shown in the graphic to the left.

Assess priorities: Reach out to others to get a sense of priorities and opportunities. If you work in governmental public health, talk to health care providers and others in your network to see what they think are programs and services that need to be protected. If you are outside government, check in with state leaders to understand their priorities and constraints; reach out to your state or city health officer, legislators, or even your mayor, possibly through the government relations staff of your organization or institution. Understanding other perspectives on current developments is a good place to start in identifying opportunities for collaboration.

Build strong partnerships: Health care and public health practitioners are obvious partners, but also consider including representatives from the local Chamber of Commerce, business leaders, local politicians, faith-based organizations, and academic institutions in your project. By working with a wider range of stakeholders, you can better identify and address factors that affect population health. For example, [click here](#) to learn how a Cleveland initiative brought together partners from community health, health care, housing, and public health to improve asthma and lead poisoning outcomes related to unhealthy housing.

Engage the community: Don't forget to engage community members and leaders in the planning stage of your population health improvement projects. Communication with the community can help prioritize budget items to reflect their needs and focus on policies or interventions that work best for them. Try to include a diverse group of perspectives, perhaps by reaching out to those who have not been involved in previous conversations. Also, be sure you provide proper compensation for people's time and expertise.

Choose the right question, pursue the right funding: After consulting community leaders, select one need to address. Don't take on more than one project at a time; it will dilute your efforts. Additionally, think outside the box for funding. If you've never pursued federal funding, go after it. If federal money has always been your main funding source, try approaching state or county representatives, local groups, or community development corporations. You might also consider in kind support; while some organizations may not be able to contribute financially, they can still share their time and expertise.

Share your successes: Your organization's future is on the line. Before new budgets are finalized, take action to ensure your organization

is receiving recognition for the important work that you do. Marketing your successes and sharing them with community partners (for example, local city councils and boards), your state government, and the media will help to ensure the future of your programs. [Click here](#) for tips to leverage media and amplify the impact of your work.

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Join us at the Practical Playbook National

Meeting: “Improving Population Health:

Collaborative Strategies That Work” will feature practical tools and concrete steps for taking action that address the challenges of moving forward in uncertain times and leverage on-going change. Presenters will share specific, workable steps for addressing the social determinants of health and proven best practices for working across sectors effectively — no matter what direction emerging health policy takes.

Sign up to attend the Practical Playbook National Meeting in Washington, D.C. from May 31 to June 2, 2017. For more information and to register, visit www.practicalplaybook.org/section/national-meeting-2017

Among the resources used to develop this brief were interviews with Ali S. Khan, MD, MPH, Dean of the College of Public Health, University of Nebraska Medical Center; Mary Beth Bigley,