



Victorian Healthcare Association

Population Health Planning Framework

BUILDING LEADERSHIP

The most effective population health planning processes are the result of strong collaboration between organisations within and beyond the health sector. Effective cross sector collaboration requires strong and clear leadership.

This section introduces the guiding principle of leadership and its relevance to population health planning. The specific roles and activities of leaders and leadership teams during the stages of the planning process are discussed, particularly in reference to the 'establishing a leadership team' section of the toolbox

Why is leadership important?

A population health approach to planning is a complex concept and requires multi-sectoral participation. Leadership is needed to develop a common understanding of population health planning and awareness within and beyond the health sector. Leadership needs to be recognised, harnessed, and intentionally built.

As experienced by the health promotion field, extra effort is required for leaders to consider the broader needs of the population as a whole, and to extend existing networks to respond to issues beyond illness (Public Health Agency of Canada, 1999). Intentional leadership will, therefore, be ongoing and iterative, as it requires changed thinking, planning, and system wide change. Strong leadership is also needed to guide collaborative and integrated effort through the planning process.

Leadership is particularly important for population health planning, as it involves:

- implementing sustainable system-wide and organisational level change
- capacity building of organisations, the community, workforce, and resources
- inter-sectoral collaboration and partnership development
- changes to organisational infrastructure to better support population health planning

(Public Health Agency of Canada, 1999:25)

Characteristics of population health leaders

- Population health planning requires leaders to:
- be systems thinkers

- be able to identify opportunities
- uphold and advocate for population health approaches to planning values and principles
- value working in partnership with shared responsibility and credit for collaborative work
- mobilise and inspire teams to take action on population health issues
- possess change management skills
- draw on a wide range of workers and expertise from various disciplines and sectors to enable the development of innovative population health interventions

(DHS 2003; Keleher 2011; Public Health Agency of Canada 2001)

Leadership competencies

The National Public Health Leadership Development Network's Public Health Leadership Competency Framework (2000) describes four key leadership competencies that are relevant to population health:

- **Transformational**

Public health needs and priorities require leaders to engage in systems thinking, including analytical and critical thinking processes, visioning potential futures, strategic and tactical assessment, and communication and change dynamics.

- **Legislative and and political**

Public health leaders need to have the competence to understand the context, and facilitate, negotiate, and collaborate in an increasingly competitive and contentious political environment.

- **Trans-organisational**

The complexity of major public health problems extends beyond the scope of any single stakeholder group, community unit, profession or discipline, organisation, or government unit, requiring leaders to be effective beyond their organisational boundaries.

- **Team and group dynamics**

Leaders must be able to accomplish effective communication and practice by building team work, group capacity and capability (Wright et al., 2000:1204).

Capacity building strategies for building leadership

Examples of capacity building activities for developing leadership to support population health planning are given below

Examples of strategies to build leadership	
Personal growth and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Utilise opportunities to develop and test new skills relevant to population health planning ▪ Foster a leadership learning team ▪ Identify and work with mentors ▪ Seek and respond to feedback about leadership skills
Visioning the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase understanding of population health planning concepts and issues ▪ Cultivate community understanding of the social determinants of health ▪ Identify emerging trends ▪ Continuously test assumptions ▪ Have an explicit initial vision
Systems and strategic thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop planning skills in partners ▪ Be aware of the complexity of relationships within health and between the health system and other sectors. ▪ Take opportunities to contribute to strategic population health planning ▪ Reflexivity: see your organisation within the bigger picture ▪ Strategically manage resources
Creative collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote an environment of creativity, innovation, performance reflection, and lateral solutions ▪ Develop and work in partnerships ▪ Build visions through consultation and collaboration ▪ Take opportunities to integrate strategies between sectors ▪ Encourage shared leadership to ensure the continuation of population health projects in the event that original leaders depart
Communication Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communicate information effectively and articulate outcomes in ways that are meaningful to others ▪ Value diversity ▪ Provide opportunities for reflection and analysis

<p>Political and social change strategies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider the broader political and social context ▪ Become familiar with the policies and processes that will impact on planning (see Step 2 the planning context) ▪ Use policy development processes to influence change ▪ Be prepared to articulate population health priorities
<p>Team learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make time to practice team learning ▪ Share expertise within the region ▪ Seek and respond to feedback from stakeholders ▪ Celebrate team accomplishments

Adapted from “A Framework for Building Capacity to Improve Health” (NSW Health, 2001)

Resources

Public Health Leadership Competency Framework, Developed by the National Public Health Leadership Network (2005).

Integrated health promotion: A practice guide for service providers, DHS (2003).

References

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Further Reading

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