



Victorian Healthcare Association

Population Health Planning Framework

STEP 1: CREATING THE LEADERSHIP TEAM

The inter-sectoral and collaborative nature of population health planning requires strong leadership. This section covers the potential partners, roles, and activities of the leadership team that will drive the population health planning process. The framework’s guiding principles of leadership and partnerships strongly relate to activities discussed in this section.

The leadership team

Who should lead

A population health planning process, whether initiated by a single agency or a coalition of organisations, requires the creation of a leadership team. The leadership team may be a new or existing partnership responsible for developing a shared vision for population health planning and driving the planning process.

Sectors outside health are increasingly participating in planning to improve health outcomes - a role that was historically confined to the health sector. Since 1991, local governments have been mandated to undertake public health planning at a local government level. Under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*, they are required to develop Municipal Public Health Plans which outline collaborative actions to “protect, improve and promote public health and wellbeing” (Section 24). The local government sector is a key partner in population health planning, since council activities are closely attuned to many of the determinants of health. In recognition of this, some local governments have been selected to lead national and state-based health prevention activities.

Potential partners for a population health planning process vary between areas, (see table 1 below). Involvement in the leadership team depends on the alignment of the planning process with an organisation’s core business activities, values, and capacity and willingness to take a leadership role.

Table 1: Examples of potential partner organisations in a population health planning process		
Local communities and groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourhood houses • Support groups • Faith groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sporting groups • Community representatives • Cultural groups

Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health services/hospitals • Community and Women's Health Services • Mental Health • Domiciliary nursing • GP Networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aged Care • Medicare Locals • Hospital Local Networks • Primary Care Partnerships • Maternal and Child Health Services
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Councils • Vic Police • Country Fire Authority (CFA) • Department of Transport (DoT) • Department of Justice (DoJ) • Department of Health (DH) • Department of Human Services (DHS) • Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) • Growth Areas Authority (GAA) • Regional Development Australia (RDA) • Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSA) • Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF) • Department of Business and Innovation • Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) • Regional Management Forums 	
Other Sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Protection Authority • VicHealth • Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) • Municipal Authority of Victoria (MAV) • Peak bodies (eg Cancer Council, National Heart Foundation) • Universities 	
Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local business - transport, food 	

Importantly, the leadership team may need to identify and engage additional stakeholders, including the community, in other stages of the planning process.

Organisational representatives on the leadership team must hold appropriate decision-making responsibilities to create an authorising environment for the team.

Role of the leadership team

The leadership team's key task is to define an agreed vision and scope for the population health planning process. This can be challenging when working with several organisations from different backgrounds and with different remits. Throughout the planning process, the leadership team will be responsible for:

- actively seeking opportunities to build the population health planning approach into existing activities and into new plans
- helping create an organisational and planning culture that seeks to reduce health inequities and emphasise health promotion and disease prevention, as well as prevent illness
- building the capacity of organisations and the workforce to support this broader approach (see 'building capacity' section of the toolbox)
- ensuring an effective planning process is followed
- drawing current and new partners into the process (see 'working in partnership' section of the toolbox)
- deciding which population health issues and actions will be given priority and balancing investment between actions (National Public Health Partnership 2000:2). More detail is provided in step 3 and 4.

Key Tasks of the leadership team

Before population health planning can begin, the leadership team will conduct the following tasks:

1. Establish a governance structure with clear articulation of roles and responsibilities

The complexity and inter-sectoral nature of actions to address population health requires the leadership team to be a partnership of cross-sectoral organisations. Governance arrangements need to be agreed, clearly articulated, and documented in funding and service agreements, partnership agreements, terms of reference and Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs). This is especially important when undertaking partnership activity involving shared resources (Australian National Audit Office, 2006).

2. Define the population to be targeted by the planning process

The population group that is the focus of the population health planning process must be clearly defined and agreed on. This can be challenging if partner organisations have different boundaries. Selecting the population group will be influenced by the breadth and number of partner organisations, and the size and area that can feasibly be included, (eg regional versus sub-regional) – large geographical areas may be more feasible for rural than for metropolitan population groups.

3. Establish an agreed vision and goals

Population health planning vision and goals should explicitly address the desire to improve the health and wellbeing of the whole population, and to reduce inequities experienced by sub-population groups. For more information on this step refer to the 'setting the vision' section.

4. Quantify and allocate shared resources

At this stage, organisations comprising the leadership team must identify and guarantee the commitment of resources required to support the planning process. In addition, organisational resources will later be required to implement agreed area-based actions. A population health approach requiring organisations to work in partnership enables a better return on investment through sharing of resources and costs. Resource sharing and allocation in relation to implementation and evaluation are discussed in Steps 5 and 6.

5. Agree on the planning process to be followed

At its core, population health planning follows the typical steps of any planning process. All health planning processes are cyclical, due to changing political and economic conditions, emerging issues, new technology and knowledge. Evaluation of health outcomes often reveals new knowledge and learning that should be incorporated into new planning cycles.

As with any planning process, the scope of population health planning must be agreed and will depend on:

- time allowed,
- resources available to support the planning process
- breadth and level of partnerships established
- broader political and social environment

References

Australian National Audit Office/Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2006 *'Implementation of Programme and Policy Initiatives. Making implementation matter. Better Practice Guide'* Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

National Public Health Partnership (2000) *A Planning Framework for Public Health Practice*, Melbourne, Australia. Available at

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Useful Resources

[*The Health Planners Toolkit: The planning process \(Module 1\) \(2006\)*](#)

[*Public Health Leadership Competency Framework \(2000\)*](#)

Further Reading

- Keleher H (2011) Planning for population health in Australia's health reforms, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* Wiley-Blackwell Publishing Asia, Australia vol35 issue 2 p106-107
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Further Information

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