



# Planning *for* Community Health

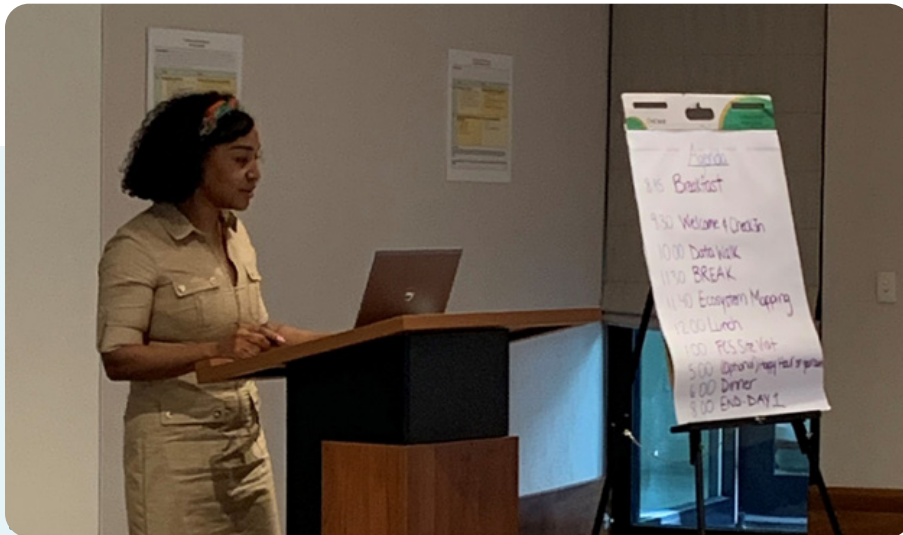
— A TOOLKIT —



# Planning for Community Health: A Toolkit

## Introduction

The community development field is increasingly focused on health as a core driver of improving lives and revitalizing communities. The COVID-19 pandemic made this focus particularly critical and timely, as it illuminated long-standing community conditions that exacerbated poor health and wellbeing outcomes. Fortunately, community development organizations are well positioned to address key community conditions that limit community health. To respond to this opportunity, in 2024, NeighborWorks America launched an action lab to explore health and build capacity for action in community development contexts. The action lab supported a cohort of network leaders to deepen their understanding of health and embed community health strategies into their vision and operational work. The result of this action lab was a set of tools, insights and strategies for each participating network organization and guidance for practitioners to advance similar work across the nation.



➤ **Kat Morris, Senior Community Manager at Gusto, welcomes cohort participants from the nine participating network organizations. The health cohort tested the tools within this toolkit to develop health strategies relevant to the unique contexts faced by their communities.**

**THE HEALTH ACTION LAB** convened network organizations interested in deepening community health work through individual and cohort-based learning and testing. Participating network organizations were: NewVue Communities, Fitchburg, Massachusetts; Urban Edge, Roxbury, Massachusetts; Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation, Houston, Texas; NeighborImpact, Redmond, Oregon; Interfaith Community Housing of Delaware, Wilmington, Delaware; Neighborhood of Affordable Housing (NOAH), Boston, Massachusetts; Tejano Center for Community Concerns, Houston, Texas; Neighborhood Housing Services (NHS) of New Haven, New Haven, Connecticut; and Windham & Windsor Housing Trust, Brattleboro, Vermont. The cohort was designed to create a space for cross-community collaboration, camaraderie, inspiration and brainstorming. It was also a space to understand the various levers organizations could utilize to activate health strategies and to share learnings from action testing.





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## Context

**Community development and health** are inherently interconnected. Across the field, practitioners recognize that access to opportunities, investments and quality living conditions have serious implications for a community's health and wellbeing. These community contexts impact housing, education, employment and critically – health outcomes. Community health requires creating the conditions that generate health and well-being, while also removing obstacles to health such as poverty and its consequences, including lack of access to good jobs, quality education and housing, safe environments and health care. Community development as a sector focuses on what are called “upstream drivers” of health, in other words, the community conditions, policies and structures that impact health and prevent the “downstream impacts,” wherein some groups bear the burden of poor health outcomes. Organizations may deploy comprehensive community development strategies to address upstream drivers by taking a place-based and intentional approach to lift up the conditions that support stronger, thriving communities.

**COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (CCD)** is a place-based and intentional approach aimed at improving lives, strengthening communities, and works at the intersection of people, place, and systems to create vibrant local communities that offer people opportunities to thrive. The health action lab served as an onramp for deepening ongoing comprehensive community development efforts. Participating organizations advanced work to embed health across their organizations in order to accelerate comprehensive change.



## COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES



➤ Comprehensive community development uses interrelated strategies to achieve progress on multiple fronts in a given community. Strategies may focus on housing, health, economic development, safety, youth, financial security, and community engagement. Many of these approaches leverage partnerships to focus on both the place and the people who live there.

**NeighborWorks launched** a health action lab to cultivate a practice and learning space for practitioners to interrogate and understand local contexts and cultivate strategies that specifically address those community conditions and structures. Achieving holistic health at a community level means enabling access to opportunity and fostering agency in communities. Integrating health into community development work stands to create communities where everyone has an opportunity to thrive. This toolkit aims to support that vital work.

**A range of factors influenced the nine network organizations in their commitments to deepening their health work through the health action lab:**

“

“To learn how other organizations and communities are working on health, preparedness, [and] resiliency.”

— *Neighborhood of Affordable Housing (NOAH)*  
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

”  
“To create a roadmap to operationalize health strategies across the impacted communities we serve... and position our agency to respond to future opportunities.”

— *NeighborImpact*  
REDMOND, OREGON



## Audience

**This toolkit** is intended for various audiences. First and foremost, the tools support community development practitioners seeking to meaningfully integrate community health into their organizations' work. Additionally, the tools are intended to support health and housing intermediaries and funders to deepen their efforts to resource and prioritize community health as a core component of comprehensive community development initiatives across the country. These partners are positioned to invest in community-led health efforts and to create a field of practice linking community development, housing, and health in community change initiatives. Practitioners and field leaders using this toolkit as a guide to deepen health work will achieve:

- Grounding in a deep understanding of community contexts and history and their impact on conditions for health.
- Identified institutions, partners and resources that contribute to opportunities for health and what is needed to advance community change.
- Organizational commitments to prioritize transformational approaches through adaptive, community-rooted strategies.
- Concrete action plans to implement health strategies as part of a comprehensive community development vision and objectives.

➤ NeighborWorks staff and network organizations learn about a South Atlanta-based organization's innovative and holistic approaches to promote flourishing communities.

# How To Use This Toolkit

The tools outlined in this toolkit do not need to be a linear progression, rather, practitioners can select and adapt tools to meet the current context in which your health, community development and housing work is operating, and where community health strategies can be intentionally strengthened. Critical to the success of health work is to ensure community-driven priorities are guiding the understanding of

key challenges, needs and opportunities. The toolkit begins with a set of foundational readiness principles that translate into organizational commitments to your community health journey. These principles will enable a long-term resident-driven approach to your work. The tools are then organized into categories to allow for selection relevant to the particular context in which you are working.

## Community Health Journey

### FOUNDATIONAL READINESS COMMITMENTS

Foundational readiness commitments for community development organizations establish the essential grounding for utilizing the actionable tools to advance long-term health strategies.

### LONG-TERM HEALTH PRINCIPLES



Community-driven values, priorities and actions guide health commitments



Systemic analysis enables long-term and sustained health transformation



Adaptive leadership fosters ongoing testing, engagement, and resourcing health strategies

### COMMUNITY HEALTH PLANNING TOOLS

#### Community History and Context

TOOLS:

- ▶ [Community Journey Map](#)
- ▶ [Problem Statement](#)

#### Community-Rooted North Star

TOOLS:

- ▶ [Aspirational Vision Statement](#)
- ▶ [Opportunity Analysis](#)

#### Partnership Cultivation

TOOLS:

- ▶ [Ecosystem Map](#)
- ▶ [Resource Map](#)
- ▶ [Action and Alignment Map](#)

#### Action Planning

TOOLS:

- ▶ [Implementation Plan](#)
- ▶ [Pitch Deck](#)

Assessing your organizational readiness involves considering the levers that might drive your health strategies. For example, if you are seeking data for case-making and identifying and measuring health outcomes, consider using the tools to articulate measurable results and explore journey mapping to understand your community context. If you need to identify more resources to invest in your health work, through leveraging funding, creative financing and resourcing for place-based efforts, consider resource mapping to outline the potential sources of funding for your work. If you want to foster regional cross-sector work that maximizes the contributions of a range of diverse stakeholders for your Healthy Communities Implementation Plan, consider using the ecosystem mapping tool to showcase the various stakeholders and their potential impact on community health.

As you review these tools, consider what resonates with your work, what sparks curiosity, what tools might be relevant to test in your community work and what is valuable for the community development field to deepen health work. Each tool is accompanied by a set of reflection prompts, templates and insights from practitioners who tested the tools. The following overarching prompts can guide your overall approach to the tools and your community health journey.

## ADVANCING YOUR COMMUNITY HEALTH JOURNEY

- 1 Do you have the foundational elements in place to initiate or strengthen your health strategies?
- 2 What do you know to be true about your health work? What results have you seen?
- 3 What has worked and what hasn't worked in your efforts to advance healthy outcomes and to engage with the community?
- 4 What will it take to deepen community health efforts? What shifts might you need to make?
- 5 How might you uplift stories and examples of community health work to advance a field of practice?



## Organizational Readiness

**Key to the health action lab** was an iterative, emergent and transformational stance toward embedding health strategies in organizational commitments. Three fundamental “readiness” elements help position health work to embed transformation: Commitment to comprehensive change, community-centered strategy and adaptive leadership. These will help situate and assess your organizational and community commitments to maximize the impact and use of the tools in this toolkit.

“

“At NeighborWorks America, we know that engaging deeply with residents and partners, recognizing our role in addressing root causes of health conditions, and being responsive to needs through reflection and learning are key factors of place-based work. The health action lab program and these tools provide a pathway to support network organizations across the country to consider tangible and transformational steps toward actualizing healthy communities.”

— *Surbhi Sardana, Senior Manager of Network Learning, NeighborWorks America*

### Community Health Journey

#### FOUNDATIONAL READINESS COMMITMENTS

➤ Foundational readiness commitments for community development organizations establish the essential grounding for utilizing the actionable tools to advance long-term health strategies.

#### LONG-TERM HEALTH PRINCIPLES



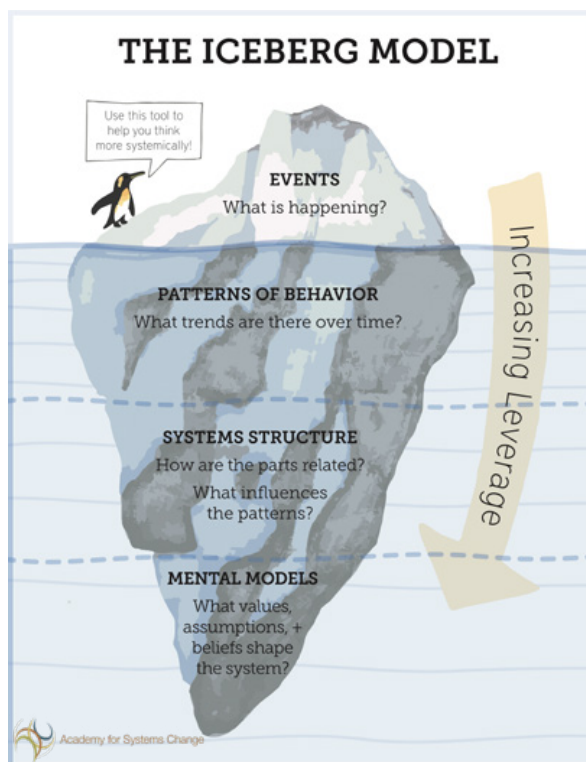
Community-driven values, priorities and actions guide health commitments



Systemic analysis enables long-term and sustained health transformation



Adaptive leadership fosters ongoing testing, engagement, and resourcing health strategies



➤ **Donella Meadow's Iceberg Model** uncovers the patterns of behavior, structures and mental models that undergird community contexts. This model opens up new opportunities to leverage stakeholder engagement and commitment to address the root causes of health conditions.

## Commitment to Comprehensive Change

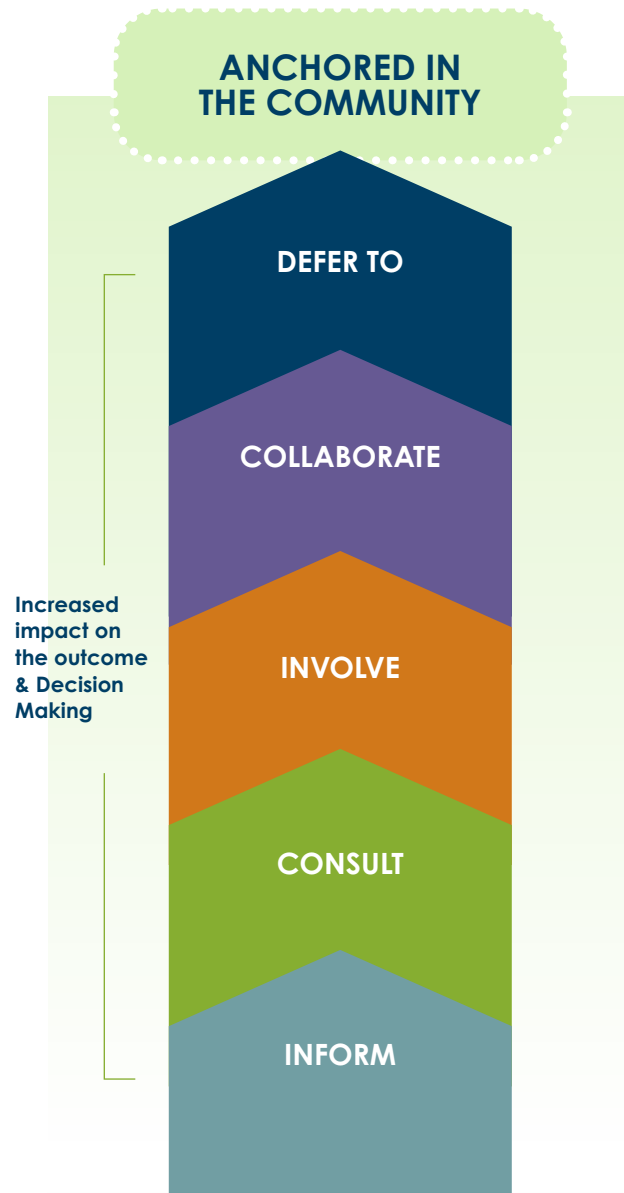
Before launching the action lab, NeighborWorks found that nearly 70% of network organizations were already implementing health activities ranging from providing health services and facilitating new grocery stores to community farming efforts and anchoring new cross-sector collaboratives to advance healthy, thriving communities. Going beyond individual programmatic approaches that focus on root causes of health differences is less common. Yet, this represents a significant opportunity identified by NeighborWorks network organizations to expand on their existing health portfolios to create deeper and more sustained impact.

The Iceberg Model depicted in Image 4 offers a visual to understand the underlying structures and driving influences that shape patterns of behavior. The model posits that the deeper the work goes to shape new mental models and structures, the greater impact and leverage opportunities will exist. Intentional health work requires nuanced analysis of conditions and forces at play in your community to develop a transformational approach for your community health strategies.

Community development organizations can assess organizational readiness for deep health

work by reviewing existing organizational strategies, partnerships and investments. Organizations can also review or strengthen aligned lines of business to create intentional pathways for comprehensive community development strategies. Building on these readiness elements, a [recent publication](#) further highlights the mindsets and practices to advance resident-centered transformation within community development to achieve healthy communities that embody these readiness principles. Here are key questions for practitioners to assess organizational readiness to embark on a transformational health journey:

- Are you making commitments to change the underlying conditions that perpetuate differences in health outcomes?
- How is your organization positioned to leverage diverse lines of business for a collective approach to health?
- Are there particular assumptions at play that keep your organization from impacting community health and well-being in more substantial ways?
- What new narratives can you cultivate to counter those existing mental models?



### Community-centered strategy

Existing relationships with community residents can translate into resident-led strategies that actualize commitments to health. Building on your community engagement line of business and/or leveraging existing partnerships in your community can accelerate this journey by building on local assets. The continuum depicted in Image 5 showcases different levels of community engagement tied to increased impacts on outcomes and decisions. Situating your current engagement work along this continuum can help assess current efforts and establish goals for further centering resident voices in various aspects of your work, including organizational governance, needs assessment and priority setting, strategy design and implementation, among others.

➤ Deepening commitments to anchor health efforts in lived experience of communities stands to increase the impact of community development efforts. Image adapted from the [International Association of Public Participation](#).

Community development organizations can assess organizational readiness for health work by reviewing commitments to community engagement and ownership. Here are key questions for practitioners to assess organizational readiness to embark on a transformational health journey:

- How are you centering residents in your organizational efforts? What role does resident engagement play in assessing community needs and priorities and driving innovation for more transformational health strategies?
- Who governs your work and how might community residents have a role in ensuring accountability to organizational commitments to health?
- How might you deepen your commitments to co-governance and community decision-making?

## Adaptive leadership

The work to create accessible opportunities for all is complex. Accordingly, community health work requires ongoing and intentional actions, reflection and leadership to respond to new needs and opportunities as they emerge. Leaders in community development can practice adaptive leadership, an iterative reflection of their ability to meet new challenges and thrive in changing environments. Adaptive leadership approaches embed learning and ongoing feedback loops to ensure an insight-driven process to drive shifts in community development work.

Network organizations across the country are practicing with an Emergent Learning framework to unearth rooted assumptions that limit impact and discover new ways of operating that allow for complex and dynamic conditions. The Emergent Learning approaches are inherently adaptive, helping organizations enable and institutionalize learning and reflective processes within comprehensive change efforts.

Community development organizations can assess organizational readiness for health work by reviewing commitments to community engagement and ownership. Here are key questions for practitioners to assess organizational readiness to embark on a transformational health journey:

- Do you have organizational leadership buy-in for an integrated health strategy?
- Does your organization have an ongoing practice space for emergence, learning, and feedback loops to continually assess your progress and opportunities to strengthen your work?

## BARs and AARs “Bookend” Action



© 2025, The Emergent Learning Community Project, a fiscally sponsored project of Global Philanthropy Partnership

➤ **Emergent Learning** embeds an ongoing learning and feedback approach for collective action.

# Health Planning Tools

The following tools can be used to advance your health journey. Select the tools that create the foundation and strategies to enable strengthened actions within your organization and community.

## Community Health Journey

➤ Select the tools below to build on your readiness commitments to advance holistic and long-term health work.

### READINESS PRINCIPLES

#### Community History and Context

**TOOLS:**

- ▶ [Community Journey Map](#)
- ▶ [Problem Statement](#)

#### Partnership Cultivation

**TOOLS:**

- ▶ [Ecosystem Map](#)
- ▶ [Resource Map](#)
- ▶ [Action and Alignment Map](#)

#### Community-Rooted North Star

**TOOLS:**

- ▶ [Aspirational Vision Statement](#)
- ▶ [Opportunity Analysis](#)

#### Action Planning

**TOOLS:**

- ▶ [Implementation Plan](#)
- ▶ [Pitch Deck](#)

## Community History And Context

**Grounding your health work** in the unique community conditions and historical context which impacts health outcomes is a critical component of deepening health commitments. The following tools help illuminate the community context that will be the basis for designing comprehensive and holistic health strategies.

### Community Journey Map

Mapping the history of a community is essential to understand the connections between how a community came to be and how historical decisions determine the distribution of opportunities, access, and investments over time. The Community Journey Map focuses on the community context for your work and can reveal the root causes of present-day issues your community faces.

The Journey Map helps you to understand how your community's context and history have shaped current community outcomes. In particular, these exercises help explore how events, policies and decisions create the conditions that impact health outcomes.

Specifically, a Community Journey Map is a timeline of events, activities, and people in a particular community. The process considers specific policies, decisions, and processes that have shaped how communities look and operate, and the opportunities afforded to residents. The Journey Map process involves outlining your community's history, including key milestones, historical events, cultural moments, distribution of resources, key institutions and decisions and policies. The Journey Map helps connect key events, the implications of those events, and the outcomes for community residents to ensure the historical context is considered as you develop strategies to advance health outcomes.

“

**“The journey mapping process has helped to refine our vision statement. The community journey mapping helped to affirm the areas of challenges and growth for the community, including areas of trauma. The process helped to confirm that looking at health HAS to be comprehensive in order to be effective. The process further affirmed that the healing must take WITH the community and not FOR the community.”**

— **Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation**  
HOUSTON, TEXAS

### COMMUNITY JOURNEY MAP EXAMPLE

Community of Focus:	East and Downtown Neighborhoods				
Key historical events	<b>1950s–60s</b> Construction of interstate highway through Downtown	<b>1980s</b> Deindustrialization and loss of manufacturing jobs	<b>1990s</b> Urban renewal and gentrification initiatives	<b>2010s</b> Closure of public hospital and local clinics due to funding cuts.	<b>2020</b> COVID-19 pandemic and public health emergency
Implications of those events	Displacement of low-income neighborhoods; loss of homes and community spaces	Economic decline, rising unemployment, especially among working-class residents	Influx of investment but uneven benefits; longtime residents face displacement and rising costs	Reduced access to preventive care.	Exposed differences in health, employment, and digital access
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fragmented communities, limited access to services, increased pollution and noise</li> <li>• Increased poverty, food insecurity, and mental health stress across affected neighborhoods</li> <li>• Housing insecurity, and widening socioeconomic divides</li> <li>• Higher ER usage, delayed diagnoses, and worsening chronic health conditions</li> <li>• Increased community building and renewed interest in local health systems</li> </ul>				

The Journey Map exercise allowed the cohort to tie the history of their community with the outcomes that community residents are experiencing today. Furthermore, the journey mapping process is an opportunity for organizational leaders to reflect deeply and understand how their organization and individual leadership can reinforce or reduce barriers to healthy outcomes.

As you continue your health journey, here are key questions for practitioners to deepen the analysis of your journey mapping.

- What insights emerge as you explore your community history and how it relates to health outcomes?
- How is community history and its impacts on health outcomes showing up in your vision statement?

➤ A Community Journey Map links historical context to present-day conditions and outcomes and illuminates how organizations can reinforce or reduce barriers to healthy outcomes.

 Craft your journey mapping with this tool:

## COMMUNITY JOURNEY MAP

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Draw a rough map of your community's history to date. Keep it simple and pull out key information. Consider key cultural/historical moments/events, the distribution of resources over time, key individuals, institutions and organizations that influenced your community's history, and the origins and/or genealogy of current structures, policies and practices.

Community of Focus			
Key historical events			
Implications of those events			
Outcomes			

## Problem Statement

Building on the historical context and community conditions, a clear Problem Statement helps articulate specific challenges you want to incorporate into your health strategies. The problem statement can be developed through a process of analyzing the structures that limit health and well-being in your community.

**“Health work is all about comprehensive change and narrative development. We at NewVue Communities are thinking about how we include departments across the organization in this work so we can work more collaboratively [towards opportunity for all]. Our housing services division already offers a health program for residents, and our community organizing team thinks intentionally about the challenges facing our residents. Other divisions, like Housing Development have always kept an eye on building healthy housing are encountering new opportunities to incorporate a health lens.”**

— *New Vue Communities*  
FITCHBURG, MASSACHUSETTS

The problem statement builds on an analysis of conditions, narratives and mental models to ensure the focus of your health strategies addresses the challenges and beliefs that keep the status quo in place. The following tool walks

through a series of questions intended to surface the specific community concerns you will focus on and the underlying drivers causing those concerns. The analysis asks the following “5 W’s” to articulate the core challenges.

### PROBLEM STATEMENT EXAMPLE

WHO	WHAT	WHEN	WHERE	WHY
<b>Who is impacted by adverse health conditions?</b>	<b>What is the unmet need?</b>	<b>When is the problem happening?</b>	<b>Where is the problem occurring?</b>	<b>Why is this worth solving?</b>
Low-income families located in our multi family housing units.	Access to affordable, healthcare and resources to manage chronic conditions is limited.	Continuously over time but became especially visible during COVID-19 crisis.	In our East and Downtown neighborhoods with limited infrastructure investment and high rates of poverty.	These conditions perpetuate chronic illness, reduce quality of life, and deepen adverse health outcomes.

➤ Answering the “5 W’s” can help organizations uncover a problem statement that guides health strategy development.

Root cause analysis ensures that you are focusing on the key unmet needs in your community. Additionally, the 5 W tool supports the development of a new narrative about why the problems are worth solving and may reveal the role your organization can play in affecting sustained change. As with other tools, as you deepen your analysis of the root causes of community concerns, consider revisiting your vision statement to refine, clarify or deepen the statement to ensure you have a bold vision for your health efforts.

As you continue to develop your health journey, here are key questions to deepen the analysis of community contexts to develop your problem statement.

- What current conditions or narratives are contributing to the current health and well-being conditions in your community?
- What prevents desirable change in your community? What reinforces desirable change in your community?
- What role does your organization play in contributing to or addressing community health?

**“The tools had a considerable impact because... it makes clear that residents must be partners. All too often, community revitalization is something that happens to a community; our health work must occur with our residents, and this needs to be part of our vision statement.”**

— *Interfaith Community Housing of Delaware, Inc. (ICHDE)*  
WILMINGTON, DELAWARE

 Craft your problem statement with this tool:

### PROBLEM STATEMENT

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Use the following prompts to create a problem statement that is a clear, concise explanation of the problem or challenge you intend to address with your health work.

WHO	WHAT	WHEN	WHERE	WHY
<p>Who is impacted by adverse health conditions?</p>	<p>What is the unmet need?</p>	<p>When is the problem happening?</p>	<p>Where is the problem occurring?</p>	<p>Why is this worth solving?</p>

## Community-Rooted North Star

A **community-driven** vision opens up possibilities for transformational strategies to achieve community health. The following tools help establish a north star vision and articulate ripe opportunities for advancing your work.

### Aspirational Vision Statement

Establishing an aspirational vision and a clear sense of what you hope to achieve will be the north star for your health journey. A vision statement provides a line of sight from your strategies toward an aspirational vision of success. The Aspirational Vision Statement is inspirational, inviting folks in to imagine what is possible together, and helps define where you want to go with your health work.

This work is designed to be revisited throughout the planning process. During the health action lab, participants continuously revisited the vision statements following work with other tools, as the experience offered critical insight to refine a focused health vision. The following examples are drawn from cohort participants, outlining their initial vision statements for their work.

**Network organizations in the health action lab crafted bold aspirational visions for their health work:**

“

“We strive for a future where every person has equal access to healthcare, economic and housing access fostering optimal well-being across all communities.”

— *Tejano Center for Community Concerns*  
HOUSTON, TEXAS

”  
“To create an environment where seniors aging in the community can come together and thrive. Urban Edge leads and facilitates opportunities for seniors to network and build connections that could empower the next generation of youth.”

— *Urban Edge*  
ROXBURY, MASSACHUSETTS

➤ The aspirational vision statement tool invites stakeholders to envision a healthy future in your community.

### ASPIRATIONAL VISION STATEMENT

**EXAMPLE:** Increase the preservation of sustainable, permanently affordable, stable, community-controlled housing to reduce displacement and stabilize communities in East and Downtown neighborhoods.

As you embark on your health journey, here are some key questions to guide the work to establish a vision statement.

- When you envision your community as healthy and thriving, what does it look like?
- If obstacles to opportunity and well-being were removed for residents in your community, what would be possible?
- What does it mean to have a thriving, vibrant community?
- What are the conditions that indicate you've achieved a thriving and healthy community?

 **Craft your aspirational vision statement with this tool:**

### ASPIRATIONAL VISION STATEMENT

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Describe your bold, aspirational and visionary north star for your health work

## Opportunity Analysis

An Opportunity Analysis is a structured way to assess potential opportunities that will help you effectively address the problem that surfaced using the prior root cause analysis tools. This approach helps identify what conditions are limiting holistic community health and opportunities to change course.

One tool to conduct an Opportunity Analysis is known by the acronym SOAR: Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results. The SOAR tool is distinct from a SWOT analysis in centering an asset-forward approach to self-assessment. Rather than developing strategies around perceived organizational or community deficits, the SOAR invites you to use aspirations and positive outcomes as a strategic guide. Asset-based thinking is a hallmark of community-led planning processes that affect transformation from within the community rather than inviting outside forces to “fix” what is wrong with the community.

“NeighborImpact has been building a relationship with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. Internally, the health work focuses on assessing internal policies and positioning the work as a bridge between tribal sovereignty and state funding resources. The Opportunity Analysis helped identify specific programs that can be wrapped into a health strategy to build into the new strategic plan and existing goals.

— NeighborImpact  
REDMOND, OREGON

## STRENGTHS, OPPORTUNITIES, ASPIRATIONS, RESULTS (SOAR) ANALYSIS

	Internal	External
CURRENT	<p><b>Strengths: What can we build upon?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are we most proud of as an organization?</li> <li>• What makes us unique?</li> <li>• Where does our organization excel?</li> <li>• What are the most significant positive differences we have made in our community in the last 3 years?</li> <li>• What are our most powerful relationships with other stakeholders?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Opportunities: What does our community say it needs?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can we reframe challenges to be seen as opportunities?</li> <li>• What are the most pressing needs? How can we best meet those needs?</li> <li>• What are the top 3 opportunities on which we should focus our efforts?</li> <li>• Who are possible new partners?</li> <li>• What are possible new resources?</li> <li>• What are possible new ways of working?</li> </ul>
FUTURE	<p><b>Aspirations: What is the change we want to bring about in our community?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is our organization deeply passionate about?</li> <li>• When we look at our aspirational vision statement, what are the details of that vision?</li> <li>• What strategic efforts (projects, programs, processes) would support our aspirations?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Results: How do we know we are succeeding?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What meaningful measures would indicate we are on track to achieving our goals?</li> <li>• What are 3-5 indicators that would create a scorecard for our health goals?</li> <li>• What resources are needed to achieve meaningful measures?</li> </ul>

➤ The SOAR tool can be used to take an assets-based approach to identifying key opportunities to advance community health. Adapted from Stavros, J. & Hinrichs, G. (2009). *The Thin Book of SOAR: Building strengths-based strategy*. Bend, OR: Thinbook Publishing.




➤ Health action lab participants developing the SOAR analysis for their health work.

The Strengths quadrant of the tool outlines efforts to build upon that are currently happening in your health work. The Aspirations quadrant helps articulate the change you want to bring and is a future-oriented analysis. Next, the Opportunity quadrant asks, what does the community say it needs to solve the core problems? This analysis allows you to reframe challenges into opportunities and reflect on new opportunities and partnerships to build into your Community Health Implementation Plan. Finally, the Results section of the SOAR tool focuses on how you know if your health efforts are successful.

As you continue to develop your health journey, here are key questions for practitioners to conduct a comprehensive SOAR Analysis.

- What does the opportunity analysis tell you about your organization’s role in advancing health?
- In what ways are you currently anchored in the community to build upon your health work and how might you strengthen these efforts?
- How do your organization’s strengths and opportunities connect to your aspirations and results?

 Craft your opportunity analysis with this tool:

### SOAR ANALYSIS

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Using the prompts below, assess the potential opportunities that will help you succeed in effectively addressing the problem identified in your problem statement.

	Internal	External
CURRENT	<p><b>Strengths: What can we build upon?</b></p> <hr/>	<p><b>Opportunities: What does our community say it needs?</b></p> <hr/>
FUTURE	<p><b>Aspirations: What is the change we want to bring about in our community?</b></p> <hr/>	<p><b>Results: How do we know we are succeeding?</b></p> <hr/>

## Partnership Cultivation

**Health strategies** advancing community change require tangible commitments by a range of community stakeholders. Leveraging a multisector approach to invest in the community conditions that create better health outcomes is a valuable strategy to amplify the impact that your organization can have alone. Consider the Health Partnership Ecosystem, depicted in the graphic to the right, which situates a wide range of diverse stakeholders that all play a role and add value to a comprehensive, place-based community health agenda.

The following tools help assess and leverage your local ecosystem of assets and resources positioned to create impact for holistic community health efforts. Together, these tools help organize identified stakeholders outlining the potential contributions of each stakeholder, what you need them to commit to in the health work and prioritize outreach.

### HEALTH PARTNERSHIP ECOSYSTEM



➤ The Health Partnership Ecosystem outlines diverse stakeholders that all have a role to play in advancing community change that is anchored in community voice. Adapted from [Build Healthy Places Network](#).

## Ecosystem Map

The Ecosystem Map helps make visible the partnerships needed to achieve success with your health strategies. The purpose of the tool is to visualize all of the essential local actors, sector stakeholders, community resident leaders, and institutions that have a role to play in your community health vision. This includes existing and potential partners who can contribute in a variety of ways, including resources, leadership, policy change, partnership cultivation and other potential roles.

**“Working in [community] health really brings us back to person-centered integrated services; helps to remind us that holistic responses serve human beings in the best way!”**

— *NeighborImpact*  
REDMOND, OREGON

For this exercise, you will brainstorm all of the people and sectors that contribute to or are needed to achieve that result and why these particular stakeholders are critical to success. Taking a step back once you have identified known partners, you can then assess other potential partners and contributions of additional sector leaders that might be missing from the map but could impact your ability to achieve your vision.

## ECOSYSTEM MAP EXAMPLE

Stakeholder	Sector and/or community represented	Why are they critical to the vision? Why would they care?	How might you cultivate a relationship with this stakeholder?
Downtown Department of Health & Human Services	Local government entity with oversight of the entire county.	Our residents are also their constituents whom the local government is responsible for serving. They must respond to residents' needs. There is also a shared desire to improve health outcomes in Downtown communities.	Provide direct funding or link to funding opportunities. They have the authority to convene local partners and stakeholders to address issues of importance to the community.

➤ The Ecosystem Map tool can help outline critical sectors to advance your health work.

As you continue to develop your community health journey, here are key questions for practitioners to conduct an ecosystem mapping exercise.

- Who are the decision-makers and resident leaders who care about this vision and how can they show up to advance desirable community health outcomes with you?
- Who else do you need with you? What are possible new ways of working together to mitigate community health challenges?
- What resources, tools or other assets do you need to achieve community change?

 Craft your ecosystem analysis with this tool:

### ECOSYSTEM MAP

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Brainstorm all the people and sectors that contribute to your vision. Consider those you are already in relationship with and others whom you would need to achieve your vision that may not yet be engaged. Include sector, community, institutional, and other stakeholders that either directly or indirectly have a role to play in your community health vision.

Stakeholder	Sector and/or community represented	Are they critical to the vision? Why would they care?	How might you cultivate a relationship with this stakeholder?

## Resource Map

The Resource Map helps articulate the resource needs to achieve success. This tool outlines specific resources that are needed to achieve your community health vision. These resources include grant funding for specific initiatives, as well as other resources to support a holistic approach to health work, such as reimbursements for key services from healthcare, investment capital that enables comprehensive community development projects, and other diversified, integrated capital that allow for flexible and sustained resourcing strategies.

“**[The health action lab] has sharpened my thinking about our work and this is now a throughline in much of my grant writing.**”

— **Interfaith Community Housing of Delaware, Inc. (ICHDE)**  
WILMINGTON, DELAWARE

The map also should include assets beyond financial resources, such as key leadership roles, or physical assets like land or buildings to leverage toward community health goals. Resource mapping can help identify readily accessible resources, as well as missing or less reliable resources that are all critical to success.

## RESOURCE MAP EXAMPLE

Resources and assets		
What resources are needed to achieve your vision?	Where are the potential sources of these resources?	What resources are missing and need to be secured?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnerships with local organizations and city agencies.</li> <li>Data and evaluation tools to track health outcomes.</li> <li>Community leadership and resident engagement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local government and public health departments.</li> <li>Universities and public health schools offering research support.</li> <li>National and regional foundations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affordable transportation options to access services.</li> <li>Community-owned spaces for gathering and education.</li> </ul>

➤ The Resource Map tool can help outline critical resources to advance your community health work.

As you continue to develop your community health journey, here are key questions for practitioners to conduct a resource mapping exercise.

- Which stakeholders hold resources that can be leveraged to advance your community health vision?

- What are ways you can diversify the types of resources for an integrated investment approach?
- How might you consider long-term sustainability as you craft your strategies and engagement with stakeholders with resources?

 Craft your resource analysis with this tool:

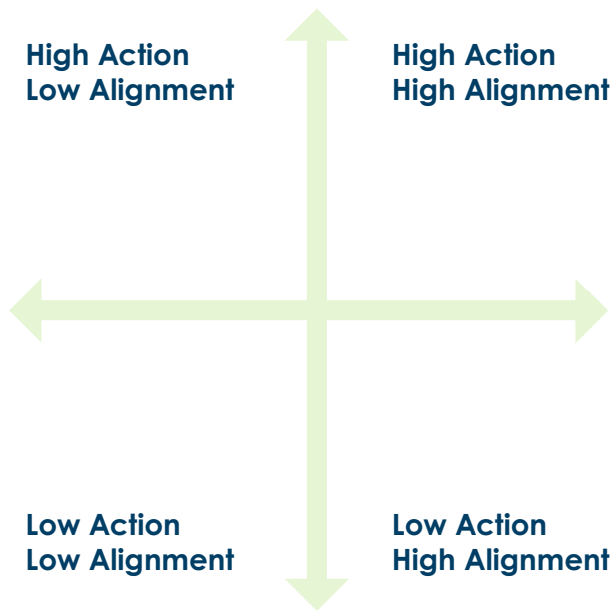
## RESOURCE MAP

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Brainstorm all the resources needed to achieve your vision. Consider diverse resources and assets including financial, leadership, operational, physical, social, and other resources. Include ideas to help identify sources as well as resources that still need to be secured.

Resources and assets		
What resources are needed to achieve your vision?	Where are the potential sources of these resources?	What resources are missing and need to be secured?

## Action and Alignment Map

The Action and Alignment map helps prioritize the stakeholders and resources to leverage in order to maximize contributions toward your community health goals. This tool helps analyze each potential stakeholder in terms of their potential alignment and their potential impact relative to your community health vision. The approach builds on the ecosystem and resource analyses, defining *what do you have and what do you need?*



➤ The Action and Alignment Map analyzes stakeholders to prioritize engagement for your community health strategies.

This tool has four quadrants where you can place stakeholders. For example, stakeholders whose work directly aligns with your community health efforts and will be critical to the success of the vision will be placed in the High action, High Alignment quadrant. Stakeholders with whom you do not yet have a relationship, yet you believe there is direct alignment with the vision fit in the Low Action, High Alignment quadrant, since you may need time to build a relationship before action steps can occur. Similarly, stakeholders who are readily engaged and interested in the work, even if there is less direct alignment between your organizational priorities fit in the High Action, Low Alignment quadrant, as you still may find there are strengths and opportunities to leverage their interest and engagement. Those who are doing activities that are not aligned with your priorities and not engaged in collaborative work to date fit in the Low Alignment, Low Action quadrant. This tool will help you make commitments for engagement and action steps.

“

“One of the things that we got to see during the site visit, for example, was Focused Community Strategies in their grocery store situated in a food desert and how they were able to actually create a revenue-generating opportunity, while also meeting immediate needs faced by that community related to food access that is so critical for healthy outcomes.”

— *Tejano Center for Community Concerns*  
HOUSTON, TX

As you continue to develop your community health journey, here are key questions for practitioners to conduct an Action and Alignment exercise.

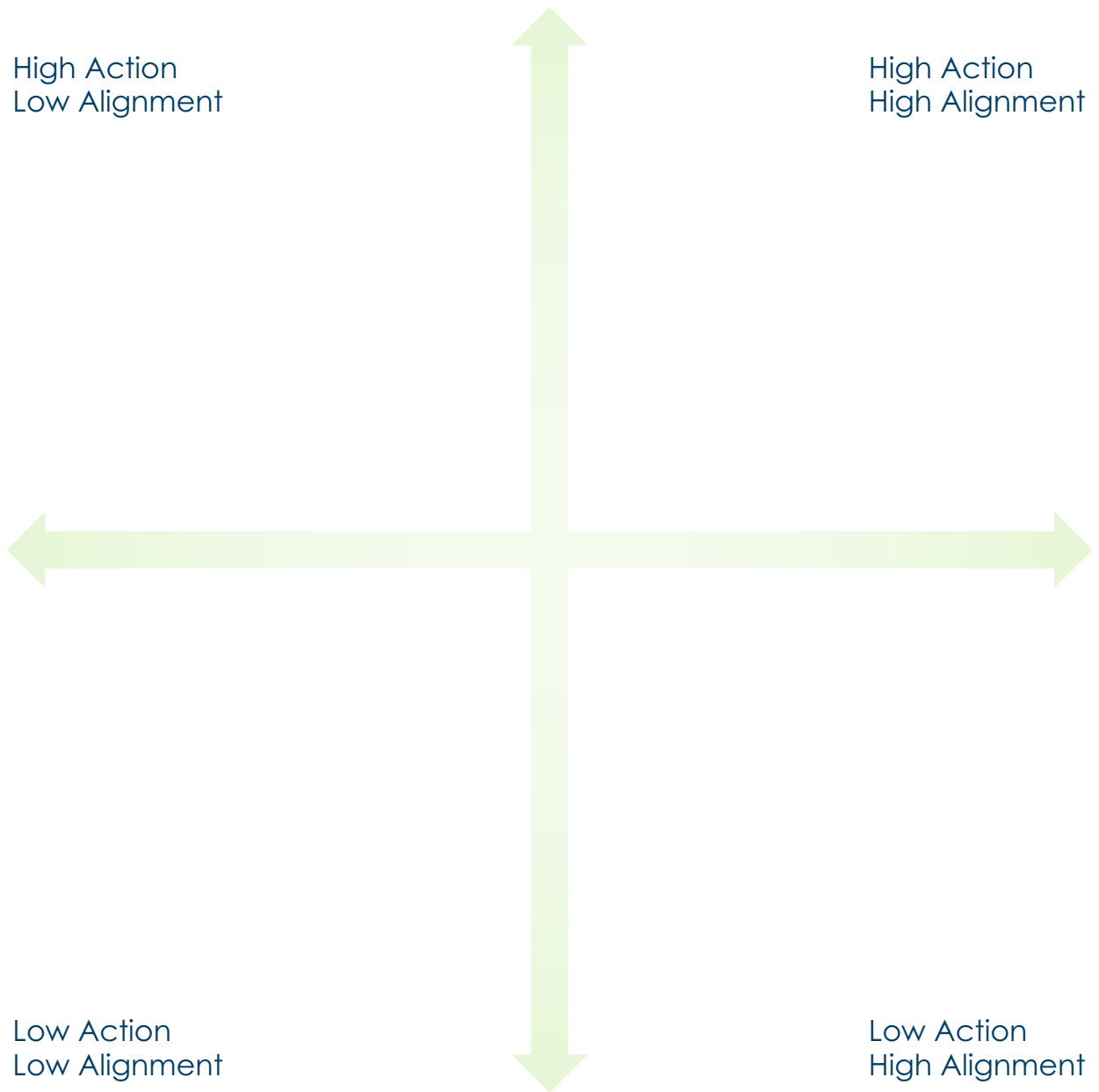
- Who are key partners that are critical to the success of your vision?
- How might early adopters and commitments be leveraged to engage new stakeholders that also have a critical role to play in ensuring comprehensive community development?
- How can you draw a line of sight from stakeholder values and missions to foster greater alignment with collective goals?

 **Craft your action and alignment analysis with this tool:**

**THE ACTION AND ALIGNMENT MAP**

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

Take the names from your ecosystem map and place them on the map below. For example, stakeholders that are working in a way that's aligned with the project priorities and already engaged in collaborative partnership fit in the High Action, High Alignment quadrant. Those who are doing activities that are not aligned with your priorities and with whom you are not in relationship fit in the Low Alignment, Low Action quadrant.



## Action Planning

Translating your planning and analysis into implementation strategies and investments enables testing, learning, and ultimately, impact. The following tools help outline a plan for action and an approach for garnering investments into your community health strategies.

### Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan is critical to turn your opportunities into concrete actions. This phase of the community health journey brings together the completed work of your vision, community history, problem statement, and opportunity analysis. The implementation plan establishes actions you will take and how you will utilize relationships and resources to reach your results, defining how do you get to where you want to be?

➤ **The Implementation Plan outlines key goals, objectives, and activities and assigns responsibility for key actions to ensure accountability to achieve your vision. Example goals, measurable outcomes, and specific activities shown here help outline the steps you will take to operationalize your community health strategies.**

COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPLEMENTATION PLAN						
<b>VISION STATEMENT:</b>		Increase the preservation of sustainable, permanently affordable, stable, community-controlled housing to reduce displacement and stabilize communities in East and Downtown neighborhoods.				
GOALS	OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	LEAD	SUPPORT	START DATE	END DATE
Reduce displacement due to lack of affordable housing	By 2029, acquire and rehabilitate at least 200 units for preservation for very low-income (VLI) and extremely low-income (ELI) households.	Develop and implement a community engagement plan to develop priority criteria for property and tenant eligibility.	Community building and engagement team	REDI team	January	December
		Create and rank potential acquisition targets and complete feasibility analysis on top 5–10.	Community Health lead and Real Estate	Community building and engagement team	May	November
		Assemble capital stack and negotiate high-level acquisition and development terms.	Community Health lead and Investment team	Real estate and REDI team	June	December

The Implementation Plan describes your goals, objectives, activities, responsible people, and timeline for your plan. The starting point for your implementation plan is your aspirational vision statement. The vision has been continuously updated during your community health journey, drawing insights from journey mapping and opportunity assessments to tighten your vision for success. Next, building on these core elements, you will build out goals, objectives and activities.

A goal is an achievable outcome that is generally broad and longer-term while an objective is shorter-term and defines specific actions to achieve an overall goal. If helpful, you can use the term “SMART” to help develop your objectives: Specific, Measurable, Achievable,

Relevant, and Time-Bound. Ensuring your goals and objectives are measurable is essential to help frame the impact you aim to achieve. The plan helps you get concrete and set a course to understand if you are making progress on your community health vision. You can have as many objectives and activities as needed to accomplish your goals. The goals and objectives will then be translated into tactical activities, along with assigning responsibility for those activities and timelines for completion. These components will help you understand where you are in your implementation journey as well as hold yourself and your organization accountable to your community health commitments.

As you continue to develop your community health journey, here are key questions for practitioners as you compile your work into an Implementation Plan.

- How will you know if you are making progress or need to change course to achieve success?
- What gaps or barriers should you continue to monitor or address to mitigate unintended consequences?
- Who is accountable for the implementation and success of the plan?

**HEALTH ACTION LAB PARTICIPANTS** reflected on the value of working with the community health planning tools. Some noted that “it became so evident how significantly community health contributes to either the survival or thriving of a community. Adverse health conditions are pervasive and must be leaned into and dealt with.” Others noted the synergies identified across their organizational commitments, for example, “how many lines of business can be tied back to health - it’s a cross-cutting, unifying force.” The collaboration space to develop community health strategies using the tools in teams and as a cohort also resonated, “to see how in sync we are as an organizational team internally given that we don’t always have the opportunity to work together.”



 Craft your implementation plan with this tool:

### IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Bring in your vision statement to ensure your implementation plan points to your north star. Next, craft goals that are achievable outcomes that are generally broad and longer-term. Next, outline shorter-term objectives and define measurable actions to achieve overall goals.

Objectives should be "SMART": Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-Bound. Then, outline the key activities needed to achieve the objectives, name lead and support roles for accountability to achieve success, as well as start and end dates for your plan.

**VISION STATEMENT:**

GOALS	OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	LEAD	SUPPORT	START DATE	END DATE

## Pitch Deck

A successful pitch is a clearly defined presentation aimed at a specific audience and includes opportunities to invest in and partner to achieve your community health vision. Key to a successful pitch is to ensure that it is understandable, relevant, and compelling for the audience, whether institutional partners and/or community residents, while orienting them to your health work. The pitch allows you to create a new narrative of what is possible through creative and actionable partnerships for your work.

**“The pitch deck helped us to see how the details of the health action lab work tied into comprehensive work we’ve already been doing and helped us see the action lab work in a larger context.”**

— **Windham & Windsor Housing Trust**  
BRATTLEBORO, VERMONT

**➤ A successful pitch opens up opportunities for organizations to find stakeholders willing to invest in and partner to achieve a shared community health vision.**

PITCH DECK	Ideas
Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is a stakeholder that you would like to engage in partnering or investing in your Community Health Implementation Plan?</li> </ul>
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How might you frame your introduction to share more about your organization and your role?</li> </ul>
Shared Priority and Community Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What problem are you trying to solve? What is the scale of the issue?</li> <li>• What portion of that problem are you taking on?</li> <li>• What is your intended result?</li> <li>• Where is this issue happening? (geographical and population focus)</li> <li>• Why is this problem happening? (summarize key local trends)</li> <li>• Who validated this as a priority? (partner organizations, resident groups, etc.)</li> </ul>
Priming Your Ask	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the problem you’re trying to solve align with the potential partner’s mission? (social determinants of health, resilience, historical disinvestment, etc.)</li> <li>• How will the partner be affected or implicated if this problem is not solved? What might generally motivate this organization to partner with you in this work?</li> <li>• What is the opportunity to solve this problem now? (pull from the SOAR)</li> </ul>
What Can This New Partnership Produce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will the lives of the people you support be different as a result of a successful partnership?</li> <li>• What specifically can your organization bring to this partnership (expertise, resources, geographic reach, community connections, credibility and trust, etc.) that will benefit the proposed partner and your shared goals?</li> <li>• How will your organization measure the impact of this partnership?</li> </ul>
Specific Ask(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What specific partnership involvement/support are you seeking? (investment, community buy-in, land, service coordination, data sharing, communications support, etc.)</li> <li>• What is your One-Sentence Ask</li> </ul>
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you want to leave your audience with as you close the presentation?</li> </ul>

 Craft your pitch deck with this tool:

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

Use the following outline and prompts to develop a slide deck to pitch your community health work. First, identify a specific stakeholder as your audience. This will help focus the pitch on clear opportunities, assets, and values that the stakeholder holds, making the pitch relevant to their interests and assets. Next, craft a deck using the prompts and include images, quotes, and other community-rooted details to contextualize the outline to your needs. The prompts in this pitch deck were adapted from the [Center for Community Investment](#).

PITCH DECK TEMPLATE	Notes
Audience	
Introduction	
Shared Priority and Community Context	
Priming Your Ask	

**PITCH DECK TEMPLATE**

Notes

What Can This New Partnership Produce

Specific Ask(s)

Conclusion

## Leading Change And Cultivating Partnerships

**Foundational to the health action lab** was a set of intentional support structures to help practitioners walk through the tools, insights, and health strategies. The following can be cultivated with colleagues in the field as you deepen your health work and can be resourced and supported by funders and intermediaries seeking to build a field of practice around community health for community development practitioners.

### Peer coaching: intentional support between practitioners in the field advancing health.

Colleagues in the field can provide valuable insights, examples and core challenges in a trusted and safe space for active brainstorming and support to surface new ways to approach health work. Peer coaching can include paired learning and accountability, challenge identification and brainstorming, exploration of community health journeys and learning, and collective narrative building for field influence.



### Structured peer feedback: feedback from trusted colleagues along the community health journey.

Gathering input and feedback in an ongoing way can help address particular challenges and surface opportunities that may not be visible to you. Colleagues can be invited to review concise presentations of the local context, work that emerged from using a particular tool, the results of that work, and outstanding questions. Colleagues can review presentations or work to date on the tools to provide input, ask questions for clarification, and help refine the results with those who developed the materials.



### Networks and partnerships: spaces that build connections around shared work.

Network building across organizations, places, and fields encourages sharing best practices, group brainstorming around shared peer colleagues. This can take shape within a particular community or across a variety of places to develop relationships, collaboration, local coalitions, regional networks, and/or communities of practice with aligned practitioners.



### Site visits: learning from examples in the field.

Engaging with practitioners advancing community-driven health work enables active learning about what it takes to make a meaningful impact in this work. Site visits are a way to engage directly with colleagues and can help deepen one's own reflection on the work.



“Developing our messaging and a theory of change to connect our work to health has been both delightful and insightful, and it’s already led to some great conversations with our volunteers and board members.”

— *Neighborhood Housing Services of New Haven*  
NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT

➤ Health action lab participants on a site visit to understand how other community development organizations are operationalizing community health strategies.

### As you seek out support and collaborators for your work, consider:

- What are some general takeaways/reflections as you engage with practitioners in other communities and their community health journey?
- What are you beginning to notice about the ecosystems in which your peers are advancing this work? For example, what partnerships and resources are available to them? Shared pain points and/or opportunities?
- What is resonating when you make the case and what are specific asks you can create so your audience is compelled to take action?



## Conclusion

**The road to actualizing community health**, as a key strategy of comprehensive community development, is a long one; however, community development practitioners are uniquely positioned to embed health in their work through iterative and intentional strategies, no matter where you start. Initiating the journey by assessing organizational readiness along the lines of leadership buy-in, an orientation towards comprehensive approaches, and existing relationships with community residents will all contribute to the success of your community health strategies. This toolkit outlined the concepts, tools and insights that surfaced during the health action lab for other practitioners interested in creating visionary and transformational community health strategies for their own work. Likewise, funders and intermediaries can support practitioners to deepen their health work and amplify stories exemplifying this work. Ultimately, the tools aim to surface opportunities and action planning to continually deepen community health commitments within the community development sector through iterative, insight-driven approaches. The most critical learning from the health action lab was to center the perspectives and wisdom of those who hold lived experiences and therefore, the closest expertise to shape how community health work should proceed. By showcasing the strategies that influence health in our communities, the community development field stands to enable new investments into a vision of community health that is rooted in communities.

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  - [NewVue Communities](#), Fitchburg, Massachusetts
  - [Urban Edge, Roxbury](#), Massachusetts
  - [Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation](#), Houston, Texas
  - [NeighborImpact](#), Redmond, Oregon
  - [Interfaith Community Housing of Delaware](#), Wilmington, Delaware
  - [Neighborhood of Affordable Housing \(NOAH\)](#), Boston, Massachusetts
  - [Tejano Center for Community Concerns](#), Houston, Texas
  - [Neighborhood Housing Services \(NHS\) of New Haven](#), New Haven, Connecticut
  - [Windham & Windsor Housing Trust](#), Brattleboro, Vermont

## About Neighborworks America

NeighborWorks America is a Congressionally chartered and funded nonpartisan nonprofit. NeighborWorks provides communities — through its network of nearly 250 member organizations in every state, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico — with affordable housing, financial counseling and coaching, training, and resident engagement and collaboration in the areas of health, employment and education. NeighborWorks builds the skills, supplements the resources and amplifies the reach of network organizations so they can empower more individuals and transform more communities than they could on their own. NeighborWorks supports its network and the broader community development field with grant funding, peer exchange, technical assistance, evaluation tools and training.





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