

A Tool to Reflect on Organizational Capacities for Healthy Public Policies



TOOL OVERVIEW

To support public health organizations, the NCCHPP has developed a tool to help structure reflection and identify concrete levers for action for advancing healthy public policies (HPPs).

This document is the last one in a series of six documents that together make up the tool:

1. Overview of your situation
2. Analysis by dimension: Partnerships
3. Analysis by dimension: Organizational structures and resources
4. Analysis by dimension: Workforce
5. Analysis by dimension: Knowledge development
- 6. Analysis by dimension: Leadership and governance**

What you will find in this document

This document provides a structure for reflecting on concrete ways to strengthen organizational capacities for HPPs, using **leadership and governance** as levers for action.

This document is organized around four strategies linked to this dimension:

1. Prioritizing health equity

2. The role of public health

3. Support for HPPs from an organization's leaders

4. The role of advocacy in public health

For each of these strategies, reflection questions are provided to help you describe the actions implemented within your organization, place them in a broader reflection, and explore potential avenues for improvement. Additional resources are offered for each strategy to deepen your reflection and identify approaches suited to your objectives.



HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

Similar to the *Overview of your situation* document, this document may be completed individually or collectively, depending on preferences and the context of use.

Before you begin, we recommend saving a copy of the document to preserve your responses and allow you to return to them as needed.

Step 1: Answer the questions provided for each strategy to describe and clarify the initiatives currently in place within your organization.

Step 2: Based on your responses from Step 1, answer the reflection questions to better contextualize your organization's work and consider potential avenues to strengthen organizational capacity for advancing HPPs.

Step 3: Explore the resources provided to further develop the reflections initiated in Steps 1 and 2. These resources can help to identify strategies aligned with your organization's objectives.

The resources also include tools and concrete examples that can support the implementation of strategies deemed relevant for your organization. Note that references to specific sections of the report [*What Can Organizations Do to Enhance Their Capacity to Promote Healthy Public Policies?*](#) are included, along with a list of additional resources available online.

Leadership and governance: The ability and willingness of organizations to implement HPPs is demonstrated through strong leadership (guiding, inspiring, influencing and directing others) and strategic reflection leading to decisions that take into account the questions of What? For whom? and How?

1 PRIORITIZING HEALTH EQUITY

Step 1 – Description of initiatives taken by your organization

- How do you prioritize health equity through your organization's operations and orientations?
- Is there a specific policy, framework or strategy guiding the organization's actions in support of health equity?

Step 2 – Reflection questions

- To what extent is health equity a priority for your entire organization?
- How does the degree of prioritization impact what strategies are put in place by your organization to advance HPPs?

Step 3 – Resources

Section 3.5.1 "Prioritizing Health Equity in Organizational Governance" on page 49 of the report [*What Can Organizations Do to Enhance Their Capacity to Promote Healthy Public Policies?*](#) puts forward two main strategies: the integration of health equity as an explicit public health function and its inclusion in official documents; and the adoption of a structuring framework to guide and promote health equity initiatives. These strategies are illustrated through examples of implementation at the provincial and local levels.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- CDC Foundation, ASTHO, and Michigan Public Health Institute. (2024). *STRETCH Framework: Strategies to Repair Equity and Transform Community Health Initiative*. Prevention Technology Transfer Center Network. https://pttcnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/STRETCH-Framework-2024_0.pdf
- Davis, R., Rivera, D. and Fujie Parks, L. (2015). *Moving from Understanding to Action on Health Equity: Social Determinants of Health Frameworks and THRIVE*. Prevention Institute. <https://www.preventioninstitute.org/publications/moving-understanding-action-health-equity-social-determinants-health-frameworks-and>
- Morestin, F. (2012). *A Framework for Analyzing Public Policies – Practical Guide*. National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy. <https://ccnpps-ncchpp.ca/a-framework-for-analyzing-public-policies-practical-guide/>
- National Health Service. (2024). *Health Equity Assessment Tool (HEAT)*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-equity-assessment-tool-heat>
- Prevention Institute. (n.d.) *THRIVE: Tool for Health & Resilience in Vulnerable Environments*. <https://www.preventioninstitute.org/tools/thrive-tool-health-resilience-vulnerable-environments>

2 THE ROLE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Step 1 – Description of initiatives taken by your organization

- How does your organization define the roles and responsibilities of public health and its partners in the context of HPP initiatives?
- Has it adopted a specific approach or a structuring framework to guide its HPP-related efforts?

Step 2 – Reflection questions

- How does your organization adjust its roles and responsibilities related to HPPs over time?
- Are the roles of the actors involved in advancing HPPs well defined and understood within your organization?
- What tools or approaches do you think could enhance this understanding?

Step 3 – Resources

Section 3.5.2 "Clarifying Public Health's Governance Roles" on page 51 of the report [*What Can Organizations Do to Enhance Their Capacity to Promote Healthy Public Policies?*](#) highlights the importance of precisely defining the roles and responsibilities of public health and its partners in promoting HPPs. In particular, it describes the example of a public health organization that has developed a typology of interventions, thus facilitating the planning and implementation of interventions, particularly those related to HPPs.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ChangeLab Solutions and Rhodes Island Department of Health. (2021). *Health Equity Zones: A Toolkit for Building Healthy and Resilient Communities. Chapter 1: Building your Health Department Team.* <https://health.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur1006/files/publications/toolkits/health-equity-zones.pdf>
- Litvak, E. et al. (2020). Making sense of what exactly public health does: A typology of public health interventions. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 111(1), 65-71. <https://doi.org/10.17269/s41997-019-00268-3>
- National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health. (2013). *Let's Talk: Public health roles for improving health equity.* <https://nccdh.ca/resources/entry/lets-talk-public-health-roles>
- Summers, A. et al. (2024). Development of a classification of common interventions to describe the work of local public health agencies. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*. 116, 943-950. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.17269/s41997-025-01016-6>

3 SUPPORT FOR HPPS FROM AN ORGANIZATION'S LEADERS

Step 1 – Description of initiatives taken by your organization

- In what ways do leaders in your organization demonstrate commitment to supporting work on HPPs?
- How is this support communicated to the entire organization?

Step 2 – Reflection questions

- Do you feel that the support and commitment of senior management have fostered support for HPPs throughout your organization?
- How is management's support reflected in priorities and in the actions taken to bolster HPPs?

Step 3 – Resources

Section 3.5.3 "Involving Leaders Committed to HPPs Within an Organization" on page 52 of the report [*What Can Organizations Do to Enhance Their Capacity to Promote Healthy Public Policies?*](#) examines the role of leaders, broadly defined, in the process of prioritizing and implementing actions that support HPPs. It presents a concrete example of the impact of committed leadership on the implementation of an HPP by a municipality.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Association of State and Territorial Health Officials. (2013). *Health in All Policies: Strategies to Promote Innovative Leadership*. <https://www.astho.org/globalassets/pdf/hiap/hiap-strategies-to-promote-innovative-leadership.pdf>
- Betker, R. C. and National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health. (2018). *Public health leadership to advance health equity: A review summary*. <https://nccdh.ca/resources/entry/public-health-leadership-to-advance-health-equity-a-review-summary>
- National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health. (2013). *What contributes to successful public health leadership for health equity? An appreciative inquiry*. <https://nccdh.ca/resources/entry/leadership-app-inquiry>
- World Health Organization. (2022). *Implementing Health in All Policies: A pilot toolkit. Section C.1 – Vision and Leadership*. Pages 54-56. <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/366435/9789240057128-eng.pdf>

Establishing clear, consistent communication between leaders at all levels of an organization

- Center for Community Health and Development. (n.d.). *Community Tool Box: Chapter 14. Section 2. Developing and Communicating a Vision*. University of Kansas. <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/leadership/leadership-functions/develop-and-communicate-vision/main>

4 THE ROLE OF ADVOCACY IN PUBLIC HEALTH

Step 1 – Description of initiatives taken by your organization

- What role does advocacy play in your organization's efforts to support HPPs?
- How does your organization support HPPs in the public sphere?
- How does your organization promote the benefits of HPPs to the relevant decision makers and interested parties?

Step 2 – Reflection questions

- What obstacles does your organization face when defending HPPs in the public sphere?
- To what extent does your organization consider advocacy a relevant strategy for advancing HPPs?

Step 3 – Resources

Section 3.5.4 "Assigning Value to Public Health's Advocacy Role" on page 53 of the report [*What Can Organizations Do to Enhance Their Capacity to Promote Healthy Public Policies?*](#) explores the adoption of advocacy initiatives that can help strengthen the capacity of public health organizations to act in support of HPPs. It also describes the strategies of defending specific positions in the public sphere, and making representations to decision makers or influential actors. These strategies are illustrated through examples of organizations that have put them into practice.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Alliance for Justice. (2023). *Advocacy Capacity Tool (ACT!)*. <https://afj.org/resource/advocacy-capacity-tool-act/>
- Center for Community Health and Development. (n.d.). *Community Tool Box: Toolkit: Advocating for Change*. University of Kansas. <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/advocating-change>
- Chaput, S. (2021). *Plaidoyer pour la santé: un guide pratique*. Réseau francophone international pour la promotion de la santé. <https://refips.org/ouvrage-de-reference/plaidoyer-pour-la-sante-un-guide-pratique/> [In French only.]
- Coffman, J. and Beer, T. (2015). *The Advocacy Strategy Framework: A tool for articulating an advocacy theory of change*. Center for Evaluation Innovation. <https://evaluationinnovation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Advocacy-Strategy-Framework.pdf>
- National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health. (2015). *Key public health resources for advocacy and health equity: A curated list*. <https://nccdh.ca/resources/entry/advocacy-health-equity-curated-list>
- Vancouver Coastal Health. (n.d.). *Population Health Advocacy: Guidelines and Resources*. <https://www.vch.ca/sites/default/files/import/documents/Population-Health-Advocacy-Guideline-and-Resources.pdf>

Making representations to decision makers and influential actors

- American Public Health Association. (n.d.). *Legislative Advocacy Handbook*. https://phern.communitycommons.org/cc_resource/apha-legislative-advocacy-handbook-a-guide-for-effective-public-health-advocacy/
- Lerner Center for Public Health Advocacy. (n.d.). *How to Conduct Meetings with Decision Makers*. <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/lerner-center/resources/how-to-conduct-meetings-with-decision-makers>

Defending specific positions in the public sphere

- Big Cities Health Coalition. (2023). *Public Health: Changing the Narrative*. <https://www.bigcitieshealth.org/public-health-changing-narrative/>
- *Changing the Narrative of Public Health Communication*. https://www.bigcitieshealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/BCHC_NACCHO360_2023_FINAL-1.pdf
- Center for Community Health and Development. (n.d.). *The Community Tool Box: Chapter 32. Section 5. Reframing the Issue*. University of Kansas. <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/advocacy/encouragement-education/reframe-the-debate/main>
- Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. (2017). *Healthy Public Policy Toolkit: Advocacy*. <https://professionals.wrha.mb.ca/old/extranet/publichealth/files/HealthyPublicPolicyToolkitAdvocacy.pdf>

Click here to access any of the tool's six documents:

1. Overview of your situation
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6. Analysis by dimension: Leadership and governance

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6. Analysis by dimension: Leadership and governance

AUTHOR

Martin Renaud
National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy

UNDER THE COORDINATION OF

Marianne Jacques
National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy

IN COLLABORATION WITH

Madalina Burtan
Unité Affaires publiques, communications et transfert
des connaissances
Institut national de santé publique du Québec

EDITING

Mylène Maguire
National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy

EXTERNAL CONSULTATIONS

Katherine Pizzacalla
Hamilton Public Health

Janet Dawson and Lisa Kaldeway
Lakelands Public Health

Laura Edgar and Sarah Merkel
Huron Perth Public Health

Amy Young
Office of the Chief Provincial Public Health Officer – Manitoba

Hilary Walsh
Department of Health and Community Services – Newfoundland
and Labrador

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