

Good Health Is Good Business

The Value Proposition of Partnerships Between Businesses and Governmental Public Health Agencies to Improve Community Health

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While U.S. health care expenditures are roughly double the average amount spent per person in other developed countries, the United States still lags behind in health outcomes, equity, and quality by comparison.¹ This imbalance has the potential to affect not only people's health, but also their workplace performance, financial stability, education, safety, and engagement with their family and community. Therefore, every other sector should consider the impact of health on its goals. Two sectors that are critically important to improving community health are governmental public health agencies and businesses.

The mission of public health is to ensure the conditions in which people can be healthy.² Similarly, businesses need healthy, productive workforces and healthy consumers with purchasing abilities in order to thrive. Yet, despite the shared interest, the high level of potential success, and the reliance of health and business on one another to achieve goals, there are relatively few examples of local governmental public health agencies and local businesses or chambers of commerce partnering to advance the health of their communities beyond worksite wellness efforts.

Recognizing this gap, we set out to understand the challenges and untapped opportunities to achieving such important collaborations. The purpose of this paper is to lay out the value proposition for both sectors—governmental public health agencies and businesses—to engage in local collaborations that result in the achievement of goals that are mutually beneficial and that ultimately advance community health. This report summarizes the potential offerings and benefits each sector brings to a partnership to improve community health.

The Value Proposition

What Public Health Offers	How Businesses Benefit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies to improve the foundations for community health • Credibility and expertise in community health promotion • Data analysis and evaluation capabilities; reinforcement of the validity and merits of interventions • Relationships with other community organizations; ability to link parties with similar interests and point to existing resources • Access to services, people, and programs at all levels of government • Training and technical-assistance capabilities • A clinical background; understanding of and engagement with the health delivery system • Knowledge of policy and funding opportunities • Ability to work with and educate advocacy groups on evidence-based strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased consumer and employee loyalty • Attraction and retention of top workforce talent • Healthier workforce pool from which to select new hires; preparation of the future workforce • Enhanced employee morale, job satisfaction, productivity, and engagement • Potential reductions in direct (health care) and indirect (absenteeism, disability, presenteeism) costs • Enhanced corporate image and improved community relations • Data-driven evidence to inform business strategy

Source: “Improving Population Health: The Business Community Imperative.”³

What Businesses/Chambers Offer	How Public Health Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach into the community through their employees and families • Expertise in marketing, communications, and public relations • Resources and capacity to contribute funding, staff-time, services, and products • Leaders as champions of collaboration • Political influence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved community health • Shared resources and efforts to achieve public health goals • Greater reach into the community • Renewed interest and investment in governmental public health agencies and initiatives • Greater awareness and buy-in from policymakers and other influencers

Source: “Improving Population Health: The Business Community Imperative.”⁴

The public health and business partnerships examined in this report can be characterized by several similar factors, including: (1) motivated and committed leaders; (2) equal and complementary participation; and (3) joint strategic planning and establishing common ground. The most impactful partnerships also focus on the underlying social and economic determinants of health, which are the foundations of community health. Critical to addressing social and economic determinants of health is understanding the strong connection between social needs—like stable housing, accessible transportation, and good health—as well as recognizing that addressing these needs on a person-by-person basis is less

impactful than policies, systems, and environmental change efforts that address social determinants on a population level.^{5,6} While there are also several common barriers to engagement, including language and communication, conflicts of interest, lack of resources, staff turnover, measurement, and culture, there are many opportunities and lessons to inform successful public-private partnerships as exhibited by the highlighted case studies.

This report includes recommendations for governmental public health agencies, individual businesses, and chambers of commerce at the local level. Tactical recommendations include:

- Developing a strategic map of local partners;
- Preparing an “ask;”
- Recruiting leaders as initiative champions;
- Focusing on common problems (often described as “low-hanging fruit”); and
- Measuring success and impacts.

Communications recommendations include:

- Using multipronged communications strategies; and
- Disseminating and using existing tools and resources.

Finally, regional, state, and national organizations—such as philanthropies or government—have a critical role to play in promoting collaborations between the business and public health sectors by:

- Distributing new and compelling case studies;
- Establishing recognition programs; and
- Funding demonstration programs.

Our hope is that this report and value proposition will inspire and encourage more transformative partnerships in which businesses and governmental public health agencies can work together to build a healthier future for our communities.

¹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. *Health at a Glance 2017: OECD indicators* (OECD Publishing: Paris, 2017). Available at: https://doi.org/10.1787/health_glance-2017-en.

² Institute of Medicine. *The Future of Public Health* (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 1988), 40-41. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17226/1091>.

³ Andrew Webber and Suzanne Mercure. “Improving Population Health: The Business Community Imperative.” *Preventing Chronic Disease*, 7(6): A121, November 2010. Available at: <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Improving-Population-Health%3A-The-Business-Community-Webber-Mercure/e940ef063fdee6c9a09d79ea3330da8061f85f20>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Brian Castrucci and John Auerbach. “Meeting Individual Social Needs Falls Short of Addressing Social Determinants of Health.” *Health Affairs Blog*, January 16, 2019. Available at: <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hblog20190115.234942/full/>.

⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “Health Impact in 5 Years.” 2018. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/policy/hst/hi5/docs/hi5-overview-v7.pdf>.



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