



# Building Public Health Infrastructure through Accreditation

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## ABSTRACT

The Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) sets the standard for public health services and leadership in the state of Arizona. To improve performance and increase accountability throughout the state, ADHS has taken on the challenge of becoming a fully accredited state health department. The goal of accreditation is to assess the health department's ability to deliver three core functions which encompass assessment, policy development and assurance, in addition to the ten essential services of public health. The steps taken toward accreditation by ADHS are novel and groundbreaking for Arizona. Through this process, ADHS also provides valuable insight to our local public health partners, as well as other states. Nationally, the work being done by states is critical to improving public health nationally, as well as continuing to improve the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) standards.

## BACKGROUND

PHAB is a non-profit organization focused on public health quality improvement. PHAB accredits state, Tribal, local and territorial health departments. At this time no public health department has achieved PHAB accreditation. Application to PHAB is a lengthy process with prerequisites, and intensive documentation requirements to prove that basic public health core competencies are being met. Once accreditation is granted, yearly reporting and re-application every five years is required to maintain accreditation status.



## METHODS

ADHS combined block grant funding and National Public Health Improvement Initiative (NPHII) grant funds to establish intergovernmental agreements with individual counties to each conduct a Community Health Assessment, Community Health Improvement Plan and Strategic Plan. All fifteen Arizona county health departments are currently participating in the project and are responsible for the following work products:

### Community Health Assessment (CHA)

Health assessments are a means to understand the population's health and make informed improvement decisions and should include:

- Development of local partnerships for the CHA
- Description of demographics, health issues, risk factors and community assets (utilizing primary and secondary data)
- Collection of feedback on CHA from partners and share with the community

### Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)

A collaborative effort between health departments and community partners to identify resources, set priorities and develop a unified plan to address health issues identified in the CHA. Necessary elements include:

- Utilization of CHA data and input from local partners
- Ownership of the CHIP by local partners
- Development of measurable health outcomes that align with national and state priorities

### Strategic Plan

A map for health departments to develop unified visions, goals and values for the next three to five years. Plans will:

- Develop a mission, vision, guiding principles and strategic priorities
- Serve as a guide for county and state health improvement plans be updated annually to ensure relevance

### ADHS Strategic Map

Summarizes Arizona's central challenges and strategic priorities.

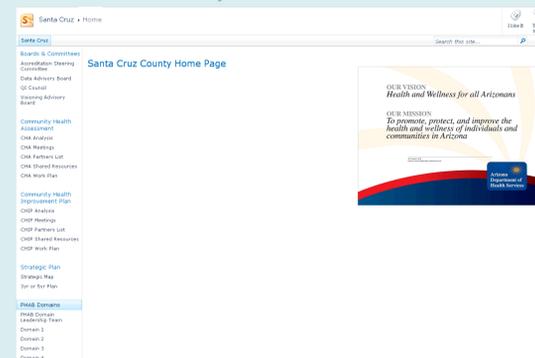


## DISCUSSION

ADHS has taken several unique approaches to the PHAB process, primarily through their collaborative work with Arizona counties. Four innovative strategies showcased by ADHS during this process are:

I. Development of a SharePoint site in the Microsoft® Cloud for the CHA/CHIP Network to share valuable information. SharePoint provides a valuable IT infrastructure and offers space for counties to share best practices and useful documents. In addition, the site has been developed to help organize all county data in preparation for future individual county accreditation.

### County SharePoint Site



II. The CHA/CHIP Network has resulted in monthly meetings, listserves, and open dialogue between county and state officials for information sharing and requests for technical assistance. Special focus is placed on strengthening the existing public health infrastructure and building new partnerships.

III. Training for county health departments involved in the CHA/CHIP process is provided at regular intervals throughout the grant and covers topics such as:

- Conducting Community Health Assessments
- Facilitating Community Meetings
- Implementing Public Health Policy
- Developing a CHIP from the CHA

IV. Comprehensive Technical Assistance has been offered to county members through National Association of County and City Health Officers (NACCHO), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and ADHS.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

By funding and providing technical support for Arizona counties through the CHA, CHIP and Strategic Plan (PHAB prerequisites), ADHS has assisted the counties in positioning themselves for accreditation through PHAB. Most importantly, the project has strengthened public health infrastructure in Arizona.

### State Health Assessment (SHA)

Following the completion of all county CHAs, primary data as well as secondary data, on a set of core indicators, will be incorporated into a unified SHA. Partners will be engaged to ensure the public health needs of the entire state are captured.

### State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP)

The SHIP will be developed from health issues detailed in the SHA and aligned with the goals and objectives outlined in the ADHS Strategic Map. Working with state and community partners to identify resources, priorities, and gather stakeholder input are critical steps in the SHIP.

### Impact on Arizona

Accreditation is a concerted effort to strengthen the statewide public health system. By building new partnerships, gaps and duplication of services can be addressed, lean methodologies can be applied, and Arizona will benefit from an overall quality improvement of public health services.

## RESOURCES

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