



ENGAGING POLICYMAKERS IN PUBLIC HEALTH PARTNERSHIPS

Key Take-Aways:

- Show up and be visible
- Include a member of the Board of Health/ County Commissioners in the Partnership
- Utilize branding concepts: What is your main message?

Connections

- Meet regularly with your local Boards of Health or County Commissioners to build trust
- Work to establish an Inter-Governmental Agreement to define and stabilize your Partnership.
- Recruit a County Commissioner liaison to your partnership meetings to help translate information into what they want and need; to discuss timing and framing of issues and questions you want to discuss with your Commissioners. Be direct: “Come to our meeting on Oct 7th at 6 pm at the main office”.
- Model good leadership, communication techniques and brainstorming methods.
- Introduce new staff and shared employees in-person.
- Build on the trust your policymakers have for the Public Health Directors – have your Partnership Coordinator or Chair pair up with each Director to provide information in their jurisdiction.
- Connect-the-dots for them: “These outcomes/initiatives are a result of the work of the Partnership.”

Communications and Support

- Make requests in person.
- When making a request or providing information, refer to state, federal and local laws and statutes and regulatory oversight strategies.
- Think about when to talk about your projects, events, health messages, staffing and budget cycles and create an annual “Communication Plan” of what to tell whom; when; and how.
- Listen to and record their questions and comments. Don’t step over anything.
- Give a time frame for what you are presenting: “Next week”, “over the next few years”, “before you leave office”. This helps manage expectations and helps them take in the information.
- Make strong and clear requests: “We want your support on this.” “We need x money to provide y and we need your participation which means every third Thursday”. “This will benefit ____.”
- Follow up and provide anything you promised to them.
- Follow up by repeating your strong requests to individual members.
- Follow up by asking if they have thought of any additional questions on x, y, or z.

Education

- Educate Commissioners on foundations of public health topics in small, frequent bites.
- Have outside experts/academics discuss the benefits of public health programs and ask their opinions.
- Hold a summit or academy on public health and invite policymakers.
- Utilize training/informational materials created for local boards of health.