

2014-2015 Accreditation Support Initiative (ASI) for Local Health Departments

FINAL REPORT

1. **Community Description**

Briefly characterize the community(ies) served by your agency (location, population served, jurisdiction type, organization structure, etc.). The purpose of this section is to provide context to a reader who may be unfamiliar with your agency.

Cambridge Public Health Department (CPHD) is a municipal health agency located in Cambridge, MA. CPHD is a medium sized local health department serving a population of approximately 106,355 in a densely populated 6.26 square miles. Its location is less than a mile from Boston. CPHD is operated by Cambridge Health Alliance, a public hospital system, via a contract with the City of Cambridge. CPHD's mission is to improve the quality of life of all who live, learn, work and play in the city, by preventing illness and injury; encouraging healthy behaviors; and fostering safe and healthy environments. CPHD has five core divisions: community health & wellness, emergency preparedness, environmental health, epidemiology & data services, and public health & school nursing.

2. **Project Overview**

Provide an overview of the work your agency conducted with or because of this funding, including the significant accomplishments/deliverables completed during the ASI project period and the key activities engaged in to achieve these accomplishments. This should result in a narrative summary of the chart you completed in Part 1, in a format that is easily understandable by others.

With the support of the NACCHO ASI funding we focused our efforts on developing our workforce development plan to meet PHAB Standard 8.2.1, A Required Documentation 1.

Prior to applying for the NACCHO ASI funding we had been engaged in accreditation efforts that focused on a self assessment of our needs, forming workgroups and on developing the three pre-requisites required by PHAB. It was through the planning process of our departmental strategic plan that we identified workforce development and leadership as a key strategic direction for the department. A logical next step was to focus on developing our workforce development plan to keep the momentum going on this important topic and to ensure its alignment with the strategic plan. Additionally, our department had already put in place a Workforce Development Workgroup and a Quality Improvement and Performance Management Workgroup made up of staff from all health department divisions working at various levels, including leadership staff. These two workgroups had developed and implemented a Workforce Assessment and Quality Improvement Survey of staff and had begun to review the data from the survey and training needs prior to our application. These efforts laid the groundwork for developing our workforce development plan.

The main activities involved in developing our workforce development plan were the following:

1. Initially, we developed a cultural competency assessment tool and analyzed the survey results that informed key staff training needs and provided training recommendations for our workforce development plan. Much of this work happened through our Workforce Development Workgroup and was shared with our leadership team;
2. Second, we developed a staff training tool to document staff training plans annually. This tool will be used by both staff and managers during our annual performance reviews to track staff trainings;
3. Third, the strategic direction from our departmental Strategic Plan as well as the results from both the Workforce Assessment and Quality Improvement Survey and the Cultural Competency Assessment provided the basis for developing our workforce development plan which includes a staff training plan for both new and existing staff;
4. After the Workforce Development Plan was created we worked with our consultant to develop an orientation training video script to orient staff to our plan in a dynamic way;
5. We purchased Adobe Connect software to have the ability to develop, host and archive trainings for all staff;
6. Finally, we developed a summary document documenting our process for developing our plan which will be beneficial for future plans.

3. **Challenges**

*Describe any challenges or barriers encountered as your agency worked to complete the selected deliverables. These can be challenges your agency may have anticipated at the start of the initiative or unexpected challenges that emerged during the course of implementing your proposed activities and completing your deliverables. If challenges were noted in your interim report, please **do** include them here as well. Please include both tangible (e.g., natural disaster, leadership change) and intangible (e.g., lack of staff engagement) challenges.*

The six month grant implementation period and the related built-in periodic reporting timelines were valuable in fostering fidelity to deadlines and sustaining a sense of accountability throughout the process. However, the development of the Workforce Development Plan is a collaborative effort that thrives on an iterative consultation process. Such a process consumes significant time investments and was thus challenging to sustain given the need to honor reporting timelines. Additionally, in late January we hired our first Quality Improvement Specialist who also serves as our Accreditation Coordinator. Had we recruited and hired her earlier in the grant process it would have helped us move more efficiently through the earlier portion of the grant period. Finally, the weather in Cambridge this past winter also proved to be a challenge in keeping all of our scheduled meetings due to the office being closed.

4. **Facilitators of Success**

Describe factors or strategies that helped to facilitate completion of your agency's work. These can be conditions at your agency that contributed to your successes or specific actions you took that helped make your project successful or mitigated challenges described above. Please include both tangible (e.g., influx of funds from another source) and intangible (e.g., staff or leadership engagement) facilitators.

The grant implementation process resulted in the development of the department's Workforce Development Plan. The rollout of the plan will ensure that new staff members are effectively oriented to the structure and functions of the department and their roles. It will ensure that all staff possess basic public health knowledge and are kept abreast with developments in their areas of expertise. It will empower staff to take a proactive role in driving their professional development through a revised staff annual performance appraisal process. The succession plan stressed in the WFD plan will provide avenues for staff professional growth within the department. In committing the department to these goals, the plan is a reiteration of department's strong commitment to staff as one of its greatest assets in delivering quality services successfully.

The workforce development process also helped further develop the internal capacity for collaborative planning within the department.

Finally, having a dedicated Accreditation Coordinator whose sole focus is accreditation related work as well as the ASI funds to pay an outside consultant who has already been working with the health department led to the successful completion of our plan.

5. Lessons Learned

Please describe your agency's overall lessons learned from participating in the ASI. These can be things you might do differently if you could repeat the process and/or the kinds of advice you might give to other health departments who are pursuing similar accreditation-related funding opportunities or technical assistance activities.

1. **The ASI grant provided needed resources.** The grant provided resources that helped our department complete tasks quickly that might otherwise be prolonged. These resources were invested in outsourcing pieces of the process for which internal capacity is limited.
2. **Grant-reporting timelines can fuel efficiency.** The precise timelines of the grant implementation period provided a structure for timely completion of tasks. In addition, they ensured the sustenance of momentum throughout the plan development process.
3. **Do your homework.** It was helpful to have the grant implementation infrastructure in place prior to the start of the grant period. The 6-month grant period was relatively short for a collaborative process of developing a workforce development plan. It was helpful for us to have a functional workgroup in place and some of the assessment data ready at the beginning of the grant period. This allowed us to launch into the development process from the start.
4. **Leadership is essential.** As with all other accreditation-related tasks, leadership responsiveness is essential. The short grant implementation period demands an efficient grant management process that may require leadership to be responsive to emerging needs. This was essential for our process.
5. **Staff engagement.** The Workforce Development Plan targets members of staff as the department's beneficiaries. Thus, it presents an opportunity for the department to demonstrate its commitment to staff. Having an established Workforce Development

Workgroup with staff at all levels in the department provided an opportunity to engage staff in the accreditation process which helped to nurture a culture of QI.

6. **Funding Impact**

Describe the impact that this funding has had on your agency. How has this funding advanced your agency's accreditation readiness or quality improvement efforts?

The ASI funding allowed us to focus some of department's accreditation efforts on developing our workforce development plan. Without this funding and focused effort we would not have a completed workforce development at this time. The funding from the ASI grant also allowed us to purchase the Adobe Connect software to help us build our technical capacity to develop, deliver and archive staff trainings. This will provide us with a new method for engaging and training staff in a dynamic way. Finally, the ASI funding provides support to hire a consultant to assist with developing some of our documents. We were fortunate in that our consultant has already worked with our staff on some other accreditation efforts and has established relationships with some staff members as a result.

7. **Next Steps and Sustainability**

What are your agency's general plans for the next 12-24 months in terms of accreditation preparation and quality improvement? How will the work completed as part of the ASI be sustained moving forward?

In the coming months we plan to finish developing our year one CHIP implementation plan and to begin implementation in the Cambridge community with our partners. We also will be working to finalize our Strategic Plan and develop an implementation plan with the continued help of outside consultants. Another area of focus for us will be on developing our quality improvement plan and our performance management system through our existing Quality Improvement and Performance Management Workgroup.

The work completed through the ASI grant will be sustained by engaging our existing Workforce Development Workgroup as well as our leadership team who will help to ensure the success of its implementation. We plan to continue to be in touch with our ASI peer mentor for assistance and guidance on their successful implementation of their department workforce development plan.