NACCHO
National Association of County & City Health Officials
The National Connection for Local Public Health

2012-2013 Accreditation Support Initiative (ASI) for Health Departments and Support Organizations

FINAL REPORT

1. **Community Description**
   Briefly characterize the community(ies) served by your health department or support organization (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.

Located in the greater metropolitan St. Louis region, St Clair County, Illinois has a population of 276,000 residing in urban, suburban, and rural communities. St. Clair County Health Department serves the 202,000 residents living in 18 townships. The four remaining townships, including East. St. Louis and adjacent communities are served by East Side Health District. The county has a large concentration of persons living in poverty and has disparate health outcomes associated with race, ethnicity and other social determinants of health. The St. Clair County Health Department has a staff of 70 and budget of 6.8 million and is a state certified local health department providing an array of basic environmental protection, health promotion, and disease prevention services. Additionally, the department serves as lead agency in regional health services related to HIV Care and women's health.

2. **Work Plan Overview**
   Provide an overview of the work you conducted with or because of this funding, including the significant accomplishments/deliverables completed between December 2012-May 2013 under the auspices of this grant, and the key activities you 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.

Prior to the grant, prerequisite work products had been completed and the governing board and leadership staff had made extensive investments of resources and organizational practices in preparation for accreditation. Fiscal resources were the major remaining barrier to seeking accreditation. ASI funding was utilized to offset 50% of the accreditation fees and provided the avenue to proceed with submitting an application for accreditation.

3. **Challenges**
   *Describe any challenges or barriers encountered during the implementation of your work plan. These can be challenges you may have anticipated at the start of the initiative or unexpected challenges that emerged during the course of implementing your proposed activities. If challenges were noted in your interim report, please **do** include them here as well.*

Increasing demands for service delivery, combined with reductions in funding, posed a daunting challenge for agency staff. The press of regular day to day activities tended to override

accreditation work plan activities. The barrier was addressed by strong agency leadership and support to inform the staff of the value of accreditation and the direct relationship with their roles and responsibilities. In addition, a full-time position was established that includes specific responsibilities for CQI , workforce development, and accreditation-related duties.

4. **Facilitators of Success**

Describe factors or strategies that helped to facilitate completion of your work. These can be conditions at your organization that generally contributed to your successes or specific actions you took that helped make your project successful or mitigated challenges described above.

Completion of work plan was facilitated by technical assistance from Mid-America Public Health Practice Center (MPHPC), University of Illinois, School of Public Health. MPHPC provided direct assistance in a comprehensive workforce competency assessment based upon the 8 core competencies as defined by the Council on Linkages Between Academia and Public Health Practice.

5. **Lessons Learned**

Please describe your overall lessons learned from participating in the Accreditation Support Initiative. 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 or support organizations who are pursuing similar accreditation-related funding opportunities or technical assistance activities.

Despite over 3 years of active preparation of agency staff and leadership for accreditation, we learned that multiple forces of change impacting public health practice diluted our efforts to create an organizational culture that fully understood and embraced using tools and methods for continuous quality improvement. Staff development and education of the direct relationship of conformance to national standards of practice with their day to day roles should have been more fully incorporated into our work force development processes.

6. **Funding Impact**

Describe the impact that this funding has had on your health department/support organization (and/or health departments you worked with as a support organization). In other words, thinking about the work you have done over the last six months:

- *(Health departments) How has this funding advanced your own accreditation readiness or quality improvement efforts?*
- *(Support organizations) How has this funding advanced the technical assistance you provide to health departments? How has this funding advanced the accreditation readiness of the health departments you worked with?*
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The funding to support accreditation fees has directly and positively impacted our ability to seek accreditation. The technical assistance from MPHPC related to workforce development also received ASI funding. Our department indirectly benefited from the funding provided to MPHPC.

7. **Next Steps**

What are your organization's (and/or the health departments you worked with as a support organization) general plans for the next 12-24 months in terms of accreditation preparation and quality improvement?

Pursuant to PHAB acceptance of our application for accreditation, within the next 12 months, we will formally submit all required documents to PHAB and move forward with the accreditation process. Opportunities for continuous quality improvement have been identified and will be ongoing. Specifically, we will continue to serve as a pilot site with MPHPC as they develop an online course on creating competency-based workforce development training plans.