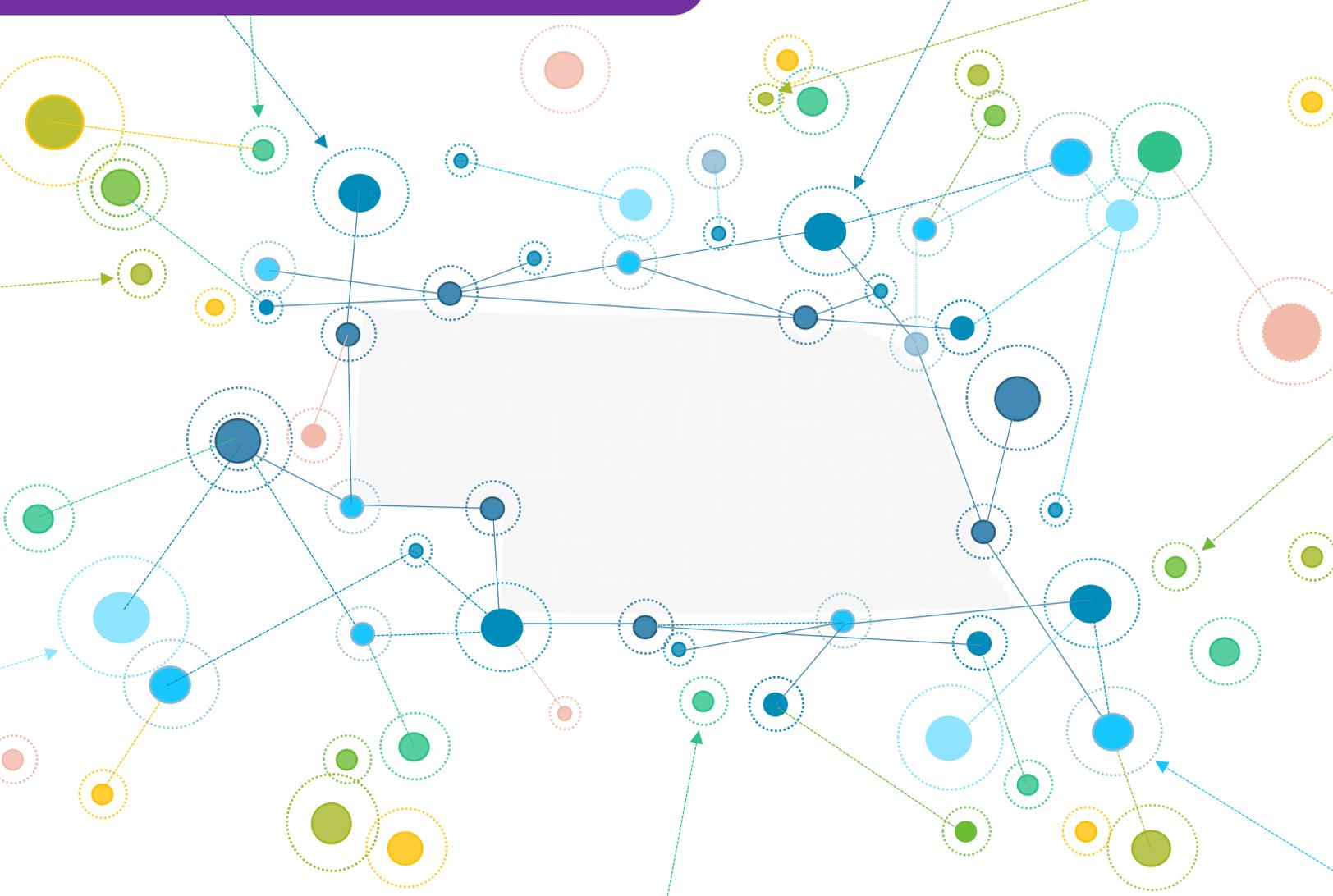


Frequently Asked Questions State Health Improvement Plan in Action



2023



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Acronyms

ASTHO - Association of State and Territorial Health Officials

COPH - College of Public Health

DPH - Division of Public Health

NALHD - Nebraska Association of Local Health Departments

NDHHS - Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services

OCHPM - Office of Community Health & Performance Management

PHAB - Public Health Accreditation Board

SHA - State Health Assessment

SHIP - State Health Improvement Plan

UNMC - University of Nebraska Medical Center

Purpose

This FAQ is written primarily for organizations - and in particular the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (NDHHS) - involved with Nebraska's State Health Assessment (SHA) and State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP). However, some of the information may be of interest to other states or those doing community-level work in Nebraska. The intent is to provide guidance and resources on what states can do after priorities are selected (see the Prioritization Guide for direction on how to implement that process).

Q: What is the SHIP?

A: The State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) outlines the activities that are meant to help address statewide public health priorities or issues identified from the State Health Assessment (SHA). Creating a SHIP involves several steps (see below), though more details on how to create a SHIP can be found in the [Developing a State Health Improvement Plan: Guidance and Resources](#).

1. [Identify and engage partners in the SHIP planning and implementation processes.](#)
2. [Develop the mission, vision, and values for the SHIP in collaboration with partners.](#)
3. [Use findings from the SHA and other data sources \(e.g., community and regional health assessments\) to identify and select priorities for the SHIP.](#)
4. [Prioritize issues identified in the previous step.](#)
5. [Communicate the priorities to people in an accessible manner, ensuring that the information is clear, comprehensible, and available to individuals who have an interest in community health throughout the state.](#)
6. [Define the desired outcomes from the priorities and create measurable objectives, strategies, and plans to implement, including benchmarks to measure the impact of the strategies.](#)
7. [Disseminate the SHIP to partners and implement the planned strategies.](#)
8. [Implementing and monitoring the SHIP.](#)

Q: Who leads the SHIP and why is it done?

A: States implement SHIPs to address public health challenges, improve health outcomes, and promote overall well-being within their populations. These plans serve as comprehensive strategies that outline specific goals, priorities, and actions to address key health issues identified through thorough assessments and community input. By implementing SHIPs, states aim to reduce health disparities, prevent chronic diseases, promote healthy behaviors, enhance healthcare access and quality, and build healthier communities. Additionally, SHIPs help states leverage resources, coordinate efforts among various stakeholders, and track progress towards health improvement goals. Ultimately, the goal of SHIPs is to create a healthier and more resilient population, leading to improved quality of life and reduced healthcare costs over time.

State health departments typically lead the SHIP. A SHIP is required for state health departments to be accredited, which means they meet certain quality standards for their field. A SHIP is also helpful for receiving federal and state funding from some sources. Accreditation of health departments is overseen by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB), and is typically granted for five years. The [PHAB Standards & Measures for Reaccreditation](#) was updated in 2022 and outlines the requirements for accreditation. In Nebraska, the NDHHS Office of Performance Management (OPM) oversees the state accreditation and thus the SHIP process.

State Health Improvement Plans are implemented to comprehensively enhance the health and well-being of a population within a specific state or region. These plans address public health challenges by prioritizing preventive measures, disease control, and health equity. By focusing on population health management, SHIPs aim to manage the health of entire communities, emphasizing community engagement and the active involvement of various stakeholders. The plans guide policy development, resource allocation, and collaborative efforts to reduce health disparities and promote optimal health outcomes. Ultimately, SHIPs provide a strategic framework for coordinating diverse initiatives, ensuring efficient resource utilization, and fostering long-term improvements in the health of the population.

Q: Who coordinates the design and implementation of the SHIP?

A: Although the OPM at NDHHS serves as the convener of partners and collector of information, the SHIP is led by state employees, such as state health department staff, and key partners throughout the state. In Nebraska, this typically includes representatives from tribal and local health departments, the College of Public Health (COPH) at UNMC, and the Nebraska Association of Local Health Departments (NALHD). It may also be helpful to solicit input and feedback from key partners. This may include LHDs, tribal entities, community-based organizations, universities, etc. This provides an opportunity to assess to what degree others have the capacity to assist in addressing potential health status priorities.

Designing the SHIP involves using content expertise to identify health objectives and potential strategies to meet them, while implementing the SHIP requires skills and resources to turn these strategies into action. Therefore, it is important to have partners that represent diverse expertise and resources. Based on surveys and interviews with those involved in past SHIPs, the following organizations or programs were seen as important for decision making: tribal health, non-profit organizations, mental health, substance abuse agencies, hospitals, local health departments, schools, and environmental health. By investing time, improving communication, and promoting inclusivity and respect with tribal and local health departments, NDHHS can create a collaborative environment that enhances the effectiveness and transparency of the SHIP.

Within the health departments, it may be pertinent to include these roles: program managers, coordinators, facilitators, content experts, administrative support, partner organization(s), and community representatives. Other organizational leaders such as the administrators and commissioners, school district(s), and service organizations may also need to be involved during the design of the SHIP so that they can be supportive during its implementation. Workgroups could be used for developing, implementing, monitoring, and reporting SHIP strategies. Establishing or using an advisory group may be useful in distributing the workload and providing expertise in the design and implementation of the SHIP. The [ASTHO](#), (p. 18-23) has examples of possible stakeholders and skills and expertise checklists that may help determine who should be involved and how they can help.

It is also important to keep an eye out for who is not involved, as you want to make sure underrepresented groups are given the opportunity to be involved. One way to encourage participation from underrepresented partners is to first consider all of the sectors involved in public health, paying special attention to vulnerable populations. Next, determine which sectors and partners would be easy to engage based on existing relationships and involvement with state health department programs. Also identify sectors where there is a need for more outreach and relationship-building because these indicate the sectors may be lacking representation.

Having partners that represent diverse expertise and resources is essential for the SHIP. In addition to the partners mentioned above, other key partners typically include community-based organizations, healthcare providers, and government agencies. The involvement of these key partners ensures a holistic and community-driven approach to the planning, implementation, and success of public health initiatives, creating a comprehensive SHIP that reflects the priorities and aspirations of the local population.

Q: How do we keep the SHIP sailing when there is turnover?

A: Having succession plans in instances of turnover can play a pivotal role in keeping the SHIP on course. These plans may include clearly set goals, ensuring work is distributed among workgroups, and having different levels of supervision to minimize disruption from personnel changes. Documentation of progress reports, membership lists, meeting attendance and notes, and resources and guides can also be helpful in bringing new people up to speed on the status of the SHIP. Online document managers such as Dropbox and Google Drive can be used to store and share documentation pending organization IT policies. Finally, retreats and meetings can be held to keep people accountable to their assigned tasks.

To minimize disruptions during the turnover in the planning of a SHIP, it is essential to establish effective knowledge transfer mechanisms and documentation processes. Succession planning should be implemented, including identifying potential successors and providing comprehensive training. Maintaining open communication channels, cross-training team members, and implementing continuous monitoring and evaluation processes contribute to a smooth transition. Developing standardized operating procedures (SOPs) and fostering a positive team culture can enhance adaptability. Engaging stakeholders, building flexibility into the planning process, and utilizing technology wisely also play crucial roles in ensuring continuity and success despite personnel changes.

Q: How are the SHIP health priorities chosen?

A: To establish priorities for the SHIP, engage with numerous stakeholders in a structured process. This inclusive approach considers health outcomes, trends, system capacity, community readiness, and aims to achieve a collective consensus, shaping the identified priorities for your upcoming plan. The SHIP priorities are not intended to reflect the most critical health problems today, but rather the issues for which a Collective Impact model can be used to achieve significant progress in particular areas. The emphasis is not solely on addressing the most critical health problems of the present moment but on identifying challenges where a collaborative and coordinated effort, as facilitated by the Collective Impact model, can lead to meaningful advancements. This strategic approach recognizes that certain health issues may benefit more significantly from a concerted, community-wide effort, leveraging the combined resources, expertise, and commitment of diverse stakeholders. By intentionally aligning priorities with the capacity for collective action, the SHIP aims to maximize its impact and create sustainable improvements in targeted health domains. This approach underscores the importance of collaboration, shared responsibility, and community engagement in addressing complex health challenges within the framework of the SHIP.

Q: How do we develop the SHIP to align with local community efforts?

A: Developing a State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) that aligns with local community efforts involves a collaborative and data-driven approach. Begin by engaging local communities

through focus groups and meetings to ensure that diverse perspectives are considered. Analyze local health data to identify specific community needs and disparities, building upon the State Health Assessment (SHA) findings. Foster partnerships with local organizations and stakeholders, leveraging existing community initiatives to avoid duplication and maximize impact.

Customize SHIP goals, benchmarks, and strategies based on community input, ensuring they are realistic and resonate with the community's long-term health vision. Prioritize cultural competence and inclusivity, acknowledging and addressing the diverse factors within the community. Build local capacity by providing training and resources to community organizations, empowering them to actively participate in and sustain health improvement initiatives. Establish clear communication channels for ongoing feedback and adjustments, fostering a dynamic and responsive relationship between the SHIP and local communities. This collaborative and tailored approach enhances the effectiveness and sustainability of public health initiatives.

Q: How do we engage partners to become part of the SHIP's efforts?

A: Identify key focus areas or components of the SHIP that require collaboration. Form workgroups around these specific areas, ensuring representation from relevant stakeholders. Invite a diverse range of partners to participate in the workgroups. This may include local representatives from government agencies, health care providers, community organizations, individuals with lived experiences, academia, and other stakeholders relevant to the specific focus area. Clearly define the objectives and scope of each workgroup. Ensure that participants understand their roles, responsibilities, and the expected outcomes. Schedule regular meetings for the workgroups to discuss progress, challenges, and next steps. Consistent communication is key to maintaining engagement. Develop action plans within each workgroup outlining specific tasks, timelines, and responsibilities. This provides a roadmap for implementation and helps maintain accountability.

Engagement is an ongoing process. There are a variety of ways to enhance participation and ensure partners stay involved and motivated to assist with the SHIP:

- Establish a feedback mechanism within workgroups to allow partners to provide input, share concerns, and suggest improvements.
- Ensure that the workgroups have access to the necessary resources, whether it be information, funding, or technical support. Adequate resources contribute to the effectiveness of their efforts.
- Encourage collaboration between different workgroups. Some aspects of the SHIP may require cross cutting efforts, and collaboration between workgroups ensures a holistic approach.
- Acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of each workgroup. Recognition reinforces a sense of accomplishment and motivates continued improvement.
- Be flexible and open to adapting strategies based on the evolving needs and dynamics of the workgroups.
- Consider conducting a [meeting effectiveness survey](#) for participants to anonymously share their feedback on meeting utility or focus on specific areas.

Identify timepoints when it would be the most helpful to engage partners in SHIP efforts. Ensure that partners have roles that are purposeful and defined, and that their time and contributions are recognized. Recognizing and celebrating contributions and progress from partners would also encourage continued engagement with SHIP efforts. A barrier to engagement is burnout.

Partners may already be involved with several community/state efforts, which can be even more common in small communities and with underrepresented groups. An early step to combat this is being clear about the expectations and time commitment involved in the requested roles. One way of minimizing burnout is to ask partners to participate in SHIP efforts as a subject matter expert and send a representative to attend regular meetings.

Q: How do we effectively communicate the SHIP priorities and action steps?

A: Effectively communicating SHIP priorities and action steps is pivotal for gaining support and ensuring successful implementation. To achieve this, create a clear and concise [communications plan](#), developing messages that articulate SHIP priorities using easily understandable language and avoiding jargon to promote inclusivity and accessibility. Tailor regular and frequent communication to diverse audience groups, taking into account specific interests, concerns, and language preferences of stakeholders, community members, healthcare professionals, and policymakers. Utilize a multi-channel communication strategy encompassing traditional channels (press releases, newsletters, and flyers) and digital platforms (social media, websites, and email newsletters). Enhance understanding through visual aids, infographics, and real-life stories that highlight the impact of SHIP priorities. Engage stakeholders through various mediums, including community events, town hall meetings, webinars, conferences, and workshops, providing opportunities for questions, feedback, and hands-on learning experiences. Establish a feedback mechanism to allow stakeholders to provide input and express concerns. This two-way communication fosters a sense of collaboration and responsiveness.

Q: How should we use the SHA when developing and implementing the SHIP?

A: When developing the SHIP, it is important to review the findings from the SHA. This information is key to identifying priorities that align with the goals of the SHIP. Set clear and measurable goals, benchmarks, and outcomes related to these priorities. Make sure the goals are realistic, achievable, and in line with the long-term vision for improving public health. You can use a logic model approach to create a structured framework for defining specific outcomes, activities, and indicators that match this vision.

Consistently use the SHA as a guide to monitor the SHIP implementation progress. Create a focused monitoring system specifically targeting the key indicators and metrics identified in the SHA. Clearly define what needs to be tracked, such as specific health outcomes or intervention milestones. Develop a strategy for data collection and reporting, specifying the tools and methods to be employed. Utilize a centralized platform or reporting mechanism for stakeholders to access and understand the progress easily. Regularly assess and report on the impact of interventions, ensuring measurable improvements and effective addressing of health disparities are clearly communicated. Tailor your strategies within the SHIP to directly target these disparities. Allocate resources and efforts towards communities and populations that are most affected by disparities, ensuring that everyone has equitable access to healthcare and services.

Q: How can we align the SHA/SHIP with the CHAs/CHIPs?

A: Aligning the SHA/SHIP with the CHAs/CHIPs involves a coordinated and collaborative approach. This alignment can be achieved by fostering communication and collaboration

between state (especially from the NDHHS) and tribal and local health departments, ensuring consistency in goals and priorities. Integrating data collection efforts and sharing relevant findings avoids duplication and enhances the understanding of community health needs. Stakeholder engagement at both levels is critical for identifying shared priorities, while effective communication channels facilitate the exchange of progress updates and challenges. Mutual support and resource allocation between state and local entities ensures a coordinated and efficient approach to health improvement. Policy alignment and a continuous feedback loop for evaluation contribute to the overall success and sustainability of health initiatives, creating a unified strategy to address health challenges at both state and local levels.

The Washington State Department of Health (WASDPH) implemented a systematic approach to enhance the coordination of community health assessment and improvement efforts throughout its decentralized public health system, which includes the state department of health and 35 local health jurisdictions. With a legislative foundation that mandates public health services improvement since the early 1990s and a dedicated fund for Local Capacity Development, Washington has sought to foster greater collaboration without explicit requirements on the nature of these collaborations. The state's Public Health Improvement Partnership, led jointly by the state department of health and a local health official, plays a pivotal role in this endeavor. It includes members from local health jurisdictions, public health officials, and health boards, focusing on aligning local and state health planning efforts. This collaboration has become increasingly vital as more nonprofit hospitals conduct community assessments in compliance with the Affordable Care Act, necessitating a more organized method of tracking these efforts. To this end, WASDPH has created a web page for linking local community health assessments statewide, aiming for better alignment and collaboration in health improvement initiatives across Washington. (see case study of Washington state in "Other Uses of Data in the SHIP Process" on page 34 in [Developing a State Health Improvement Plan: Guidance and Resources](#)).

Q: How do we keep the SHIP realistic?

A: Establishing goals for the SHIP that are connected to metrics and benchmarks is crucial for effective progress tracking. Clear and measurable goals should be set for each priority, accompanied by specific metrics to quantitatively assess progress, such as percentage changes in health indicators. Benchmarks serve as milestones, providing targets for achievement at different stages of implementation. Creating participatory logic models involves collaborating with stakeholders to visually represent the relationships between program inputs, activities, and outcomes, ensuring community insights are integrated. These metrics and benchmarks collectively serve as a comprehensive framework for objective evaluation and adaptation of strategies, ensuring that progress is not only measurable but also aligned with community priorities and values. Using CHAs/CHIPs to guide the development of the SHA/SHIP helps to support local health department priorities and ensures that funding opportunities align with current local priorities. Regular reviews of goals, metrics, benchmarks, and participatory logic models allow for ongoing assessment, informed decision making, and continued celebration of progress.

The SHIP should ideally focus on a smaller number of health status priorities, as suggested by evaluation data that recommends a narrowing to three or fewer, based on overwhelming feedback on the scope of past priorities. If narrowing the focus is not feasible, an alternative could be to address each priority sequentially over time, akin to Missouri's SHIP which implemented a roll-out schedule, adding a new priority every six months with annual progress reports. Continuity of priorities beyond the typical five-year SHIP cycle is also suggested,

allowing more time for significant change. This redesign involves reassessing past approaches and prioritizing stakeholder engagement and public input, which could occur through various collaborative forums. Additionally, the terminology used to describe priorities should be clear to ensure all department services feel valued and integral, even if not highlighted as a priority within the SHIP.

Q: How will we know if we're making progress on the SHIP?

A: In addition to establishing a process for evaluating and monitoring actionable items during priority selection procedures, it is crucial to implement regular meetings for accountability and progress checks within the workgroup. Clearly define how progress will be measured, the frequency of measurement, and designate responsible individuals. Discuss mechanisms for addressing potential revisions to items during these regular check-ins. Consider utilizing tools such as logic models, dashboards, metrics, benchmarks, and trackers that align with accreditation standards to effectively measure progress. Another valuable approach is to formalize roles and expectations through legal agreements like a memorandum of understanding (MOU). [Sample agreements](#) provided by the Center for Sharing Public Health Services can be adapted for use in this context. Regular meetings will provide a platform for collaborative discussions, ensuring ongoing accountability and timely adjustments to the plan as needed.

Q: How do we share progress updates on the work we've done with the SHIP?

A: Tracking the short, medium, and long-term benchmarks for implementation efforts will help with measuring the efficacy of SHIP strategies. Progress updates can be shared using established communication plans. Regularly scheduled meetings such as local health department retreats can be part of the communication effort to share updates on implementation efforts between the state and local partners, and the issues that workgroups are addressing. How progress updates are shared should be tailored to the audience. For example, sharing updates with workgroups may be done through regular check-in meetings with leaders, while updates for the public may be done via websites and e-newsletters.

Q: How do we keep partners continually involved in SHIP efforts?

A: Maintaining clear expectations for partners such as their role and time commitment to SHIP items along with a vision and objectives can play a significant role in helping them stay involved with SHIP efforts. To address this, various strategies are suggested, including setting clear expectations and roles from the beginning, utilizing a [RACI chart](#) to delineate responsibilities, and ensuring a diverse group of community partners are involved to foster both partner and community ownership. Effective communication strategies can also determine continued partner participation. The ASTHO State Health Assessment Guidance provides a list of [online resources](#) to facilitate effective and participatory communication. Seeking feedback from key partners also provides an opportunity to assess their capacity to engage in SHIP efforts.

Sustaining partner involvement in the SHIP efforts necessitates a multifaceted approach centered on proactive engagement and ongoing communication.

1. Clear delineation of roles and expectations within the SHIP framework is paramount, ensuring partners understand their contributions towards overarching goals.

2. Regular updates through newsletters, meetings, and collaborative decision-making processes foster a sense of ownership and commitment among partners, encouraging their active participation in SHIP activities.
3. Opportunities for engagement, such as involvement in workgroups or task forces related to priority areas, empower partners to leverage their expertise towards collective impact.

Q: We have a lot to work on – how do we get it all done?

A: To effectively navigate the SHIP and ensure successful implementation, a multifaceted approach is essential. Foster collaboration through the formation of workgroups, harnessing diverse stakeholder expertise to concentrate efforts on specific objectives within the SHIP. To set up workgroups for success in developing a SHIP, it's essential to follow a structured and inclusive process. First, establish clear objectives for each workgroup, outlining their scope of responsibilities and expected outcomes. Ensure that each workgroup represents diverse stakeholders, including local health department representatives, healthcare providers, public health officials, and representatives from relevant organizations. Provide adequate training and support to workgroup members to build their capacity in areas such as data analysis, strategic planning, and community engagement techniques. Offer resources, such as access to relevant data sources, technical assistance, and training materials, to support their efforts effectively.

Encourage collaborative decision-making within the workgroups, fostering an environment where all voices are heard, and diverse perspectives are valued. Facilitate regular meetings and communication channels to maintain momentum and ensure progress towards established goals. Additionally, establish mechanisms for ongoing feedback and evaluation to monitor the effectiveness of workgroup activities and make necessary adjustments. This could include periodic check-ins, surveys, or focus groups to assess satisfaction and engagement with the SHIP development process.

Regularly update the plan based on current data, emerging health trends, and stakeholder feedback. Implement a continuous feedback loop to facilitate communication, address challenges, and make informed decisions, maintaining alignment with benchmarks. Utilize a variety of communication channels, including traditional and digital platforms, to engage stakeholders and disseminate information. Celebrate achievements at each benchmark to foster motivation, momentum, and community engagement. By combining strategic goal-setting, collaborative workgroups, continuous feedback mechanisms, and effective communication, you can create a comprehensive and dynamic approach to successfully achieving the objectives outlined in the SHIP. By providing guidance, support, and opportunities for collaboration, workgroups can effectively contribute to the development of a SHIP leading to more impactful and sustainable public health initiatives.

Q: How frequently does the SHIP need to be updated?

A: Although the SHIP priorities are reassessed every five years, the process of implementing the SHIP is not a static and evolving, and iterative process. Updates to the SHIP should occur regularly, reflecting a “continuous model” and the cyclical nature of public health planning. A continuous model for SHIP updates involves an iterative process rather than waiting for specific intervals. In a continuous model, leverage technology and data analytics to monitor health indicators in real-time. This approach allows for immediate identification of emerging data and the need for adjustments in the SHIP. In a continuous model, the SHIP team can establish continuous feedback loops with workgroups, stakeholders, community members, and relevant

experts. Regularly solicit input and engage in collaborative discussions to assess the effectiveness of strategies and identify areas for improvement. Most SHIPs cover a five-year period. The current SHIP in Nebraska is from 2022 to 2027. The next SHIP will be from 2028 to 2033. Because it can take 12-24 months to develop a SHIP, a state may want to consider the next SHIP in the third year or fourth year of the current SHIP.

Q: Where can I go for more resources or information?

A: There are a variety of tools and resources available for SHA/SHIP efforts. Below are a handful.

1. Developing a State Health Improvement Plan: Guidance and Resources A Companion Document to ASTHO's State Health Assessment Guidance and Resources:
This guidance resource includes seven modules and describes the process for developing a state health improvement plan (SHIP).
<https://www.astho.org/globalassets/pdf/accreditation/developing-a-state-health-improvement-plan-guidance-and-resources.pdf>
2. Logic model template:
This document offers guidance on completing a logic model, along with helpful examples and a template for reference.
<https://cdphe-lpha.colorado.gov/sites/cdphe-lpha/files/documents/CHAPS%20Logic%20Model%20Template%202019.docx>
3. Colorado Health Assessment & Planning:
This website provides guidance implementing the SHIP and can assist local health agencies with collaborative community health assessments and addressing public health issues.
[Colorado CHAPS Phases website](#)
4. Communications Plan:
This resource covers key communication materials for health professionals and includes practical resources to help guide teams that are working to communicate SHIP efforts.
[Health Communication PLAYBOOK](#)
5. Community Commons:
This dashboard provides tools and resources that facilitate gathering, sharing, interpreting data, addresses methodological concerns, and beyond. Furthermore, it gives a good outline of how to implement data and mapping efforts towards addressing SHIP priorities and other concerns.
<https://assessment.communitycommons.org/collections/Maps-and-Data#anchor9>