

Outlining a Vision for Community Health Worker Integration

Background

CHWs are critical partners and voices in public health initiatives to advance health and well-being. However, given that public health initiatives often have categorical funding, it can be easy to lose sight of public health's broad mission to improve the health and well-being of our communities and think in terms of, "How can we 'use' CHWs, and how can we fund that program?" This worksheet directs users to instead consider, **"How can we improve health and wellbeing in our communities, and why are CHWs important partners in that effort?"**

CHWs are core partners in public health, health care, and social support pathways, and integrating them will require shared understanding across the whole community ecosystem of who CHWs are, the value they bring, and the support/infrastructure required for CHWs to work effectively. Successful integration of CHWs requires building awareness and cultivating buy-in at both individual and system levels.

This worksheet walks through a series of prompts to reflect on how the work of CHWs relates to and advances your agency's mission and vision. It can help guide conversations with CHWs and ensure that your agency incorporates CHWs' own critical perspectives into planning efforts.

Priority-Setting

Many agencies or programs have vision statements or strategic plans already documented or published, which can be a reference; however, we encourage you to use these prompts to brainstorm openly with your partners about a specific vision or future state.

- Given your organization's mission and work, what is a major problem you're trying to address?
- Which populations (and subpopulations) are uniquely impacted?
- What is the ideal future state? If we fast forward 10 years, what would look different?
- Why does this matter?

Write your thoughts and ideas (problem, current state and disparities, ideal future, importance):

The Role of CHWs

Now, think about the role CHWs can play in realizing that ideal future. Keep in mind the [C3 Core Competencies](#) as a reference of the skills and qualities CHWs bring.

- How do CHWs contribute to this work now?
- What barriers do CHWs face to contributing to this work now (e.g., workload, funding, scope of work)?
- How might CHWs contribute in the future? What unique value would CHWs bring?

Write your response (current scope and involvement, variation, barriers to involvement, value):

Necessary Support Structures for CHW Integration

Shift a focus from thinking, “What else can CHWs do?” to, “How can we change our systems or structures to better leverage the unique strengths of CHWs in meeting members of our communities where they are?”

- Given the barriers to integration identified in the previous section, what is an actionable step we could take to address at least one barrier?
- What are the support structures that currently exist for CHWs in my jurisdiction (e.g., training, CHW networking, supportive supervision)?
- Who are other CHW allies in my jurisdiction, and what role could they play in creating additional support for CHWs?

Write your thoughts and ideas (action, support structures, allies and their roles):

Bringing It All Together: Vision Statement

Review your notes from the previous discussion prompts, and formulate a central vision statement. You may adapt the following template or create your own:

Sample: Effectively integrating CHWs into the work of our **[jurisdiction/program/agency]** will advance our overall mission and vision to **[larger goal for population]**. CHWs currently play important roles in **[current scope]**, and in the future, they could be positioned to further improve health and wellbeing in each corner of our community by **[potential expansions or changes to scope or program participation]**. However, to realize this vision, we must welcome and support CHWs as long-term partners in our larger efforts, building **[support structures and resourcing appropriately]** and raising awareness as well as building buy-in from CHW allies.

Write your vision statement:

Action Steps

Identify specific action steps to improve CHW integration into programs, inform policy relating to CHW support, or generate additional resources for CHW infrastructure. Consider who you need to engage or who could support that action step (e.g., CHWs, community organizations, government officials, health care providers, etc.). Add rows if needed.

Table 1: Partnerships to Support CHW Integration

Action Step:				
Which partners should you consult/engage?	What is their current level of buy-in or awareness?	What contributions can partners make to the larger goal of CHW integration?	Is there an existing relationship?	Who will engage this partner?

As you enter conversations with CHWs, CHW allies, and new partners, you can continue to revisit and revise your vision statement. Consider:

- How do other partners’ visions compare to yours?
- What would potential partners define as their ideal future state?
- What additional support or structures for CHWs do they see as being necessary? What role can they play in building those supports?

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