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BRANDING RESOURCE GUIDE
FOR HEALTH DEPARTMENTS

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ABOUT
THIS
GUIDE

This resource guide was developed to advise health departments as they embark on strategic planning and quality improvement processes and begin to explore how best to position their agency in the marketplace. A robust brand is designed to enhance an agency's visibility in the community and boost its perceived value to the public, policymakers, funders, and other key stakeholders.

This guide serves as an introduction to brand development, outlining the path to fortifying a more resilient health department brand. It breaks down the process into understandable and manageable steps, providing a comprehensive journey toward brand enhancement. The guide is a dynamic resource, continuously updated to reflect new information as it becomes available.

WHAT IS
BRANDING?

A brand is the identity and story of an organization that makes it stand out from competitors that provide similar products or services. The goal of branding is to earn space in the minds of the target audience and become their preferred option for doing business.

For example:

An individual isn't looking to buy an electric car, they are looking to buy a Tesla.

You are reaching not for soda, but for a Coca-Cola.

You aren't buying just any phone, you are upgrading your Apple product.

As a health department you aren't looking to make sales, but it's important your audience knows you are the trusted and preferred voice of health in your community. Each health department already possesses a distinct brand that represents the perception it projects to the community on a daily basis. As this perception evolves over time, it's essential to proactively monitor and adjust the department's brand strategy. Neglecting this can result in an unintentional brand identity. By establishing a clear brand, vision, and strategy, a health department can position itself as a proactive leader in enhancing community health outcomes.

1. Decker A. "What is Branding? Understanding its Importance in 2023." *Hubspot*. March 15, 2023. https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/branding. Accessed February 1, 2024.

REBRANDING 101

Your health department may have intentionally built a brand in the past or may have unintentionally developed a brand over time. Either way, if you are planning to reestablish your brand as a health department you will need embark on a "rebrand."

What is a rebrand?

Rebranding is a marketing initiative in which a brand's identity (i.e., its "look and feel") is changed, to influence how a brand is perceived in the minds of its audience.

A new logo **does not** equal a rebrand

While a rebrand can include updating visual elements such as a logo, color palette, typography, etc—it does not have to.

A rebrand isn't only aesthetic

A true transformation looks at all brand elements, including vision/mission, brand voice, strategic values, social media, and desired audience.

A rebrand is not all or nothing

While a rebrand should have the commitment of your team and be a part of your annual strategic plan—capacity and financial resources can be fitted to your needs.

THE ROLE OF TRUST
FOR GOVERNMENT

Trust is a very important issue for public health. Without trust, any communication or branding effort will fall flat at best and elicit a negative response at worse. When researching the role of trust and government, a few key takeaways are clear:

The more local, the more trusted

Trust in government varies dramatically at different levels of government.

The further removed a government agency appears, or the less connected it is to the community it serves, the greater the level of distrust tends to be. This underscores the importance of allocating resources toward understanding and connecting with your audience in a manner that resonates with them.

Digital experience drives trust

A citizen's digital experience with a government agency is a strong predictor of their overall level of trust.

High trust stems from individuals perceiving state governments' digital services as user-friendly, helpful in accomplishing their tasks, and effective in safeguarding their data.

Mission matters

The mission of various government agencies can greatly influence citizens' perception of trust.

1. 1. O'Leary J, Agarwal S, Welle A. "Improving trust in state and local government." *Deloitte Insights*. September 22, 2021. https://www2.deloitte.com/xe/en/insights/industry/public-sector/trust-in-state-local- government.html. Accessed February 1, 2024.

WHEN TO REBRAND
YOUR HEALTH DEPARTMENT?

When should you rebrand your health department? If you have not reviewed your branding efforts within the last five years, it may be time to start thinking about a rebrand. Additionally, there are several factors that can alert you to the need for a rebrand of your health department.

A FEW KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

Have your goals or values changed?

- Does your current brand reflect the image, actions, or outcomes your health department is championing?

- For example: Is one of your values diversity or community engagement? If so, do your branding and communication efforts reflect that?

Is your brand image obsolete?

- If you look at other agencies or even brands you admire, does their look and feel read as more modern than your health department's? Colors, fonts, or even the tone of your communications need to seem relevant to today's audience.

Have there been changes in the community or marketplace?

- Look at your community first: have there been large changes in the demographics, interests, or any other key defining characteristics of your state's inhabitants? Is there a national trend that you think will influence your residents for years to come?

- Look at the marketplace next—who are your competitors? Who is influencing public health or community behavior? How does your health department stack up in terms of branding?

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE
TO THE BRANDING OR REBRANDING PROCESS

01. BRAND DISCOVERY

To chart the future course of a brand, health departments must first define the existing reality of their brand. The following steps offer guidance for health departments to determine their starting point in the branding process.

A

Communications Audit

Review your published materials and your digital communications platforms, as well as the goals you align to these materials.

Key questions to ask yourself:

- Are you consistent with the look and feel of your communications materials?

- Is every document and platform instantly recognizable as a product of the organization?

- What are your communications goals, your desired audience, and the current tone of your brand?

Examples of materials to review:

- Official letterhead

- Slide deck

- Brochures

- Posters

- Websites

- Email marketing

- Social media

B

Brand Audit

Examine factors influencing the brand, starting with internal assessments through tools like focus groups, data and metric analysis, and employee surveys. Extend the analysis to external stakeholders, including community leaders, business figures, and local government. Use digital tools such as polling, email surveying, or community "Ask Me Anything" events to gauge interest. Hold formal in-person community listening sessions as well.

Key questions to ask stakeholders:

- What words would you use to describe the health department?

- What problem does the health department solve?

- How does this brand make you feel?

- What does the health department's logo make you think of?

- How could this brand improve?

C

SWOT Analysis

Undertake a SWOT analysis to identify internal and external factors influencing brand development: identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to inform the brand's strategic development.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE
TO THE BRANDING OR REBRANDING PROCESS

02. BRAND STRATEGY

Once the health department establishes the current perspective of its brand, the next phase involves defining the ideal future for the brand. This includes shaping how the agency wants employees, the public, and key stakeholders to perceive it.

- **Mission:** Craft a concise mission statement that goes beyond goals and objectives. This primary positioning statement should explicitly state why the health department exists, answering questions about its business, products/services, and "customers."

- **Vision:** Craft a vision statement outlining the desired long-term strategic position of the health department. This vision will guide the mission, values, and overall brand. Envision the agency's impact on the community over the next decade, creating a succinct and inspiring vision statement.

- **Values:** Define the organization's values, shaping the personality of the health department. List these values and articulate how they guide the agency's operations, influencing decision-making, fund allocation, and public and community engagement.

03. BRAND IDENTITY

- **Name, logo, and look:** Ensure that the agency's name, logo, and overall visual identity align with the agency's vision, mission, values, and core essence. Develop clear guidelines for logo use, fonts, colors, and design schemes, creating a brand standards document for consistency. Assign responsibility for reviewing all communications to ensure adherence to these standards.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE
TO THE BRANDING OR REBRANDING PROCESS

04. BRAND LAUNCH

Once the health department finishes developing its brand, it is time to introduce the brand to a wider internal and external audience.

A

Assimilation + Brand Guidelines

Internally, ensure that employees understand and embody the brand, making it the foundation of the organizational culture. Conduct internal meetings, integrate the brand into communications materials and strategic plans, and establish a launch date for external unveiling.

B

Public Relations

Develop a public relations strategy that aligns with the brand, giving the health department a distinct voice that reflects its values and personality. Utilize various tactics, such as press releases, earned media, feature stories, health columns, and community outreach, to convey the agency's identity and mission. Build positive relationships with the media to reach a broader audience.

C

Marketing

Utilize a mix of communication channels, including email, billboards, radio, television, direct mail, and social media, to promote the agency and its rebrand. Craft visually appealing advertisements aligned with brand standards. Choose key time periods for promotion to maximize impact. Maintain an ongoing effort to make clear to the community that your brand is here to support them.

A TIERED APPROACH:
LOW BUDGET/LOW CAPACITY

1) Brand Discovery

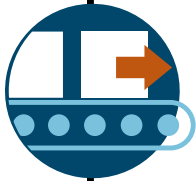Complete a communications (platform and goals) audit.

2) Brand Strategy

Create a formal branding/rebranding plan, including brand architecture (if applicable), brand positioning, and a communications strategy.
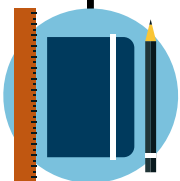
3) Brand Development

Pick 3-4 priority platforms to audit and refresh your communication touchpoints (e.g., social media, newsletters, etc.).

4) Brand Roll-Out

Celebrate the rebrand externally by showcasing the changes in a low cost way, such as through an email announcement and social media toolkit, etc.

5) Brand Guidelines

Create short and simple reference documents geared to communications staff on the standard operating procedures for the rebrand.

> If a current platform or strategy doesn't align to your rebrand goals, budget, or capacity, let it go, this can be a longer term vision.

1. Michno M. "Rebranding process – how to create it step by step." *Admind*. March 23, 2022. https://admindagency.com/blog/rebranding-process-how-to-create-it-step-by-step. Accessed February 1, 2024.

A TIERED APPROACH:
MID BUDGET/MID CAPACITY

1) Brand Discovery

Perform a communications (platform and goals) audit.

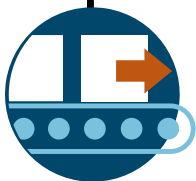**Also perform a community perception (focus group and/or data review) audit.**

2) Brand Strategy

Create a formal branding/rebranding plan, including brand architecture (if applicable), brand positioning, and a communications strategy.

3) Brand Development

Audit all digital platforms and refresh communication touchpoints (e.g., social media, newsletters, etc.).

4) Brand Roll-Out

Celebrate the rebrand externally by showcasing the changes in a low cost way, such as through an email announcement or social media toolkit, etc.

Hold an internal rebrand roll-out to create buy-in among non-communications staff to champion the rebrand.
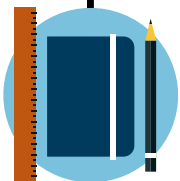
5) Brand Guidelines

Create short and simple reference documents geared to communications staff on the standard operating procedures for the rebrand.

Create a bi-annual event (lunch and learn, training, etc.) for staff to be refreshed on best branding practices.

1. Michno M. "Rebranding process – how to create it step by step." *Admind*. March 23, 2022. https://admindagency.com/blog/rebranding-process-how-to-create-it-step-by-step. Accessed February 1, 2024.

A TIERED APPROACH:
HIGH BUDGET/HIGH CAPACITY

1) Brand Discovery

Perform a communications (platform & goals) audit. Perform a community perception (focus group and/or data review) audit.

Perform a competitor analysis.

2) Brand Strategy

Create a formal plan, including brand architecture (if applicable), brand positioning, a communications strategy, **naming, and a tagline.**
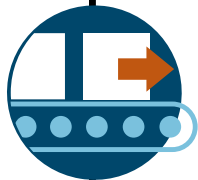
3) Brand Identity

Update your logo, typography, colors, and imagery (hire a specialty firm).

4) Brand Development

Audit all digital platforms and refresh communication touchpoints (e.g., social media, newsletters, etc.).

5) Brand Roll-Out

Celebrate the rebrand externally by showcasing the change among digital avenues (email, social media, etc.) and with an in-person event. Hold an internal rebrand roll-out to create buy-in among non-communications staff to champion the rebrand. Pitch the rebrand to relevant news outlets.
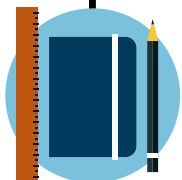
6) Brand Guidelines

Create short and simple reference documents geared to communications staff on the standard operating procedures for the rebrand.

Create quarterly events (lunch and learn, training, etc.) for staff to be refreshed on best branding practices.

Create monthly meetings for communications staff to review metrics, analytics, opportunities, and challenges related to the rebrand.

1. Michno M. "Rebranding process – how to create it step by step." *Admind*. March 23, 2022. https://admindagency.com/blog/rebranding-process-how-to-create-it-step-by-step. Accessed February 1, 2024.

A CLOSER LOOK AT A
COMMUNICATIONS AUDIT

1 **Establish Objectives and Scope:**

- Define the objectives of the communications audit, such as understanding your current brand perception, evaluating communication channels, and identifying strengths and weaknesses.
- Determine the scope of the audit, including the departments, programs, and communication channels to be assessed.

2 **Gather Information:**

- Collect all existing communication materials.
- Compile data on audience demographics, communication goals, key messages, and previous branding efforts.

3 **Review Materials:**

- Analyze the collected materials to assess consistency, clarity, tone, messaging, and alignment with health department objectives.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of different communication channels in reaching target audiences.
- Identify any gaps, inconsistencies, or areas of improvement in the current communication strategy.

4 **Stakeholder Interviews:**

- Conduct interviews with key stakeholders, including department heads, staff members, community leaders, and target audience representatives.
- Gather insights on perceptions of the current brand, communication challenges, audience preferences, and desired brand attributes.

5 **Benchmarking and Comparative Analysis:**

- Benchmark the health department's communication efforts against industry standards and best practices.
- Conduct a comparative analysis of communication strategies used by other health departments or similar organizations.
- Identify opportunities to adopt successful strategies and differentiate your organization from your competitors.

6 **SWOT Analysis:**

- Conduct a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis to summarize findings from the audit.
- Highlight strengths to leverage, weaknesses to address, opportunities for improvement, and potential threats to the rebranding effort.

7 **Report and Recommendations:**

- Prepare a comprehensive report summarizing the findings of the communications audit.
- Provide actionable recommendations for enhancing the health department's communication strategy and aligning it with the goals of the rebranding effort.
- Prioritize recommendations based on their potential impact and feasibility.

MATERIAL CHECKLIST FOR YOUR COMMUNICATIONS AUDIT

✔ **Print Materials**
- Brochures
- Pamphlets
- Flyers
- Posters
- Reports

✔ **Digital Content**
- Websites
- Blog posts
- Social media posts
- Email newsletters
- Online ads
- Infographics

✔ **Media Relations**
- Press releases
- Media kits
- Media pitches
- Interviews/articles in newspapers, magazines, and online publications

✔ **Internal Communications**
- Employee newsletters
- Memos
- Training materials
- Staff meetings/presentations

✔ **Community Engagement Materials**
- Event announcements/promotions
- Community calendars
- Public service announcements (PSAs)
- Educational materials

✔ **Visual Identity**
- Logos
- Branding guidelines
- Graphics
- Photography

✔ **Audiovisual Content**
- Videos
- Podcasts
- Webinars

✔ **Health Education Materials**
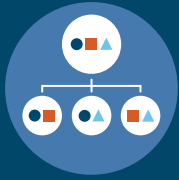- Brochures/booklets on specific health topics (e.g., nutrition, vaccination, disease prevention)
- Educational videos
- Interactive online tools

✔ **Surveys and Feedback Mechanisms**
- Patient satisfaction surveys
- Community feedback forms
- Social media listening
- Online reviews and ratings

KEY BRANDING **DEFINITIONS**

Brand Architecture

A system that organizes brands, products, and services to help customers access and relate to a brand.

Brand Positioning

The unique value that a brand presents to its customer.

Brand Identity

The visible elements of a brand, such as colors, designs, and logos that identify and distinguish the brand in the community's minds.

Brand Equity

The commercial value that derives from consumer perception of the brand name of a particular product or service, rather than from the product or service itself.

Mission

A statement that defines your brand's goals, objectives, and approach.

Vision

A statement that describes the long term impact you want to make with your mission.

Values

The fundamental beliefs that an organization's leadership and team stand for in their operations, industry, community, and the world.

1. Oppelt J. "What is Brand Architecture? Definition, Models, and Examples." *The Branding Journal*. Published 2022. https://www.thebrandingjournal.com/2022/01/brand-architecture/. Accessed February 1, 2024.

2. Wheeler K. "How to Develop a Unique (& Memorable) Brand Identity in 2020." *Hubspot*. Published October 5, 2020. https://blog.hubspot.com/agency/develop-brand-identity. Accessed February 1, 2024.

3. Patel S. "The 2019 Guide to Successful Brand Positioning in Your Market." *Hubspot*. Published September 28, 2022. https://blog.hubspot.com/sales/brand-positioning-strategy. Accessed February 1, 2024.

CRAFTING A DISTINCT PUBLIC HEALTH IDENTITY

A note on public health statements:

Most health departments have interchangeable mission, vision, and value statements   something along the lines of "promote health, safety, and resilience in X state." This may be OK for your health department, but this may also be an opportunity to think about how your state or health department is unique, how you would like to stand out, and what you would like to be known for.

The following example is selected intentionally to showcase its very specific and clear mission, vision, and value statements. This company's excellence in defining themselves makes for a clear idea of who this company is and how they differ from competitors and why customers should interact with them.

Mission Statement

Offer a wide range of well-designed, functional home furnishing products at prices so low that as many people as possible will be able to afford them.

Vision Statement

Create a better everyday life for many people.

Value

Togetherness, Caring for People and Planet, Cost-Consciousness, Simplicity, Renew and Improve, Different with a Meaning, Give and Take Responsibility, and Lead by Example.

1. Aboulhosn S.   What is a brand mission and how to define it. *Sprout Social*. Published August 24, 2020. https://sproutsocial.com/insights/brand mission/. Accessed February 1, 2024.
2. Bynder.   Brand Values: Definition, Examples & How to Define Them." *Bynder*. https://www.bynder.com/en/glossary/brand values/. Accessed February 1, 2024.
3. IKEA. Our culture and values   IKEA Global. *IKEA*. Published 2023. https://www.ikea.com/global/en/our business/how we work/ikea culture and values/. Accessed February 1, 2024.

TOOLS & RESOURCES

To Design Branding Materials and Assets:

Create customized assets for print and digital that stand out and have a clear visual story.
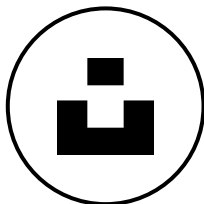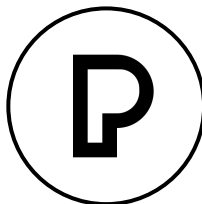
Canva	Adobe Express	Pablo by Buffer	Vista Create
https://www.canva.com	https://www.adobe.com/express/	https://pablo.buffer.com	https://create.vista.com

To Find Compelling Imagery and Video:

Utilize high quality imagery for social media posts.

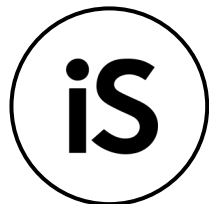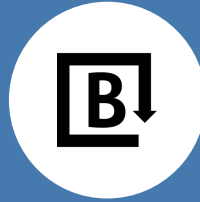| Unsplash	Pexels	Nappy	iStock
https://unsplash.com	https://www.pexels.com	https://nappy.co	https://www.istockphoto.com

TOOLS & RESOURCES

To Manage Brand Identity and Style Guidelines:

Organize and catalog all visual assets to create consistency in branding (e.g., logos, color palettes, typography, etc.)

Frontify
https://www.frontify.com

Brandfolder
https://brandfolder.com

Canva
https://www.canva.com

To Monitor and Evaluate the Health of your Brand:

Utilize a data-driven approach to continuously optimize your brand and audience experience.

Brandwatch
https://www.brandwatch.com

Meltwater
https://www.meltwater.com

Google Analytics
https://analytics.google.com

Buzz Sumo
https://buzzsumo.com

Hotjar
https://www.hotjar.com/