

5.d. Recipient Activity d: Planning Consortium

Establish a planning consortium consisting of technical experts, community members and other key stakeholders who can provide substantive recommendations on planning and implementing a coordinated and integrated environmental public health tracking (surveillance) network. This group should meet at least quarterly.

5.d.1. Results and Accomplishments

Overview

The Planning Consortium (PC) is our statewide advisory group that provides guidance to program staff on a variety of program components. During FY1-3, the Planning Consortium has met nine times and has contributed significantly toward planning for an EPHTN in California; especially toward our understanding of stakeholder perspectives and needs. The Planning Consortium has also facilitated the development of protocols and policies for an EPHTN in California. Examples include: accountability mechanisms, transparency policies, stakeholder involvement and public participation guidelines, data release guidelines, procedures for responding to community concerns and requests, etc.

Further, the Planning Consortium has contributed significantly in shaping the program through:

- Participating in program evaluation activities.
- Identifying strategies to obtain legislative, agency, and NGO support.
- Identifying opportunities for public/private partnerships and other funding, and program support when funding opportunities are identified.

The planning effort through the Planning Consortium in California is an integration of staff driven and membership driven approaches. We believe this is the best way to:

- Promote healthy dialogue with stakeholders.
- Enable targeted stakeholder input.
- Allow for coordination of stakeholder and state-specific needs with needs of the national program.

Critical issues in this planning effort identified by Planning Consortium members and staff include:

- The importance of inter and intra agency collaboration and “buy in”.

- The need to address privacy/confidentiality and community right-to-know issues with program stakeholders.
- The utility of EPHT information for stakeholders.
- Capacity building for EPHT stakeholders.
- The continued need to characterize the role of advocacy groups in planning and implementation.
- Identification of policies and procedures to ensure program success.

Several products have been identified that will be finalized to address EPHT issues including:

- Ethical guidelines for our program.
- Cluster response protocol.
- Data use guidelines.
- Public participation guidelines.

Updates on the status of the two pilot projects have played a critical role in supporting collaboration by providing program stakeholders with tangible results from the tracking effort. These results offer a “what’s in it for me” perspective for stakeholders. As part of these presentations, we attempt to bring in community stakeholders to discuss the relevance or value of the results, so the members can develop a more complete understanding of how the EPHT program can support community action. We believe these tangible results support the development of program sustainability by generating interest among stakeholders in advocacy at the state and national level. We believe Planning Consortium members will be instrumental in future advocacy efforts.

Planning Consortium members have also been instrumental in helping to implement specific recommendations from the SB 702 report. Specifically, the report recommends that a strategic plan be developed to guide program development. Planning Consortium members currently help to draft parts of the strategic plan that relate to program governance. Governance includes procedures and policies related to how the program will respond to stakeholder concerns and the roles they will play in decision making. This process supports the building of sustainable capacity by creating a sense of ownership among Planning Consortium members.

Planning Consortium Workgroups

The Planning Consortium has a team structure that includes a Needs Assessment and Outreach Workgroup, a Technical Team, and an Evaluation Workgroup. The results of efforts by these workgroups are conveyed to the Planning Consortium in various ways. The workgroups are described below.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND OUTREACH WORKGROUP

The Needs Assessment and Outreach Workgroup was convened to assist in the development and implementation of a needs assessment strategy and assist in increasing the knowledge of and interest in EPHT; identifying and fostering partnerships; and building EPHT capacity. A detailed description of this workgroup's activities can be found in SECTION 5.b - Recipient Activity b: Assessing State and Local Needs on p37.

TECHNICAL TEAM

Our program's Technical Team (TT) was formed in late 2002 to discuss details of how the needs assessment for central surveillance systems should be implemented and to provide guiding commentary for architectural framework issues. The TT was composed of about 20 information systems specialists from universities, national laboratories, and environmental and health departments. The first meeting of the TT was held on March 5, 2003, in which the process for planning and developing our program was described to the TT members. The TT advised on the scope of the inventorying of existing surveillance systems, emphasizing a stepwise methodology that increased in complexity. Following this suggestion, we designed the Future Assessment in two phases, where the first phase involved an initial, limited set of questions for a broad set of surveillance systems about data scope, information technology governance, and future ability for direct exchange. The second phase involved a more in-depth survey for a limited set of systems that were previously determined to have the greatest capacity for integrating into an EPHTN network. We utilized the input from the TT to develop a request for proposal to conduct the Future Assessment.

The preliminary results of the first phase of the Future Assessment were presented at the second meeting of the Technical Team on August 22, 2003. Discussion and commentary following this presentation centered on the criteria that would help us to determine which systems should be assessed further in the second phase of the Future Assessment. It was agreed that the geographic specificity of a data system's primary data element and the timeliness of availability of data were useful criteria for determining which systems should be included. TT members advised that the criticality of data elements to environmental health analysis should be the dominant criteria for determining which systems are most apt for incorporation of their information infrastructure into the EPHTN. There was additional presentation and discussion around the high-level vision and business requirements for the EPHTN. The TT advised that identifying the clients, users, or stakeholders of the EPHTN is the most important preliminary task in conducting a needs assessment. It was agreed by the TT members that in the short term the EPHTN should follow the character of a physical integrated data repository, where data is imported in a more ad hoc fashion. In planning for the long-term implementation, the EPHTN should work towards supporting provider control and stewardship of data content and system functionality. This type of network architecture would lend to a more virtual integrated data repository. Translating this into a high-level business requirement, the EPHT program should work towards creating a virtual integrated data repository, but at any given time and especially at the beginning stages of implementation, it should also support a physical repository.

The TT met for a final meeting in April 2004 to discuss the key requirements of the EPHTN. TT members gave commentary on two themes that we identified as key requirements for a successful EPHTN architecture.

- For successful implementation of an ongoing standards-based network of environment, health, and linked environmental health data, we should encourage and assist surveillance systems to comply with and implement one of two national electronic data sharing initiatives: PHIN and NEIEN. In particular, the dissemination, analysis, visualization, and reporting specifications of these initiatives are crucial to the success of an EPHTN.
- EPHT programs should assist environmental and health surveillance systems in augmenting existing data, improving data quality, and operationalizing their systems for linkage in space and time. Two technologies to assist in accomplishing this should be built out by the EPHTN and marketed to surveillance systems: centralized geocoding services and automated spatial linkage components. Crucial to the integration of environmental and health data is the adoption of enterprise-wide standards for spatio-temporal linkage.

In general, the TT agreed that these architectural approaches would be appealing to surveillance systems that are greatly concerned with confidentiality, privacy, client access and responsible use of their data. Cautioning that data quality must always be taken into account before performing any type of data integration or interpretation, the TT members argued that this type of distributed architecture puts more control in the hands of data system owners, while at the same time giving them access to technical resources (e.g. expertise in spatial enterprise functions, plus software, hardware, and data investments by our program) that they otherwise would not have.

EVALUATION WORKGROUP

This workgroup was designed to assist in the development and implementation of program evaluation strategies in order to (1) enhance the ongoing planning process; (2) identify impediments encountered and solutions applied to complete all required planning and pilot project components; and (3) evaluate the content, adequacy, and quality of proposed plans for an EPHTN in California. This workgroup has assisted in:

- Reviewing credible information about the program gathered by staff that helps answer questions about the program.
- Developing agreed upon standards and methods by which to judge evaluation conclusions that reflect values held by stakeholders, and draft recommendations based on those conclusions.
- Ensuring that lessons learned from the evaluation are presented to stakeholders in a clear and useful format.
- Identifying evaluation questions and tools.

A detailed description of this workgroup's activities can be found in SECTION 5.j - Recipient Activity j: Project Evaluation on p141.

Meetings at a Glance

Table 1: Planning Consortium Meetings at a Glance

Meeting #	Theme	Date	Attendance
1.	Introduction to Tracking and solicitation of Planning Consortium ideas for effective tracking directions, Guidelines for dialogue were agreed to, small group.	March 7, 2003	27
2.	Planning Consortium Timeline and Milestones, SB702 Report and Environmental Indicators discussions, Criteria Development for Reviewing SB702 Recommendations.	June 16, 2003	20
3.	Needs Assessment and Overview of Central Valley/South Coast Pilot Project.	October 23, 2003	17
4.	Developing Guidelines and Action Agenda for CEHTP.	March 19, 2004	31
5.	CEHTP as a tool for NGOs and Pilot Project Findings. Guest presenter, LBACA.	July 30, 2004	29
6.	Environmental Justice Workshop Panel and EJ Presentation by EPA Region 9	December 14, 2004	30
7.	EJ discussion, Data Use Guidelines, InfoAlamedaCounty.	February 18, 2005	33
8.	EJ Educational Dialogue, Cost Mapping, Atlanta CDC meeting, guest presenter Rajiv Bhatia.	June 3, 2005	30
9.	Interim Assessment and Final Report Outline.	October 6, 2005	20

Detailed meeting agendas and meeting summaries are included in APPENDIX K: Planning Consortium Materials.

Intended Outcomes for Each Meeting

MEETING 1 INTENDED OUTCOMES

- Understand the background and intended outcomes of our program.
- Understand how the project is structured and the role and function of the Planning Consortium.
- Learn about each other’s perspectives on the current challenges, strengths, and needs around environmental health tracking and the functions and characteristics of an ideal tracking system.
- Identify a work process and next steps for the Planning Consortium.

MEETING 2 INTENDED OUTCOMES

- Increase understanding of environmental health indicators.

- Provide feedback on SB 702 report recommendations.
- Learn about the activities and progress of the Technical Team, Needs Assessment Team and the Pilot project.

MEETING 3 INTENDED OUTCOMES

- Learn about CEHTP's new Central Valley/South Coast pilot project and how it relates to current efforts.
- Engage in discussion and respond to SB 702 report recommendations.
- Learn about needs assessment activities and provide feedback on survey distribution strategies.
- Provide feedback on stakeholder input activities and potential uses of data from the Alameda County Pilot Project.

MEETING 4 INTENDED OUTCOMES

- Learn about the scope and activities of a local environmental health agency and how they relate to Environmental Health Tracking.
- Discuss possible guiding principles for the California Environmental Health Tracking Program.
- Determine processes, issues, and schedules for future meetings.

MEETING 5 INTENDED OUTCOMES

- Share information and network.
- Get updates on program and legislative activities.
- Learn about asthma findings from the Alameda County Pilot Project.
- Learn about the data gathering and advocacy efforts of the Long Beach Alliance for Children with Asthma and discuss how their efforts can inform other Provide input on the Data Use Guidelines for California.
- Learn about challenges involved in accessing data for tracking purposes.

MEETING 6 INTENDED OUTCOMES

- Share information and network.
- Get updates on program and legislative activities.
- Learn about UCBAPE-CEHTP sponsored workshop for environmental justice organizations.
- Discuss EPA's plans for developing environmental justice assessment methods.
- Provide input on the MOU regarding data sharing between Cal/EPA and CDHS.
- Provide input on the Data Use Guidelines for California.
- Discuss future program strategies and directions.

MEETING 7 INTENDED OUTCOMES

- Share information and network.
- Get updates on program and legislative activities.
- Discuss the process and role of Planning Consortium members in addressing Environmental Justice issues in planning and implementing an EPHTN in California.
- Learn about and provide input on data dissemination strategies
- Provide input on the Data Use Guidelines for our program.
- Discuss next steps for the Planning Consortium.

MEETING 8 INTENDED OUTCOMES

- Share information and network.
- Discuss and develop shared understanding of key terms and issues related to environmental justice.
- Obtain updates on program and legislative activities.
- Discuss the California Environmental Quality Act to bring environmental health and justice perspectives to land use decisions; identify how these issues may relate to the tracking initiative.
- Learn about and provide input on cost maps that utilizes Asthma indicators for Alameda County.
- Discuss next steps for the Planning Consortium.

MEETING 9 INTENDED OUTCOMES

- Share information and network.
- Learn about and discuss the interim assessment (survey results) of the Planning Consortium. Discuss what the findings mean and how to utilize findings to improve the Planning Consortium process.
- Obtain updates on program and legislative activities.
- Learn about our program's final report to CDC. Discuss the outline for the final report and how Planning Consortium members may contribute to specific sections.

5.d.2. Challenges and Barriers

The challenges of working with a Planning Consortium continue to be:

- Condensing a lot of information into a short meeting.
- Allowing enough time for feedback and discussion from Planning Consortium members.

- Adjusting to newly participating Planning Consortium members and getting new members “up to speed” on tracking.
- Managing the expectations of Planning Consortium members and keeping the focus on the goals for Tracking so that members don’t fall into the misapprehension that EPHT will be the final solution to all environmental health issues.
- Communicating effectively with Planning Consortium members between meetings.
- Balancing the interests and agendas of a very diverse stakeholder group that has a lot of expectations about the tracking initiative.

5.d.3. Lessons Learned

- Overall, despite the many challenges, Planning Consortium members have been actively engaged in EPHT, have provided invaluable input, and are strong partners in the development of an EPHTN. We have made great strides toward ensuring that members become and remain key partners.
- There is no single method of involving and engaging stakeholders - what works for one stakeholder may not work for others.
- Key aspects to partnership with the Planning Consortium include:
 - The Planning Consortium process provides tangible results in gaining the support of stakeholders regarding program development.
 - The Planning Consortium process supports the development of a governance structure that creates program ownership among members.
 - Having an independent, outside consultant as a meeting facilitator as well as an NGO co-chair is critical for the Planning Consortium to have a sense of shared decision-making and impartiality

5.d.4. Recommendations

- At the state level, to fully integrate partners in a meaningful way, a consortium or other entity should advise EPHT programs on priorities, methods, and implementation, and should have a genuine role in the decision making process, along with the principal investigator or program manager and other relevant officials. This consortium should include representatives from federal, state and local health and environmental agencies, tribal governments and agencies, data system owners, environmental and environmental health groups, groups representing the interests of health effected individuals, community-based organizations, and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The consortium should have an EPHT program co-chair and a non-governmental group co-chair. The consortium should advise the EPHT programs on tracking priorities, methods, and implementation, and should go beyond an advisory function and have decision-making authority, along with the principal investigator.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH TRACKING PROGRAM

- As we move into the implementation phases of Tracking, we should continue to look to individual members of the Technical Team for commentary and evaluation of individual components.
- An Interagency Working Group, composed of representatives from Cal/EPA, University of California, USEPA Region 9, the California Conference of Local Health Officers, and various agencies within the California Department of Health Services (including the Division of Environmental and Occupational Disease Control) should be organized. This group should address interagency planning and implementation issues (including data sharing, and continued or new agency support regarding the initiative). Products from this working group could include (a) establishing new policies and procedures regarding data collection and data sharing including development and monitoring of memoranda of understanding; (b) identifying strategies for improving inter/intra agency communication and responding to agency concerns regarding environmental health tracking, and (c) identifying opportunities for collaboration including new pilot projects, outreach and capacity building, or training for county health departments and other stakeholders.
- EPHT programs should discover what various stakeholder groups need in order to participate. Determine what the motivations and barriers are for participation and involvement.