

Tip Sheet – Guidance for Participant Identification

MAPP is intended to result in the development and implementation of a community-wide strategic plan for public health improvement. Therefore, for the plan to be realistically implemented, it must be developed through broad participation by persons who share the commitment to and responsibility for the community's health and overall well-being. It is unlikely that key implementers will simply adopt the recommendations of a plan for which they had no input. The commitment to implementation will come from the sense of ownership that results from participating in the plan's development.

Framework for Participant Selection

Consider the following issues when identifying and recruiting participants for the MAPP process:

- *Who plays a role in the local public health system?* It is important to include individuals that have a hand in providing public health services. The Essential Public Health Services framework (described below) provides a good starting point.
- *What broad, cross-sectorial participation is needed?* The MAPP Committee should be representative of the overall community. A broad cross-section of residents and organizations is needed for members to be truly representative of the perceptions, interests, and needs of the entire community.
- *What other criteria do they meet?* Consider other issues, such as expertise and access to key assets and resources, the need for diversity and inclusiveness, and long-term availability and interest.

Identifying Possible Participants through the Essential Public Health Services

The Essential Public Health Services provide a useful framework for determining who is responsible for the community's health and well-being. The services reflect core processes used in public health to promote health and prevent disease. Thus, potential participants in the MAPP process would include individuals, organizations, and other entities that contribute to the delivery of one or more of the ten services identified below.

- Monitor health status to identify community health problems
- Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community
- Inform, educate and empower people about health issues
- Mobilize community partnership to identify and solve health problems
- Develop policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts.
- Enforce laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety
- Link people to need personal health services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable
- Assure a competent public health and personal healthcare workforce
- Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility and quality of personal and population-based health services
- Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems.

The Essential Services will be used further in MAPP's Local Public Health System Assessment as a framework for measuring the performance and capacity of the public health system. Because MAPP results in a strategic plan for improving community health and for creating and strengthening the local public health system, all entities that contribute to the Essential Services should be included throughout the process.

Identifying a Broad Cross-Section of Representation

The following is a list of groups, sectors, and types of organizations that should be considered for participation in the MAPP process. Benefits of inclusion and other considerations are also detailed.

Community representatives: The participation of community members in the MAPP process is essential, not only for obtaining a complete understanding of the community's needs and interests, but also for the development and implementation of workable strategies. In addition to receiving public health services, community members may participate in the delivery of essential services, for instance, informing others about health issues. Community representatives might best be defined as residents and/or consumers of public health services. Representatives might be identified through outreach to clubs and other neighborhood organizations or from the clientele of local providers. It is important to distinguish community representatives from representatives of community-based providers who, while important, may bring a formal provider perspective to the process. Seek diverse representation and new viewpoints, being careful not to limit participation to those who typically represent a community.

Governmental agencies: In addition to the local public health authority or board of health, other agencies contribute to the health of a community. Other governmental agencies may address such issues as aging, social services, environmental protection, mental health, substance abuse, sanitation, and economic development. Including these organizations in the MAPP process helps to more broadly establish and enforce policies that protect the community's health and leverage resources.

Medical care providers: Medical care providers might be represented through local hospitals; health systems; community health centers; emergency medical services; managed care organizations; and professional associations representing nurses, physicians, etc. Participation in the MAPP process increases these representatives' awareness of and appreciation for traditional public health activities, fostering a stronger integration of medical care and public health services.

Education: The MAPP process may benefit from participation by local schools and institutions of higher learning. Outside of the family, schools are one of the few institutions with regular and sustained access to young people. Schools often contribute directly to the essential public health services and can provide the larger public health community with access to this important population. The relationship between education, economic opportunity, and health status suggests that schools are an important partner in the MAPP process. Finally, institutions of higher education, such as community colleges, universities, schools of public health, nursing, and medicine, contribute to several essential services related to assuring a competent workforce, evaluation of services, and research.

Criminal justice: In many communities, the criminal justice and law enforcement systems are valuable partners for public health. The increasing recognition of violence as a public health issue, coupled with the longstanding concerns about substance abuse, provide points of common interest for the public health and criminal justice systems. Additionally, correctional health programs are a vehicle for the delivery of public health services, while community policing programs may provide a mechanism for further community engagement. Other possible participants might come from the local court system and sheriff's office.

Environmental organizations: While public health work is often prompted by environmental factors (e.g., asthma and lead poisoning), representation from environmental organizations is sometimes overlooked in participatory and collaborative public health initiatives. Appropriate representatives might be found in community-based and non-governmental agencies, forest services, and fish and wildlife departments.

Faith community: In many areas, the faith community can be a powerful force for broadly disseminating public health messages and engaging residents in healthy behaviors. In addition to neighborhood churches and synagogues, representatives of larger religious membership organizations might be included in the MAPP process.

Business community: By providing employment and economic livelihood, businesses play a critical role in community health and well-being. Through employee wellness programs, worksite safety initiatives, and other activities, the business community contributes to the delivery of some essential public health services. The need for productive and healthy employees and reduced health care costs should provide the business community with incentive to participate.

Philanthropy: Local foundations might participate on the MAPP Committee as supporters of public health services and programs. Through its participation, the philanthropic community becomes aware of the needs and preferred strategies identified through the process and also recognizes that efforts in the community are being coordinated. The knowledge gained through the MAPP process may then be used to encourage subsequent grant-making efforts.

Other Participants: Other organizations or sectors may also be appropriate for participation in the MAPP process. These might include policy and advocacy organizations and coalitions that focus on specific or broader public health issues. Consider representatives that, while not explicitly focused on public health, have the potential to contribute to the health of the community. These might include organizations concerned with issues such as job training, youth development, housing, community economic development, etc. Finally, consider inviting representatives from the media. These individuals may provide valuable advice and input throughout the process and may be helpful in disseminating information and engaging the community.