



Bipartisan Policy Center

Public Health Forward

Modernizing the U.S. Public
Health System

December 1, 2021

What is Public Health Forward?

- Coalition led by the Bipartisan Policy Center, national public health associations, and philanthropies to articulate a five-year vision for governmental public health in the U.S. and an actionable framework for state and local elected and health officials to reach this vision.
- While the focus is on state and local officials, the initiative recognizes the critical role of the federal government and the private sector to complement these activities in order to improve the public's health.
- The initiative comes at a time of opportunity as there has been a significant short-term infusion of resources to support public health activities and the workforce in response to COVID-19.
- The initiative also comes at a challenging point for governmental public health given the politicization of public health over the course of the pandemic.

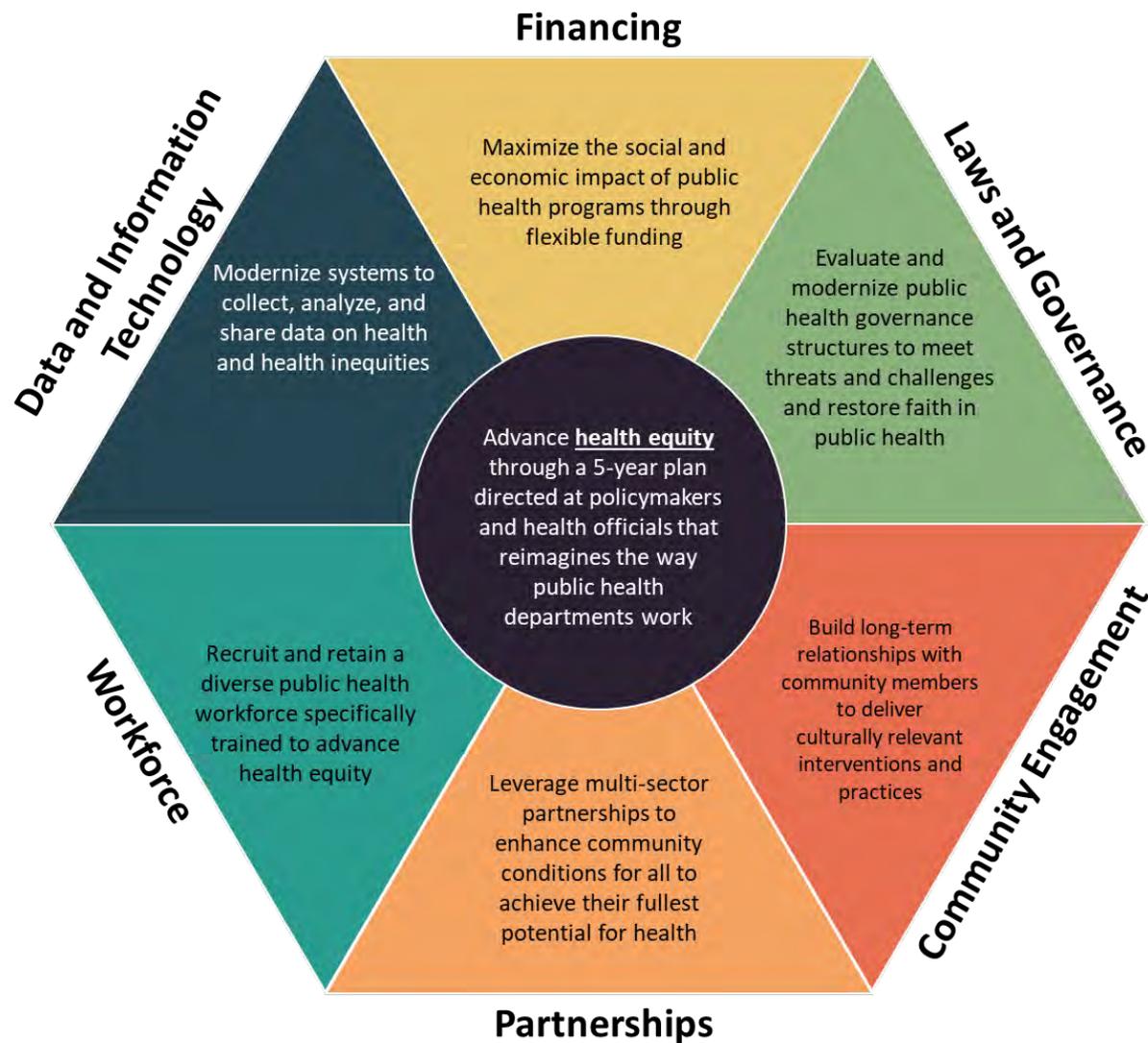
Public Health Forward Task Force

- **Mike Beebe**, Former Governor, Arkansas
- **Mary Ann Borgeson**, Commissioner, Douglas County, Nebraska
- **Michael Curry**, Esq., President and CEO, Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers; Member, National Board of Directors, NAACP
- **Matt Eyles**, President and CEO, America's Health Insurance Plans
- **Charlotte Haberaecker**, President and CEO, Lutheran Services in America
- **James Madara**, M.D., CEO & Executive Vice President, American Medical Association
- **Sly James**, Former Mayor, Kansas City, Missouri
- **John Kasich**, Former Governor, Ohio
- **Ron Nirenberg**, Mayor, San Antonio, Texas
- **Phyllis J. Randall**, Chair At-Large, Loudoun County, Virginia, Board of Supervisors
- **Michael Rell**, Mayor, Wethersfield, Connecticut
- **Kristen Silverberg**, Executive Vice President for Policy, Business Roundtable
- **Jonathan Singer**, Former State Representative, Colorado
- **Deb Soholt**, Former State Senator, South Dakota

Vision

- In 2026, the United States is becoming a healthier nation because elected and public health officials seized the historic opportunity to invest in new and transformative ways to modernize the governmental public health system.
- In a healthier America:
 - Advances in health equity continue to be made through partnerships with various sectors and community engagements
 - Sufficient, predictable, and flexible public health funding supports the public health system
 - A robust, modern, interoperable, and secure public health information system delivers real-time, accurate, and actionable
 - Modernized laws, policies, and statutes protect and promote the public's health
 - A highly skilled, trained, and diverse public health workforce provides evidence-informed programs and services

Framework for a 21st Century Public Health System



Finance

- Action #1: Provide flexible funding and maximize existing assets to support public health services and capabilities, including those needed to address health inequities.
- Action #2: Evaluate the social and economic impact of public health programs and strategies.

EXAMPLE: *Costing the Foundational Public Health Services in Ohio*, released in 2019, assesses the current levels of spending on core public health programs and functions, and the resource gaps that exist, in every local public health department across the state.

Data and Information Technology

- Action #1: Strengthen the collection of timely and actionable public health data to guide programs, respond to emergencies, and address health inequities.
- Action #2: Invest in data sharing between public health departments and health care entities.

EXAMPLE: The Oregon legislature passed a bill in 2020 that requires health care providers to collect information on race, ethnicity, language, disability, and other demographic information at health care encounters related to COVID-19, and to share this information with the Oregon Health Authority (OHA).

Workforce

- Action #1: Invest in the recruitment and retention of a diverse and inclusive governmental public health workforce.
- Action #2: Improve hiring and promotion policies and processes to ensure high-quality public health services.

EXAMPLE: The Tennessee Legislature passed the TEAM Act in 2012 to reform the state human resources system and establish a pay-for-performance program; the state also created the position of Chief Learning Officer to direct professional growth and build a learning environment across state government.

Public Health Laws and Governance

- Action #1: Review, evaluate, and modernize public health governance structures and statutory responsibilities.
- Action #2: Support and clearly communicate the roles of public health departments to the public.

EXAMPLE: In Indiana, a 15-member Governor's Public Health Commission will examine the state's preparedness for health emergencies, funding plans, governance models at the state and local levels, and data collection measures.

Partnerships

- Action #1: Incentivize partnerships between public health departments and other sectors (e.g., housing, food, transportation) and stakeholders (e.g., business, faith-based organizations, health care).
- Action #2: Establish a dedicated body charged with routinely monitoring, assessing, and influencing the implications for health in all government sector policy discussions.

EXAMPLE: The Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, partnering with the Kansas City, Mo., Health Department & the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City, helped pave the way for new laws across the region restricting tobacco sales to youth under 21.

Community Engagement

- Action #1: Invest in long-term relationship-building and partnership development with residents and community-based organizations (particularly those serving communities experiencing health inequities) and in Tribal consultation.
- Action #2: Invest in the capacity of CBOs and provide resources to support collaboration with public health departments.

EXAMPLE: PHRASES (Public Health Reaching Across Sectors) is a program that provides research-based tools and messaging to help public health leaders effectively communicate the value of public health and to build stronger relationships with partners and communities.

Next Steps for State & Local Policymakers

- Learn about federal public health investments through COVID-19 relief legislation that have come to states and localities
- Prioritize *Public Health Forward* recommendations that are most appropriate for your jurisdiction
- Consult with public health officials & non-governmental organizations in implementing recommendations



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