

Introduction

The New Orleans Health Department (NOHD) has undergone dramatic transformation in the past two years. With a shift from providing direct services to a public health framework based in assessment, assurance, and policy development, NOHD has assumed a new, exciting role in the community. The department has forged relationships across sectors and established itself as a strong convener, capable of facilitating health improvement by linking, leveraging, and aligning local resources.

The department will use this strategic plan to sustain momentum and achieve the objectives set in collaboration with the community.

Strategic Planning Process

This plan represents months of critical thought and effort on the part of NOHD staff. The transformation of a department takes time, patience, and constant attention to strategic questions. NOHD believes it is important to document the foundations of the process, which occurred as part of the original transformation plan and served to inform the current strategic plan. The timeline in Figure 1 outlines key events in the strategic planning process, which are described in detail below.

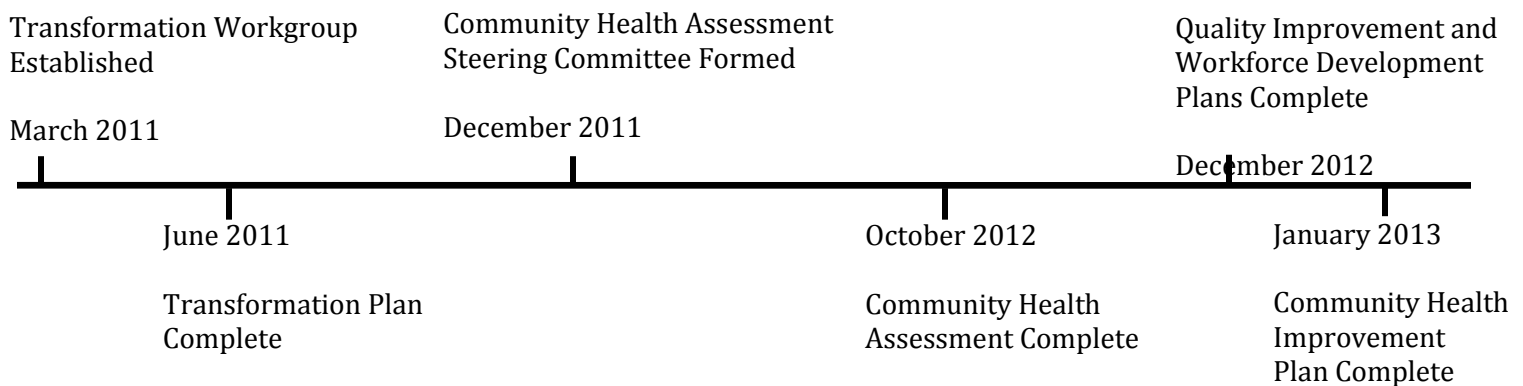


Figure 1: Strategic Planning Timeline

In March 2011, department leadership requested volunteers to join a Transformation Workgroup, which would be responsible for developing an internally focused Transformation Strategic Plan. All program leads and many support staff stepped forward to participate in the workgroup. Beginning March 31, 2011, Charles West, from the City Information Technology and Innovation Services (ITI) Department, facilitated a series of 2 hour, biweekly meetings. During these meetings the workgroup explored crucial questions including- why NOHD exists and what it hopes to achieve; the principles and beliefs that will guide NOHD’s behavior; the services NOHD will offer; the external conditions that the organization must respond to; and the internal structures necessary to organize and support the organization.

The plan was finalized on June 30, 2011. The resulting document laid out the department’s new vision, mission, values, a SWOT, and key initiatives needed to transform. When the Public Health Accreditation Board standards and measures version 1.0 were released in July, NOHD cross-walked them with the identified initiatives, deciding to use this guidance as a roadmap for achieving the desired transformation.

As the internally focused Transformation Strategic Plan moved forward, the department began to engage in collaborative, community-centered work on some of the most crucial health challenges facing New Orleanians- nutrition, fitness, access to care, and violence. Concurrently, NOHD assembled a steering committee to conduct a comprehensive community health assessment and community health improvement planning effort.

With the data from the community health assessment and input from the community regarding their desired areas of focus, the department's administrative team met on December 10, 2012 to update the SWOT analysis to reflect the current state of the organization and the environment. This exercise proved valuable to see how far the organization had come since the first SWOT as well as to highlight new assets and identify areas where attention or improvements are required.

The improved administrative structure of the department facilitated opportunities for gathering useful organizational data to further inform the strategic plan. Input from the department's newly established Quality Council and results from the workforce development assessment issued in September 2012 informed the health department infrastructure section, with feedback regarding key organizational challenges/opportunities and important skill areas to build staff capacity. The department's basic performance management system, established in 2011 and enhanced in 2012, provided useful guidance for how the department will measure success for each of its strategic objectives.

Finally, the community health improvement plan (CHIP), completed in December 2012 provided substantial direction to the department's strategic plan. NOHD aims to align department priorities with those issues that are most important to the community, as laid out in the CHIP. The objectives and performance targets of the strategic plan reflect the content of the CHIP as aligned with City and department priorities.

Contributors

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External Support

Mayor's Office of Performance and Accountability
Charles West, Former Information Technology and Innovation Services Consultant