

# **Strategic Practice Selection Exercise**

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# Strategic Practice Selection Exercise

Standards for health departments include a three part process of planning. Part 1 is a community health needs assessment where priorities are arrived with as much supporting local or state data possible. Topics considered may be quite broad and are then narrowed to a few that are important to the community and have great potential to be solved. Part 2 is a strategic plan<sup>1</sup>, assessing the availability, affordability, accessibility, and utility of current interventions to solve the problem. Part 3 consists of an implementation plan with identified sources of funding, leaders/agencies, and time frame (1).

This exercise focuses on Part 2. To do this, we have used generic information, and evaluated for “most health departments” and most localities, however defined. Priorities, often assigned by communities/states, were based on expert opinion and recommendations found in the public health literature (2-7) (The process is not described here). The three priorities are: tobacco use prevention and cessation, mitigation of diabetes in the complex of obesity, and clinical public health preventive services. Each priority contributes to a sizable proportion of avoidable annual deaths (435,000, 365,000, and 140,000 respectively) (6, 8). Readers who share these priorities could with this exercise tailor the strategy findings to their community and then flesh out a community-based implementation plan.

Important components of strategic planning for each of the public health priorities include a selection of interventions that work (“strength of evidence”), the “potential intervention delivery and coverage” profile, and “community acceptability.” Intervention-specific “strength of evidence” is based upon recommendations from various national efforts to evaluate the efficacy evidence: The Community Guide to Preventive Services (9), Clinical Preventive Services Task Force (10-17), the Joint National Committee on Prevention, Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Pressure (18), and others (19). The selected priority areas are shown to have strong intervention potential for public health (2, 3, 20-25). Vilnius and Dandoy proposed a rating system, beginning too with a small set of priorities, evaluating all interventions at once, and sketching acceptability in terms of deal breakers (“PEARL” whereas, we have created a continuum of willing to implement an public health priority intervention).

Potential intervention delivery and coverage consists of an estimate of the at-risk population (percent of the population), the extent to which an intervention has already been taken up, and whether the population at risk is reachable and can be served effectively. These factors, unique to individual communities or types of communities, may be adjusted to suit local situations, including whether a health department’s reach or population health is the goal. Scoring was conducted drawing on experience and the public health literature (26-32).

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<sup>1</sup> Strategic plan or strategic planning in the context of this exercise is intended to describe a strategic practice selection process for choosing public health interventions, not to be confused with the Public Health Accreditation Board’s public health department accreditation application strategic plan pre-requisite.

Community acceptability pertains when the intervention is laden with cultural, political, ease of use, availability barriers or is perceived as not the job of public health. This assessment may be heavily influenced again by local situations and be tailored to better reflect one’s location. Factors rated qualitatively were: applicability to health departments; utility to local health departments; reliability of implementation; ease of monitoring implementation; applicable to a broad range of communities; low controversy potential; and low resource or cost requirement. The qualitative rating of 1-5 stars was converted to percentage of stars assigned out of all possible (7 criteria x 5 = 35).

Table 1 summarizes all the information assembled for the strategic plan by public health priorities. By public health priority, Tables II.A-C identify interventions and their delivery and coverage potential. Table III.A. describes the community acceptability rating of interventions targeted by public health department(s). Tables III.B-D rates intervention acceptability to the community by public health priority. Table IV summarizes public health department implementation potential for each intervention.

**Table I. Likelihood of Saving Lives Implementing Highly Rated Public Health Interventions**

Public Health Priorities	Possible Number of Deaths Averted	Potential Intervention Delivery and Coverage	Strength of Evidence <sup>a</sup>	Baseline	Intervention Delivery and Coverage Applied to Annual Lives Saved <sup>b</sup>	Community Acceptability (Table III)
<b>Tobacco</b>	435,000 (8)	1.5-5.6% (smokers)	A	All smokers: 18.2% Adults: 22.8%(8) HS students: 23.0% (33)	1,000-272,400	57-94%
<b>Diabetes/Obesity</b>	365,000 (8)	0.12-3.9%	B-A	59% overweight/obese(34) <sup>c</sup> 6.0-9.0% adult diabetics (34-36)	600-158,000	63-80%
<b>Public Health Clinical Services</b>	140,000 (6) <sup>d</sup>	0.27-31.4%	B-A	HD & Aspirin Use: 3.8% Diabetics using Aspirin Use: 5.6% (34-37)	2,800-140,000	69-94%

<sup>a</sup> Intervention-specific “strength of evidence” is based upon recommendations from various national efforts to evaluate the efficacy evidence: The Community Guide to Preventive Services(9), Clinical Preventive Services Task Force (10-17), the Joint National Committee on Prevention, Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Pressure (18), and others (19). A=strong evidence; B=sufficient evidence

<sup>b</sup> These annual lives saved may be augmented when interventions are implemented in concert

<sup>c</sup> Overweight : BMI=25-29.9; obese: BMI≥30.0

<sup>d</sup> The average of deaths attributable to the factors of low education, low social support, individual level poverty, and income inequality

**Table II.A. Tobacco Intervention Delivery and Coverage Worksheet**

<b>Interventions</b>	<b>Proportion of Population At Risk</b>	<b>Intervention Uptake</b>	<b>Reachable</b>	<b>Effectively Served</b>	<b>Percent of Population Affected (Subgroup)</b>
<b>Increase Price of Tobacco Products (4, 39, 40)</b>	18.2% <sup>c</sup>	8%	99%	95%	1.5% <sup>a</sup> (smokers)
<b>Limit Youth Access to Tobacco (4, 38)</b>	7.1%	90%	95%	95%	5.7% (youth smokers)
<b>Avert Exposures to Second and Third-Hand Smoke (4, 40, 41)</b>	43% 1.7% (children)	10%	75%	85%	2.7% (passive smokers) 0.1% (passive smokers-children)
<b>“5 As” Approach to Cessation (20, 42, 43)</b>	20%	50%	90%	50%	4.5% (smokers)
<b>Limit Visibility of Tobacco (4, 38)</b>	100%	90%	70%	10%	6.3% <sup>a</sup> (population) 1.6% <sup>b</sup> (children) 1.3% (smokers)
<sup>a</sup> Prevalence in entire population <sup>b</sup> Youth, 15-19 year olds =7.1%, children, <15 years =20% of the population <sup>c</sup> Age weighted smoking prevalence in the whole population					

**Table II.B. Diabetes/Obesity Intervention Delivery and Coverage Worksheet**

<b>Interventions(22)</b>	<b>Proportion of Population At Risk</b>	<b>Intervention Uptake</b>	<b>Reachable</b>	<b>Effectively Served</b>	<b>Percent of Population Affected (Subgroup)</b>
<b>Clinical Screening and Weight Loss Counseling (15, 43)(overweight and obese)</b>	Population <sup>a</sup> : 58% Children:17% (22) Adults:73% (22)	20%	Children: 90% Adults: 68.3% (44) Population: 74.2%	50%	4.3% (population) 1.5% (overweight children) (22) 5.0% (overweight adults)
<b>Shift to Healthier Diets (fruits and vegetables) (4, 22, 43)</b>	76.5%	10%	10%	50%	4.8% (unhealthy eaters) (25, 45)
<b>Enhanced Physical Activity (4, 13)</b>	No leisure time PA: 60.7% (44)  No exercise: 75.8% (44)	10%	10%	20%	0.1% (exercisers) 0.2% (engaged in PA) (13, 22, 25, 45)
<b>Enhanced Glycemic Control through Disease and Case Management (12, 14, 25, 28, 46)</b>	8.4% (44)	50%	50%	20% (28, 46)	0.4% (diabetics) (12, 25)
<b>Access to Places for Physical Activity (4, 13)</b>	75%	10%	20% <sup>b</sup>	1.27 times <sup>b</sup> (22, 29)	1.9 % population (22)

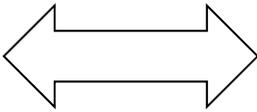
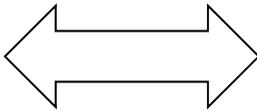
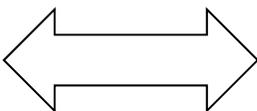
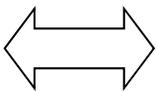
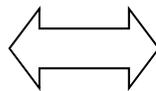
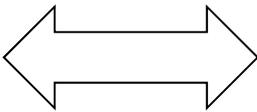
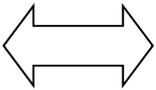
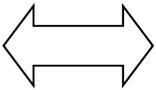
<sup>a</sup> Age weighted prevalence

<sup>b</sup> Depends greatly on the amount of community area revamped

**Table II.C. Clinical Public Health Services Delivery and Coverage Worksheet**

<b>Interventions</b>	<b>Proportion of Population At Risk</b>	<b>Intervention Uptake</b>	<b>Reachable</b>	<b>Effectively Served</b>	<b>Percent of Population Affected (Subgroup)</b>
<b>Vaccine Delivery (9, 43)</b>	Flu, population: 100% Flu, adults >64: 31.9% Pneumo vaccine, adults >64: 12.4%	Flu, population: 69.8 Flu, adults >64: 69.8% Pneumo, adults >64: 68.1%	Influenza: 50% Pneumo: 85%	90% 90%	53% (population) 6.6% (adults>64) 2.3%pneumo (adults >64)
<b>Clinical Reminder Systems for Preventive Care (9)</b>	72% (47)	50%	100%	50%	19%
<b>Colorectal Cancer Screening (43, 48)</b>	Adults over 50: 24%	Adults over 50: 62.6% (49)	10%	85%	1% population
<b>Screening and Treatment for Hypertension (2, 16, 18, 43)</b>	HBP: 29.6% HD: 1.7%	67%	67%	85%	11.2% (population) 0.4% (HD) 0.7% (diabetes)
<b>Aspirin for Those with Heart Disease (2, 17, 43)</b>	HD: 3.7% diabetes: 3.1%	At-risk, HD: 64.8% (37) At-risk, diabetes: 37.4% (37)	80%	85%	1.2% (HD) 0.3% (diabetes) <sup>a</sup>
<sup>a</sup> PLUS >8% decline in cancer among 20 yr aspirin users (50)					

**Table III.A. Community Acceptability Rating of Interventions Targeted by Public Health Department(s) (PHD)**

Acceptability Components	*****	****	***	**	*
<b>Applicability to health departments</b>	Consonant with PHD mission and traditional roles	Perhaps new to PHD repertoire but similar in characteristics to other interventions/ populations	General consensus that the activity is worthwhile but the implementation lacks enthusiasm from all sectors	Genuine difference of local opinion about PHD role in the intervention	Viewed as outré and not helpful to the community or whole population
<b>Utility to local health departments</b>	Similar target population, personnel required that PHD already uses				Target population and necessary personnel is totally new to the PHD
<b>Reliability of implementation</b>	One implementation protocol fits all				Implementation protocol for each community, subpopulation, time period, etc
<b>Ease of monitoring implementation</b>	Simple, straightforward intervention				Intricate intervention with many steps, a hierarchy of implementation or many contacts
<b>Applicable to a broad range of communities</b>	Variability of intervention uptake is low		Variability of intervention uptake is moderate		Variability of intervention uptake is high
<b>Low controversy potential</b>	Addresses protection of the entire population				Addresses illegal activity, a subpopulation in disfavor, or uses an intervention with dis-benefits
<b>Low resource or cost requirement</b>	High cost, intensity of trained personnel, or many FTEs		Moderate cost, intensity of trained personnel, or FTEs		Low cost, intensity of trained personnel, or few FTEs

**Table III.B. Community Acceptability of Tobacco Interventions Targeted by Public Health Department(s)**

	<b>Increase Price of Tobacco Products (4, 39, 40)</b>	<b>Limit Youth Access to Tobacco (4, 38)</b>	<b>Avert Exposures to Second and Third-hand Smoke (4, 40, 41)</b>	<b>“5 As” Approach to Cessation (20, 42, 43)</b>	<b>Limit Visibility of Tobacco (4, 38)</b>
<b>Applicability to health departments</b>	State***** Local*	*****	*****	****	**
<b>Utility to local health departments</b>	*****	**	**	****	**
<b>Reliability of implementation</b>	*****	***	Public areas ***** Homes*	****	**
<b>Ease of monitoring implementation</b>	*****	****	Public areas ***** Homes*	***	***
<b>Applicable to a broad range of communities</b>	*****	*****	*****	*****	*****
<b>Low controversy potential</b>	***	*****	****	*****	***
<b>Low resource or cost requirement</b>	*****	*****	*****	**	****
<b>Overall Rating</b>	83-94%	83%	66-89%	77%	57%

\*\*\*\*\* means best; \*worst. These are qualitative ratings; percentages are provided to make consistent with other numerical ratings. A health department could insert a different estimation based upon their access to certain populations or current programming levels. To convert individual qualitative rating (stars) to a quantitative rating, 5 stars=80-100%, 4 stars=60-80%, 3 stars=40-60%, 2 stars= 20-40%, and 1 star=0-20%.

**Table III.C. Community Acceptability of Diabetes/Obesity Interventions Targeted by Public Health Departments(s)**

	<b>Clinical Screening and Weight Loss Counseling (15)</b>	<b>Shift to Healthier Diets (22)</b>	<b>Enhanced Physical Activity (13)</b>	<b>Enhanced Glycemic Control through Disease and Case Management (12, 14, 28, 46)</b>	<b>Access to Places for Physical Activity (13)</b>
<b>Applicability to health departments</b>	****	****	***	***	**
<b>Utility to local health departments</b>	****	***	***	***	**
<b>Reliability of implementation</b>	***	**	**	***	**
<b>Ease of monitoring implementation</b>	****	**	**	****	**
<b>Applicable to a broad range of communities</b>	*****	*****	*****	***	*****
<b>Low controversy potential</b>	*****	****	*****	*****	*****
<b>Low resource or cost requirement</b>	***	*****	*****	**	****
<b>Overall Rating</b>	80%	71%	71%	66%	63%

\*\*\*\*\* means best,\*worst. These are qualitative ratings; percentages are provided to make consistent with other numerical ratings. A health department could insert a different estimation based upon their access to certain populations or current programming levels. To convert individual qualitative rating (stars) to a quantitative rating, 5 stars=80-100%, 4 stars=60-80%, 3 stars=40-60%, 2 stars= 20-40%, and 1 star=0-20%.

**Table III.D. Community Acceptability of Clinical Public Health Interventions Targeted by Health Department(s)**

	<b>Vaccine Delivery (9)</b>	<b>Clinical Reminder Systems for Preventive Care (9)</b>	<b>Colorectal Cancer Screening (48)</b>	<b>Screening and Treatment for Hypertension (16, 18)</b>	<b>Aspirin for Those with Heart Disease (17)</b>
<b>Applicability to health departments</b>	*****	****	*****	***	**
<b>Utility to local health departments</b>	*****	*****	**	***	**
<b>Reliability of implementation</b>	****	****	*****	***	*****
<b>Ease of monitoring implementation</b>	****	*****	***	***	***
<b>Applicable to a broad range of communities</b>	*****	***	*****	*****	****
<b>Low controversy potential</b>	*****	*****	***	*****	***
<b>Low resource or cost requirement</b>	*****	***	***	****	*****
<b>Overall Rating</b>	94%	83%	74%	71%	69%

\*\*\*\*\* means best; \*worst. These are qualitative ratings; percentages are provided to make consistent with other numerical ratings. A health department could insert a different estimation based upon their access to certain populations or current programming levels. To convert individual qualitative rating (stars) to a quantitative rating, 5 stars=80-100%, 4 stars=60-80%, 3 stars=40-60%, 2 stars= 20-40%, and 1 star=0-20%.

<b>Table IV. Summary of Public Health Department Implementation Potential for Each Intervention</b>			
<b>Interventions</b>	<b>Potential Intervention Delivery and Coverage</b>	<b>Community Acceptability (Table III)</b>	<b>Deaths Averted</b>
<b>Tobacco</b>	<b>1.5-5.6% (smokers)</b>	<b>57-94%</b>	<b>1,000-272,400</b>
Increase Price of Tobacco Products (4, 39, 40)	1.5% (smokers)	83-94%	35,900
Limit Youth Access to Tobacco (4, 38)	5.7% (youth)	83%	70,500
Avert Exposures to Second and Third-hand Smoke (4, 40, 41)	2.7% (passive smokers) 0.1% (children)	66-89%	1,000-27,300
“5 As” Approach to Cessation (20, 42, 43)	4.5% (smokers)	77%	107,600
Limit Visibility of Tobacco (4, 38)	6.3% 1.6% (children) 1.3% (smokers)	57%	7,000- 31,100
<b>Diabetes/Obesity</b>	<b>0.12-3.9%</b>	<b>63-80%</b>	<b>600-158,000</b>
Clinical Screening and Weight Loss Counseling (15)	4.3% 1.5% (overweight children) (22) 5% (overweight adults)	80%	25,000-107,400
Shift to Healthier Diets (22)	4.8% (healthy eaters) (25, 45)	71%	22,900
Enhanced Physical Activity (13)	0.1% (exercise) 0.2% (Leisure time PA) (13, 22, 25, 45)	71%	600-1,000
Enhanced Glycemic Control through Disease and Case Management (12, 14, 28, 46)	0.4% (diabetics) (12, 25)	66%	17,400
Access to Places for Physical Activity (13)	1.9% population (22)	63%	9,300
<b>Clinical Public Health Services</b>	<b>0.27-31.4%</b>	<b>69%-94%</b>	<b>2,800-140,000*</b>
Vaccine Delivery (9)	Flu: 53% (population) Flu: 6.6% (adults >64) Pneumo: 2% (adults >64)	94%	2,800-74,200
Clinical Reminder Systems for Preventive Care (9)	19%	83%	35,000
Colorectal Cancer Screening (48)	1% population	74%	5,800
Screening and Treatment for Hypertension (16, 18)	11.2% (population) 0.4% (HD) 0.7% (diabetes)	71%	11,600-53,000
Aspirin for Those with Heart Disease (17)	1.2% (HD) 0.3% (diabetes)	69%	5,000-28,500
*The sum of all interventions was rounded to 140,000, the total estimated in this category. This is due to some services delivered to any person, irrespective of their ability to pay.			

## Conclusion

It must be stressed that the foregoing estimates are based on evidence and data from the literature but translation to an individual field setting is likely to be highly variable. In addition, the intention of this exercise was to assist with prioritizing interventions for “public health” generally and adjustments to the numbers might be made for individual locations considering the implementation of interventions based on local considerations. Not a small factor to consider is how broadly to scope public health activities, anticipated effects will naturally be larger if the entire population of a community is targeted and smaller if the reach of the local health department is more circumscribed. Nevertheless these calculations offer insights into some public health activities that may yield saved lives or deaths averted.

Notably, tobacco use prevention and cessation still play a major role in protecting population health and many communities still are far from Healthy People no tobacco goals (51, 52) and have not implemented evidence-based, effective policy interventions to limit smoking and exposure of children (53). By the numbers, public health can be instrumental in creating environments where people do not take up smoking and are not exposed to environmental smoke, and where those addicted may receive assistance to quit.

Traditional services provided by health departments, especially those targeted to the poor and underserved, still provide great benefit to the population and the range of choices is broad -- from vaccines to screening for chronic disease to delivering a simple pill to facilitating provider reminder systems. Hypertension detection was a public health priority in the 1970s and most people do have their blood pressure measured today but treatment and control remains a need. High blood pressure is just one risk factor for heart disease and may be addressed with clinical services delivered by health departments alone or in concert with others (e.g., high cholesterol, etc.). Capacity to perform these services will prove especially valuable in a time of potential pandemics and affordable health care.

A priority area of diabetes and overweight/obesity has been highlighted, as in the past years the problem has grown and continues to grow. Significant opportunity exists to reduce the burden from both of these highly intertwined conditions that range from community-based to individual directed programming. Communities seeking to address these conditions have several effective venues to select from and could potentially integrate other chronic disease risk factors into their program.

Public health as a profession is known for protecting health and these interventions offer opportunities with a solid basis for success. Public health priorities are also determined by cost, effort, expertise, fit with the community’s need and other factors. Using this list there is probably an intervention for each health department or at least a hint as to where to look and what to consider when seeking other interventions.

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