ACH

Accountable
Communities
for Health

Start Up Guide

Welcome

Welcome

Welcome to the **Accountable Community for Health (ACH) Start Up Guide** for integrating innovation and collaboration to explore, activate and support successful community change. A portion of this content was originally developed as a prototype for the state of Vermont Accountable Communities for Health. It was then tailored to a specific project related to community health change in California through the creation of California Accountable Communities Health Initiative (CACHI). This **ACH Start Up Guide** is the third iteration building on the lessons learned and experiences in our ACH work.

The concept for CACHI was developed during the Let's Get Healthy California Task Force process in 2013-2014. At that time, there were only a minority of models – an Accountable Care Community in Akron, Ohio, and federal State Innovation Models (SIM) were just getting underway in a few states across the country. CACHI was formally launched in early 2016 with the release of an RFP, which received 44 applications. After a rigorous review process, six communities, which came to be known as the Catalyst communities, were selected to begin work in September 2016. Subsequently, another nine communities from the original applicant pool were invited to join a second cohort, named Accelerators. The Catalyst grantees received $850K over three years, along with substantial technical assistance support. The Accelerator grantees received $80K over 2.5 years and a more limited set of technical assistance supports.

This ACH Start Up Guide is a result of a need for change in population health approaches and best practices that have emerged from the field.

It is filled with methods, practices, tools and a general framework that may be applied to a variety of changes happening within any community.

The intent is to make this guide available for use by local leaders who want to operate as an Accountable Community for Health (ACH).

The aim is to build a foundation of knowledge and understanding about how to engage in the work, so that teams can participate together and activate their creativity, passion, service, and collective intelligence to bring good things to life.

A Rationale of Thinking and Acting Systemically

The Population Health Innovation Lab (PHIL), an initiative of the Public Health Institute, recognizes that population health is complex.

Traditional ways of addressing issues that contribute to poor health often do not get to the root of the problem. Instead, communities tend to apply single-focused programs that although helpful, often only produce a temporary band-aid effect, never reaching the heart of the issue.

Population health is defined as the health outcomes of a group of individuals, including the distribution of such outcomes within the group (Kindig & Stoddardt, 2003). For example, a community or region could be considered healthy overall and some populations that live in the area are less healthy. Understanding the root factors that contribute to those differences are important and should be taken into account in the ACH work.

Our approach suggests that communities understand the root causes of the issues that affect the health and well being in their own communities. Root causes are interconnected with various issues, outlooks, and interests that need to be understood when moving toward change. In order to increase understanding, and begin to address the roots of the issues, working systemically is imperative. Structural issues including resource availability and distribution of wealth are among other linked concerns. Add in numerous complications such as individual and collective values and behaviors, and the complexity of ACH development grows.

It's important to consider that in complexity, neither one person, nor a group of experts have all the answers. All-inclusive solutions can only be found when diverse stakeholders convene to brainstorm and co-create together. This strategy requires deep listening, intentional process, receptivity to perspectives, willingness to be challenged on one's point of view, reflection and ability to collaboratively envision solutions that nobody could have seen on their own.

Testing potential solutions and returning to the table to assess data and work through adjustments can lead over time to effective systemic community change. Willingness to utilize diverse practices, multiple methods, broadened mindsets and organizational tools will stretch perspectives and enable a systems approach for understanding. As comprehension of the system within a community increases, leverage points are revealed and offer an opening for creating a new DNA of that particular system.
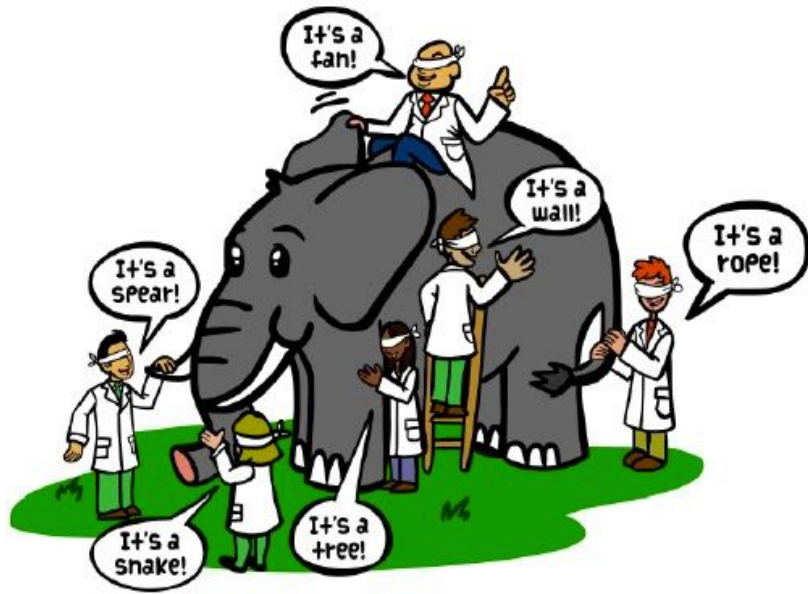
As the image illustrates, six blindfolded people are each touching a part of an elephant, but don't know what the whole elephant looks or feels like or even that it is an elephant!

Together, if they share their ideas and sensations, they may eventually figure out that they are touching a huge animal - an elephant. Similarly, stakeholders within a complex system can only see part of the system they are working in.
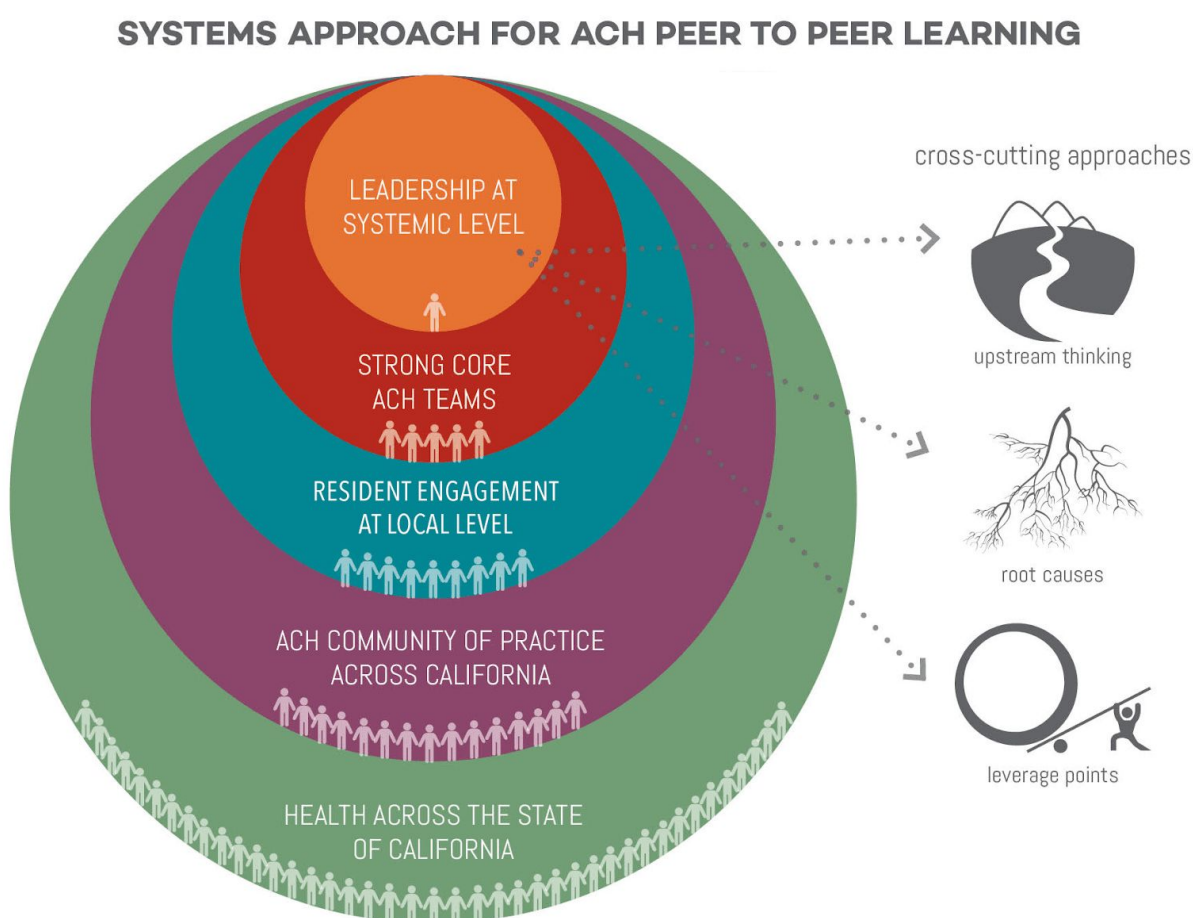
Image from The Baseline Company

While their individual vantage points are essential to solving a piece of the puzzle, it takes many vantage points while learning together, to see more of the whole system. It becomes imperative to include as many diverse perspectives as possible, and to help stakeholders increase their capacity to see broadly, through each other's eyes.

> In systems thinking, the aim is to move away from a 'siloed' approach. We repeatedly approach solving problems by addressing parts of the system rather than seeing its entirety. This often results in producing ineffective outcomes. Complex challenges require an integrated and interconnected approach, where people are working across disciplines, communities, organizations and including perspectives of the whole system to find relevant solutions.

Concentric Circle Framework

Employing and encouraging the use of a systems thinking framework supports an innovative shaping and strategy distinction regarding community change. The concentric circles below provide a visual representation of the systems approach to creating health across California. Each circle is distinct and yet interconnected to the whole framework.

In viewing the model below, taking a macro and micro perspective may offer insight into the approach. Spend time visualizing the big picture of change without getting pulled into granular thinking. See the whole model activated and in action. Then, as you study the individual circles of the graphic, consider the details and what impacts might contribute to a fully functioning approach.

SYSTEMS APPROACH FOR ACH PEER TO PEER LEARNING

LEADERSHIP AT SYSTEMIC LEVEL

STRONG CORE ACH TEAMS

RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT AT LOCAL LEVEL

ACH COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE ACROSS CALIFORNIA

HEALTH ACROSS THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

cross-cutting approaches

upstream thinking

root causes

leverage points

I.   Leadership at the Systemic Level

At the center of the concentric circle model is leadership. This is an individual within the system working to affect change. You can see how individual leaders have the capacity to influence the other layer in the concentric circles model.

II.   Strong ACH Core Teams

Strong Core Teams are the foundation for doing good work and navigating complex adaptive systems. Creating the conditions that enable trust, listening, sharing, being present and co-creating in an environment where learning takes root is essential to this work. When working in complex systems, the outcomes are often unknown and the need to revise approaches and tackle the work in a new way becomes apparent. Having an adaptive team that is able to iterate, adjust, let go of what isn't working and celebrate successes and dedication is essential to the work.

III.   Resident Engagement at the Local Level

Engaging community residents that are directly affected by the complex challenges in your community, provides an opportunity to learn of the many perspectives that have a piece of the puzzle for the challenges you are working to address. Exploring power structures within your community can reveal areas calling for change as well as opportunities for resident wisdom to lead the way.

IV.   ACH Community of Practice in California

In order to become a system of influence, it is important to have shared language, practices, methods and frameworks to use together. This enables the ACH to come together more quickly and to dive into what needs attention while working together adaptively and effectively. Core Team activities can be found in Tools and Templates under Phase 1.

V.   Health Across The State of California and Beyond

All of the above mentioned work is in service to creating health across the State of California. Supporting the entire state in moving towards wellbeing takes a lot of dedication, commitment, shared understanding, and complex adaptive problem solving.

It is essential to remember that in systems thinking, many cross cutting approaches are required to address the work. Be certain to celebrate your efforts. Establishing an ACH is a journey along a path of many experiences both fluid and challenging. Use this ACH Start Up Guide in service to hone in on what is needed for your individual, team, community and state work in order to realize this future, together. Once you create health across the State, see if you can widen the boundaries of the system and begin supporting others outside your state in creating health and well-being in their communities.

About This Platform Prototype

The ACH Start Up Guide is a unique resource in that it is housed on Networks For Purpose. The platform is an innovative technology that offers an interactive setting as well as the opportunity to build out a comprehensive library of multimedia resources. It is intended to serve as a launch point for budding ACHs and beyond.

networks for purpose

The documents in the Start Up Guide present creative operations that merge multiple strategies and practices including design thinking, collective impact, experiential learning, Theory U and more. This multi-pronged approach is intended to support leaders in discovering what works best for them in the development of their unique ACH structure.

Given that no two communities are exactly alike, you may want to peruse what's available and select your learning based on need. However, we do recommend reading the Getting Started document first as it provides a general overview of considerations when first starting out as well as context for beginning. It also includes an introduction to Theory U, a framework consisting of five phases that serve as a guide for developing your community. When your team needs support in designing, you can turn to the useful structures and samples in the library by navigating to the Tools and Templates folder. Additionally, important guidance documents that will assist in grounding you in context for this innovative work are listed below with a brief description. Take some time to browse these documents and see what may be of service to your community.

CACHI →
The Accountable Community for Health (ACH) is a new model of collaboration bringing together leaders from multiple sectors who have a shared interest in improving health and health equity in their communities. In this document, find out more about the **California Accountable Communities for Health Initiative** including background information, the Seven Definitional Elements Model, and an assessment tool designed to bring understanding and evaluation of readiness to launch an ACH.

Five Phases of ACH Work →
The Theory U framework has proven capacity to deliver quality results by tapping into the thinking and experiences of diverse stakeholders from across sectors. Access this document to deepen your understanding on the objectives and actions you may be engaged in as you move back and forth between the phases.

Theories →
The strategy in cultivating a successful ACH is informed by multiple theories, methodologies, practices, tools, and frameworks designed to support adult learning through action learning approach. In this document you will find a beginning list and description of theories proven to be effective.

Frameworks & Practices →

Frameworks are helpful to provide context and background for what may be present in the current environment and or where the work needs to go. This informative document provides descriptive examples of several frameworks and practices that compliment ACH advancement.

Flexible Mindsets →

Working in complexity and system change requires the need to approach challenges with new ways of thinking and innovative operations. This document names and defines a variety of mindsets and approaches to support the participants and leaders of your community's ACH in navigating unknown territory and unique scenarios while simultaneously keeping the space safe for participation.

Approaches to Support Your Work →

When working in complex systems, outcomes are often unknown and the need to adapt and uncover new ways of working becomes a reality. This includes how we think about, engage in dialogue and planning and many other multifaceted factors. In this document you will find a list of systems approach considerations and strategies to integrate into your ACH process and operations.

Definitional Element Examples and Resources →

The CACHI model outlines a set of 7 definitional elements. In this document you will find a plethora of resources including tools, articles, webinars, surveys, reports, guides and more grouped by the 7 definitional elements.

Five Phases of Theory U Tools & Templates →

This comprehensive list of resources and documents, organized by phases of Theory U, include added provisions for supporting assorted teams and for expanding the work.

ACH Meeting Topics →

This document provides a short list of topics from four key areas that can be used as a starting point to explore and spark context and direction in your ACH leadership meetings.

Case Studies →

Reading about the successes and learning of other communities involved in ACH development can provide insight and inspiration. The case studies serve to illustrate specific examples of a particular focus along with details on the navigation of change.

Icon Legend

Throughout the start up guide we have used icons to draw your attention to specific actions and supports. The icons offer ease for the user in honing in on where to go next. The following icons are used throughout this guide:

Template

Framework

Tool

Resource