

STRATEGIC PLANNING



Introducing a Strategic Roadmap for a Community Health Needs Assessment and Implementation Plan

Learn best practice tips for aligning your organization's CHNA process with strategic planning priorities.

By Lisette Hudson and Valerie Hayes

Mission statements for most hospitals include improving community health by offering patient care and services to area residents. But what about community health in a broader sense? Are hospitals and health systems providing the services and programs their patient population needs?

To document efforts toward improving community health, under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA), not-for-profit 501(c)(3) hospitals are required to conduct a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) and create an implementation plan once every three years.

At Community Hospital Corporation, we have identified best practice tips to help organizations prepare CHNAs and implementation plans that align with strategic planning priorities and Internal Revenue Service requirements. Here's the strategic roadmap we developed.

Step 1: Define your study area.

Who are the people your hospital serves? Map this geographic area based on patient origin data, and include medically underserved, low-income, and minority populations. There is no requirement to assess a certain percentage of your patient populations.

We recommend studying the region where the majority of your patients reside, taking into account availability of data sources and the presence of your hospital within the area(s). For example, if a large majority of patients are coming from the

county where your hospital is located, we recommend studying that single county. This allows you to maximize your presence and impact related to community benefit activities within that targeted area.

Step 2: Collect and organize data.

Analyze and summarize the most current data for insight into populations you serve. Using data to support points of comparison throughout the report allows you to identify the most significant health needs. Examining the study area could include:

- **Demographics:** population composition and growth by age, race, ethnicity, and economic factors (e.g., household income, poverty level, unemployment rate). Data sources include the US Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

- Health status: mortality, incidence of chronic and communicable diseases, health behaviors (e.g., smoking, physical activity), maternal and child health, mental and behavioral health, and access to healthcare. Data sources include the CDC, the Department of State Health Services, and county health rankings.

CHNA requirements mandate gathering qualitative input from:

- State, local, tribal, or regional governmental public health department representatives (or equivalent) with expertise relevant to the health needs of the community.
- Members of medically underserved, low-income, or minority populations; or individuals or organizations representing the interests of these groups.

In addition, obtain feedback from community stakeholders. Input from leaders within the community may reveal health needs that are not reflected in the quantitative data. Questions could include: What are the biggest health needs? How accessible are primary care services? What barriers exist to obtaining health services?

Step 3: Evaluate, share, and prioritize health needs.

Bring together the quantitative and qualitative data collected and share it with your CHNA team. The team should study the size and prevalence of each issue, the effectiveness of interventions, and the hospital's capacity to address identified concerns. Take these items into consideration and then prioritize the most significant health needs.

Step 4: Develop and align the implementation plan with strategic planning priorities.

First, the implementation plan should document the significant health needs identified, and describe how your hospital will meet each prioritized need (or if not, why). Best practice tips include listing the needs that will be addressed, goals and objectives, and related community benefit activities the hospital has scheduled over the next three

years to address each priority. Tracking the progress of these activities could include elements such as responsible leaders, timing, progress, and key results for each activity.

Action steps to address prioritized health needs may include collaborations with local organizations. For instance, one hospital noticed increasing teen pregnancy rates in its study area. That hospital worked with local schools to implement programs to reduce high-risk behaviors leading to teen pregnancy. Additionally, the hospital developed an innovative program to help young moms-to-be lower the risk of low birth weight newborns through an incentive-based "rewards" program. Teens keeping regular appointments with physicians could earn points to redeem for a variety of items, such as strollers, diapers, and infant bedding.

Second, it is vital to the success of your implementation plan to include key members of administration in its development. This allows for continuity across other planning processes, such as annual strategic plans or specific service line initiatives. Align the implementation plan with your organization's strategic plan by:

- Emphasizing existing community benefit activities.
- Involving members of administration and other key stakeholders from the start who understand the hospital's community benefit activities and their relationship to overall strategy. This task is particularly important for items containing financial or personnel requirements.
- Identifying specific ways in which CHNA efforts support the organization's strategic goals.
- Engaging members from outside organizations for collaboration.
- Incorporating CHNA initiatives into the hospital budget.

For example, based on the priorities of its strategic plan and health needs assessment data showing increasing rates of adverse

health outcomes within its study area, a hospital may identify the goal of lowering the risk of those outcomes within its implementation plan. The hospital may consider many avenues to address this need, which could include enhancing existing activities, collaborating with local partners, or targeted spending. Any decision requiring financial or human resources would require the integration of budgeting, capital planning, strategy, and input from hospital personnel across a variety of departments.

For instance, the CHNA data may indicate that breast cancer mortality rates in your

study area are much higher than surrounding regions. This may indicate a need for targeted education and/or prevention services in a particular area. A hospital may use that information to support or inform its strategic planning initiative to budget for the purchase of additional imaging equipment as an action step to impact associated mortality rates. This action item would then be included in the implementation plan as well as its strategic plan and capital budget.

Finally, make the CHNA widely available and accept feedback. Post the report on the hospital's website. You could also include your report for discussion at various community events or showcase your community benefit activities through local media outlets.

To learn additional best practices, register for the on-demand "Strategic Planning Electives" course. It includes a webcast on this topic, titled "Strategic Roadmap for a Community Health Needs Assessment and Implementation Plan." For more information, visit shsm.org/electives.

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Identify how the community health needs assessment implementation plan supports strategic goals.