



Take 2: Quick Hits of Reflections & Advice from Population Health Network Leaders

Part One: Forming Integrative Networks

Introduction

In [our introduction to this four-part series](#), Nemours associates leading our portfolio of work related to integrative activities within population health networks described the journey that we have been on with nine communities across the United States that participated in our [Integrator Learning Lab](#) between January and September of 2020. Each of the participating networks received customized technical assistance from Nemours and other [expert faculty](#) on topics including:

- Equitable Governance Structures & Distributed Leadership;
- Embedding Equity Strategies within Population Health;
- Cross-Sector Data Sharing;
- Articulating the Value Proposition of Your Network; and
- Financing & Sustainability.

[The nine networks](#) were represented by partners from a range of sectors including (but not limited to) health care, public health, community development, government, higher education, early childhood education, social services, and impact philanthropy. While each network was at a different stage of maturity, all of the networks were connected by a shared commitment to achieving health equity through resident-led systems change and an ongoing commitment of multi-sector partners to attend to the overall health and well-being of the community.

For more information on our broader work related to integrative activities within population health networks, [click here](#).

Take 2: Quick Hits of Reflections & Advice from Population Health Network Leaders

Throughout the Integrator Learning Lab, we encouraged participants to be “leaders and learners.” In each part of this series, we lift up the leadership and experience of Learning Lab participants, inviting you to **Take 2 - two reflections and two pieces of advice** from individuals deeply involved in making population health networks work.

SERIES TOPICS INCLUDE:

1. **Forming Integrative Networks**
2. **Reinvigorating Integrative Networks**
3. **Planning for Network Sustainability**
4. **Deepening Community Engagement**



Take 2: Reflections on Forming Integrative Networks

As we closed the Lab, we asked our Lab participants from Paterson, NJ and Philadelphia, PA to reflect on the question below. Their two primary reflections follow.

Q Question

What are some unique challenges related to starting a multi-sector population health network that is centered in health equity?

R Reflections

Challenge #1 = Using data to set goals, while still being nimble and open to community and partner feedback.

Partners that come together to form integrator networks typically have a deep understanding of how the data in their sector relate to health disparities in the community. Partners from other sectors (including community residents) are holders of equally relevant data, though each may view disparities, causes, and solutions through a different lens. As our cross-sector partners co-create solution/strategies, it's sometimes been challenging to strike a balance between the priorities (funded and otherwise) and perspectives of everyone involved as we work to land on shared goals that have robust buy-in.

Challenge #2 = Balancing the desire to move quickly with the need to do the work of trust-building.

Integrator networks move at the speed of trust. It may seem like a network is taking a step back by pausing for iteration and revision of its plans in the early stages. However, these pauses are necessary and deliberate, and have paid off by ensuring that our partners are transparent and clear about the long-term work they are agreeing to enter into.

Take 2: Advice for the Field

Our colleagues' responses to the question above, combined with insights from our broader portfolio of work on integrative activities within population health networks, leads us to offer two pieces of advice for the field:

A

When creating shared goals for the network, be sure to frame needs and solutions with a community lens.

Our teams and our partners have discovered that residents often identify and prioritize community challenges and concerns differently than community organizations. Networks should create informal and formal means to garner input to ensure that community voice and priorities are reflected in meaningful ways in the success targets established. Each network partner can then be accountable to each other and community residents for transforming the aspects of the system that their institutions interface with in service of the community.

Share past successes with network partners, while communicating a bold new vision for the future.

One of the lessons that emerged from our work was the importance of honoring the good work that partners are already doing together. This process can help to maintain momentum as the new network seeks to take on challenges that can seem out of reach. This celebration should accompany stretch goals (such as ending childhood poverty or infant mortality) that challenge partners to take on the deep structural issues that must be changed in order to secure a brighter future for everyone in the community.

Thoughts?

We invite you to share feedback by adding comments below [our blog post introducing this series](#), Tweeting us at [@MHCUpstream](#), or by emailing us at MHCUpstream@Nemours.org.

The work described in this document was funded through generous support from The Kresge Foundation.

Words from Our Partners

“ Focus on the needs and the voices of the community, and let that be the guide and the force that propels the network forward. ”

“ As a new integrator or a new group of people coming together... be open to this different perspective and a different set of tools...rather than trying to fit what we already have into this [network]. ”

“ I believe strongly in taking a team approach to this work. There are times that we have to lift each other up. [We] also need to not be afraid to fail. We are always learning and evolving. ”

“ [The key is to have] open communication and willingness to do the work together, even if it seems like a stretch... [We should never lose] sight of the neighborhood we are working in and [be] continually looking for ways to include community voices. ”