



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

Part Three: Planning for Network Sustainability

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](#).

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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 Planning for Network Sustainability

As we closed the Lab, we asked our partners from Ventura, CA and Sarasota, FL to reflect on the question below. Their two primary reflections follow:

Q Question

What are some unique challenges related to securing long-term funding for a multi-sector network that is focused on health equity?

R Reflections

Challenge #1 = Staying focused on opportunities that fit your mission.

Our networks are addressing challenges that require considerable external funding. However, we've chosen to only pursue public and philanthropic opportunities that are directly aligned with the change we want to make for youth and families. While there have been growing pains, this approach has allowed our networks to deepen the right relationships and increase our prospects for long-term funding in ways that do not lead to mission drift.

Challenge #2 = Showing the value of your network to range of stakeholders.

Networks in our counties had produced value for the community, as well as providers and potential funders - value that we hadn't yet fully articulated before joining the Integrator Learning Lab. We had to develop a clear “value proposition” that shows that, while there is still work to do, we are making a difference for children and families in our communities. Clarifying this value allowed us to make a stronger case to public and private payers that can help support our networks.

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 Take time to learn the pain points of those that can support your work.

We've learned from our partners that it is important for integrators to better understand the win-win when approaching funders, managed care plans, etc.. Understanding potential funders' prerogatives and pain points in light of the value you create helps network partners make a stronger case for funding their work.

Be persistent!

Our partners in the Lab attest to the fact that it can take many conversations with internal partners and external funders to establish the clear value that networks create. Networks often lack dedicated funding from partners, their own non-profit status, or committed funding from philanthropy for the amount of time it takes to transform systems. But, in each case, they continued to refine their case to the point where internal partners and external funders felt increasingly comfortable to provide more resources to their networks. Networks must continue to remind various stakeholders of their value and be prepared to partner when the opportunity arises.

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 MHCUC@Nemours.org.

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Words from Our Partners

“ Sometimes (pursuing misaligned grant opportunities) can be very distracting and overwhelming, so you can get on a little bit of a chase instead of really standing on what you already envisioned for your initiatives.”

“ One thing that I would really recommend as people start out is working on a long-term sustainability plan from the very beginning .”

“ [We're] starting to outline more clearly what the business approach would be, having some shared strategies and goals, mapping what the funding structure would look like, and really more clearly outlining what the return on investment would be for our new funding partners.”