
Smithers, Montgomery, and Beyond: Taking Innovation to Scale in WV

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Putting it All Together - Essential Elements



- **Municipal leadership (Times 2!)**
 - Build strategic alliances to balance power dynamics
 - ID policy development opportunities (and target advocacy)
- **Healthy communities frame**
 - Origins
 - Leverage assets across sectors
 - Articulate interconnections and mutual reinforcement
 - Metrics that validate incremental progress and produce enthusiasm
- **Proactive, genuine neighborhood engagement**
 - Listen *AND* act on what you learn
 - Strategic inclusivity

Health Care and Public Health: Current Dynamics



Challenges *(the bad news)*

- **Health Care**

- Staffing / the “great resignation”
-  costs *and*  pressure on reimbursement
- Federal agency delusion / faint-heartedness
- Retreat from strategic investment in CD
- Increased public scrutiny for nonprofits / incursion of private equity
- 50% rural hospitals in the **red** – 418 at risk of closure*

- **Public Health**

- Decades of under-funding / categorical funding
- Culture of hyper-individualism / “blame the victim”
- Covid hangover
- Local control and its limits
- Focus on deficits

Cass, A., “50% of Rural Hospitals Operating in the Red: 7 Things to Know,” February 13, 2024, Becker’s Hospital Review.
<https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/finance/50-of-rural-hospitals-are-operating-in-the-red-7-things-to-know.html>



Opportunities *(the good news)*

- **Health Care**

- Increased knowledge/understanding of inequities in our communities
- Imperative to repair public image
- Growing recognition of need for engagement in local/regional policy issues
- Engagement of CHWs (also by LPHAs)

- **Public Health**

- Covid experience (finally) and increased attention to need for strategic investment
- CDC workforce development initiative (\$24 million for WV state PHD)
 - WVU Health Affairs Institute serves as TA provider (in collaboration with PHMC)
 - Build capacity; incl. robust engagement of community stakeholders
- Expand focus on leveraging community assets

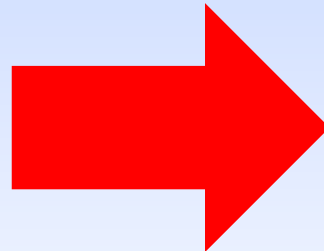
The Community Development Lever

- **Wealth of Federal \$ for community development funding**
 - Imperative to ensure that some goes to rural communities
 - Small business development
 - Creative housing options
 - Renovations (e.g., UVW redevelopment in SM)
- **Key roles for both Health Care and LPHAs (as outlined by BHPN)**
 - Articulation of VC framework for general population
 - Develop metrics that validate strategic investments
 - Facilitate broad engagement of community residents
 - As demonstrated by Fayette County PHD

From Social Determinants to Vital Conditions¹

SDoH

- Unhealthy housing
- Exposure to array of environmental hazards
- Limited access to healthy food sources & basic services
- Unsafe neighborhoods
- Lack of public space, sites for exercise
- Limited public transportation options
- Inflexible/poor working conditions
- Toxic stress (e.g., allostatic load, weathering)



Vital Conditions

- Humane Housing
- Thriving Natural World
- Basic Requirements for Health and Safety
- Reliable Transportation
- Meaningful Work and Wealth
- Lifelong Learning
- Belonging & Civic Muscle

1 – Milstein, et al, Feb 2, 2023, "Organizing Around Vital Conditions Moves the Social Determinants Agenda into Wider Action, Health Affairs"

Necessary Conditions to Reach Our Full Potential

Categories

- **Humane Housing**
- **Thriving Natural World**
- **Basic Health & Safety**
- **Meaningful Work & Wealth**
- **Lifelong Learning**
- **Reliable Transportation**
- **Belonging + Civic Muscle**

Elements

- • Adequate space; safe structures; affordable costs, diversity, close to food, recreation, & nature
- • Clean air, water, soil; healthy ecosystems; freedom from pathogens, radiation, & extreme weather conditions
- • Safe water, nutritious food; routine physical activity; safe, satisfying sexuality & reproduction; freedom from trauma, violence
- • Rewarding work & standards of living; livable wages, family & community wealth; savings & limited debt.
- • Continuous development of cognitive, social, emotional abilities; early childhood experiences; quality K-12 & continuing education.
- • Proximity to work, school; safe transport; efficient energy use; few environmental hazards;
- • Social support; civic association; freedom from stigma, discrimination; collective efficacy; vibrant arts, culture, & spiritual life; opportunities for civic engagement.

We (and You) Can Do This!

Build alliances for comprehensive health & economic development strategies that

