

Louisiana: Multi-Sector Support to Scale Evidence-Based Practice

Case Stories in Public Health Leadership and Practice

Case

Louisiana Department of Health’s **Well-Ahead Louisiana** helps scale evidence-based and promising practices by facilitating bi-directional support between the state and places where policies and practices impact health through **WellSpot Designation**. Well-Ahead promotes voluntary changes toward health in communities throughout the state. The initiative began at the local level and is strengthened and sustained through state and local expertise.

Actions

Well-Ahead provides a statewide infrastructure for scaling evidence-based practice across sectors to prevent chronic disease. A key part of Well-Ahead is designating places and organizations that make it easier for Louisiana residents to be healthy. Upon meeting specific wellness benchmarks, Well-Ahead designates these environments as WellSpots. Initial steps and ongoing processes are listed below.

- The state health office collaborated with a private communications firm to build the Well-Ahead brand for the initiative.
- Well-Ahead identified evidence-based benchmarks for multiple sectors: childcare centers, schools, colleges and universities, worksites, hospitals, healthcare facilities, restaurants, and faith-based organizations.
- Well-Ahead defined consistent and easy ways to communicate processes for places to improve health continuously. These messages included simple directions, such as: “register,” “assess,” “take action,” “reassess,” “get designated,” and “keep it up”.
- With the brand, messaging, and designation process in place, the state Well-Ahead office now manages the designation process. It provides guidance and technical assistance to local Well-Ahead representatives and participants.
- Local participants provide guidance and insight to the state Well-Ahead office, allowing refinement of the benchmarks and continuous learning and improvement.
- Local Well-Ahead representatives provide peer-to-peer support within and across sectors and work together to increase the number of entities recognized as WellSpots.

Public Health Practice in Action

NACDD explores, supports, and celebrates continuous improvement in state level organizational capacity and public health practice. Our work is grounded in the STAR conceptual model, which includes six interrelated spokes:

- Workforce Development
- Leadership
- Organizational Climate & Culture
- Partnerships & Relationships
- Management & Administration
- Evidence-Based Public Health Practice

Successes

- Partners and the public now recognize and trust the Well-Ahead brand to advance chronic disease prevention efforts across the state.
- Well-Ahead designated 1,166 WellSpots across Louisiana in its first year and a half of implementation.
- Well-Ahead has a growing social media presence and routinely shares wellness messages.
- Well-Ahead incorporates priorities defined in multiple federal cooperative agreements into the flexible benchmark and support process. This aids in breaking down programmatic silos and creates pathways for collaborative chronic disease prevention work.
- Well-Ahead WellSpot Designation process provides an excellent tool for evaluating the extent to which sectors adopt evidence-based and promising practices to improve health.

This case story provides an example of **Partnerships & Relationships** through the following actions:

- Well-Ahead engages in collaborative planning with a diverse set of internal and external partners, allowing for mission alignment.
- The WellSpot Designation furthers collaboration by encouraging and celebrating actions taken by public and private sector organizations at the state and local level.

Challenges

Building infrastructure for a scalable, multi-sector, collaborative effort is no small task. Throughout the process, leaders prioritized making action steps clear through effective communication about the benchmarks and established a bi-directional support system between local and state partners. A flexible benchmark structure allowed the program to respond to local feedback and incorporate new federal grant requirements. Collaborating with an external communications firm was effective but took effort to ensure the appropriate health messages were elevated within each sector.

Impact

- Over 3,000 spaces and places designated as WellSpots.
 - More than 23,000 residents are reached through Well-Ahead social media posts.
- Evaluation efforts estimate that WellSpot spaces and places and the Well-Ahead brand have touched the lives of more than 4,000,000 residents.

Related Reading

- [Making the Most of Cross-Sector Collaboration](#), Health Affairs Blog 2018
- [Multi-Sector Partnerships have the Potential to Transform Health, but Most Aren't There Yet](#), Health Affairs, 2018

Contact Information

Melissa Martin RDN, LDN

Melissa.r.martin@la.gov

Director, Well-Ahead Louisiana
Louisiana Department of Health- Office of
Public Health

Robin L. Rhodes

robin.rhodes@la.gov

Deputy Director, Well-Ahead Louisiana
Louisiana Department of Health- Office of
Public Health

For more information about the [NACDD](#) Public Health Leadership and Practice Team and Organizational Capacity Development through [STAR](#) e-mail PHLP@chronicdisease.org

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