

Building Community Support for Your Health Center

A Guide for Health Center Staff and Boards



Prepared by



CAPITAL LINK

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Authors

Capital Link

Capital Link, established in 1998, is a non-profit organization dedicated to assisting community health centers in accessing capital for building and equipment projects. From market feasibility and program, staffing and facility plans to comprehensive financing assistance, Capital Link provides extensive technical assistance to health centers to strengthen their abilities to plan and carry out successful capital projects. Additionally, Capital Link works in partnership with primary care associations, the National Association of Community Health Centers and other entities interested in improving access to capital for health centers. For more information, visit www.caplink.org.

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Introduction

Developing strong relationships with community leaders and stakeholders is essential for achieving your health center's mission, providing a network that will offer helpful input and support for your efforts to meet the needs of your service area. An ongoing dialog between you and your constituents will enable you to understand the needs of your service area and educate your community about how your work benefits them. Ultimately, creating community support for your health center is essential to your success within it, especially when contemplating expansion plans.

A high level of involvement and interaction with the community has a myriad of benefits to health centers. For example, listening to community members that use your health center can help you understand unmet medical needs and identify opportunities for service delivery improvements. It can also provide valuable feedback to pilot programs, an efficient way to implement response plans. Making connections with local leaders that are unfamiliar with your health center gives you an opportunity to educate them on the tremendous impact of community health centers, building a base of supporters for your health center.

Relationship-building is a Mutual Exchange of Values

Building credibility and gaining support for your health center in your community begins with an understanding of how your center is currently perceived in your market. The best starting point is to discover why those currently engaged in your health center's mission chose to become involved. Have you asked them why they dedicate their time to you? If not, ask them and see if their response matches with the reasons you suppose. In general, people support causes because:

Why Do People Support Causes?

They have a good understanding of the work you do.

They are interested in the work you do and think it's important.

They believe you are here to stay and their involvement will make a difference.

They have a personal connection with your organization.

To get people to the point where they are sufficiently motivated to support your health center over the many other causes demanding their attention, you need to gain a deep understanding of their interests. The goal is to find a match between your health center's mission and the individuals that value it. Once you find that match, you can take into account the needs and wishes of your stakeholders in decision-making and share information with supporters about your goals and successes. It's a mutual exchange of values that is ongoing and reciprocal.

Turn Your Focus Outward – How Well Do You Know Your Community's Needs?

Before consulting with leaders in your area about the many services your health center can provide, it's imperative to comprehend the unique identity, assets, and needs of your community—not just the patients you currently serve. Do you know the local history, demographics, socio-economics, culture and languages? What are the biggest health risk factors? What is the demand for health services, and what providers are currently meeting the demand? Knowledge of these issues will help you identify barriers to providing quality care and help you tailor your message to build connections. To understand how your health center fits into the larger community context, research the following:

Do you Know your Community?

What are the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of my community?

Who else is providing similar services in my community?

What are the cultural and environmental characteristics of my neighborhood?

What is happening in terms of neighborhood improvement?

What organizations are supporting community economic development?

What employment growth strategies are in place for the community?

There are numerous sources that you can access to provide detailed information about your market. Your local municipality can provide you with economic, social and demographic data and analysis. On the next page are several additional resources available to you.

Market Assessment Resources

U.S. Census Bureau – demographic and economic data

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| American FactFinder | http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml |
| QuickFacts | http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/index.html |
| Business Patterns | http://www.census.gov/econ/cbp/ |

UDS Mapper/HealthLandscape – visual mapping software of FQHC service areas with data downloads: <http://www.udsmapper.org>

Health Indicators:

| | |
|--|---|
| County Health Rankings | http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/ |
| Community Health Status Indicators | http://communityhealth.hhs.gov/HomePage.aspx |
| Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS) | http://www.cdc.gov/BRFSS/ |

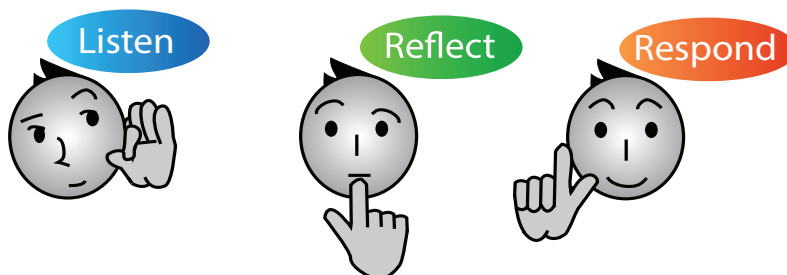
Payer Mix: Centers for Medicare and Medicaid www.cms.hhs.gov

Small Area Health Insurance Estimates <http://www.census.gov/did/www/sahie/index.html>

Seeing Your Health Center from the Community's Perspective

Even after gaining an understanding of your market's needs, it's not enough for you to simply articulate your mission; you must also discover why community health centers are of importance to your stakeholders. Think of the reasons for your own commitment and involvement and use that perspective to describe what makes your health center a community asset.

The best way to understand why you are important to stakeholders is to ask them and listen carefully to their response. Ask patients, members of the medical and business communities, and local philanthropists about their views on community health centers and pause for reflection. What values come to the forefront? This feedback can help you clarify exactly how the community benefits from your health center and how to best express those benefits so you can advance your mission.



Educating the Community About Your Mission

Once you have a good sense of your market needs and why stakeholders see value in what you offer, you have the basis to create a statement that informs them about your health center. This statement should bring to life your mission and educate your community about how your health center is responding to its needs. The messages should be crafted to focus on the specific interests and concerns of your audience, whether it's the media, opinion leaders, economic leaders or potential donors. It should not be solely focused on your health center's needs.

Health centers have a powerful story, but it needs to be carefully told in order to achieve the desired results. Bear in mind that if you don't take control of your own story, others will tell it for you, and it may not be the information you wish to share. Community members must easily grasp what your health center does in order to fully appreciate how you can play a part in energizing the area, but the information must be accurate and factual.

To begin developing a compelling statement, make sure that your organization has a clear enough understanding of your mission that it can be articulated as an "elevator message," an agreed upon explanation of your goals that can be delivered in the time it takes to travel between floors 1 and 10. See if you have an effective elevator message by discussing it internally and with your Board. Are you in agreement about the work you do and don't do? Is your mission attached to a need that stakeholders can relate to and that your organization is passionate about?

The benefit of clearly articulating your mission extends beyond rallying the community around your health center or raising your profile. Your mission directs all that you do. It helps to keep your eye firmly on the community's needs, not your own needs. It also gives you a long-term view when it's all too easy to focus on day-to-day challenges. Most health centers have identified their mission, but if you haven't considered it in a while, ask yourself these key questions:

Key Questions for Clarifying Your Mission

What is your service model and who do you serve?

What are your distinctive competencies?

What do you stand for? What are your core values?

What are your goals? What outcomes will you achieve?

What are your performance standards and how will you measure them?

Here are a few examples of mission statements:

The mission of ABC Health Center is to provide high quality, reliable primary health care and support services to increase access and decrease health disparities.

ABC Health Center's mission is to provide caring, quality and culturally competent health services to the people of ABC city, regardless of their financial status; to reduce health disparities and promote wellness in the community.

After you complete your mission statement, expand your message to create a fact sheet that concisely tells the community all about your health center. Pick out the messages that are memorable, differentiable, and credible. Keep it simple, but make sure you are including information that is meaningful to the community. Use bullets rather than long paragraphs, and graphics to support your main points. Below is the general information that your fact sheet could include, with an example on the next page.

| | |
|---|--|
| Mission and Purpose: | Your mission statement, vision and/or statement of commitment. |
| History: | Key events and milestones. |
| Key Objectives: | What is your health center prioritizing right now? |
| Services/Programs: | What is offered/provided? Include a service area map, service statistics and trends. |
| Patient Profile: | Basic demographic information on persons and groups served. |
| Revenue Sources/ Expenses: | Operating Income and Expense summary, any indications of growth. |
| Community impact, economic or other: | Total number of employees, how much economic impact the health center stimulates. |
| Endorsements/ Testimonials/ Accreditations: | From key leaders, partners and industry associations. |
| Board/Staff Listings: | Show title, company for Board Members, title for key Staff Members. |

Anytown Community Health Center

Serving 1 in 3 Anytown Residents

123-456-7890/www.anytownhealth.org

Jane Smith, Chief Executive Officer

PATIENTS SEEN IN 2011 37,466

| | |
|------------------------|--------|
| Primary Care | 20,534 |
| Behavioral Health | 2,497 |
| HIV/AIDS Services | 1,256 |
| Ancillary Services | 534 |
| Health Education | 3,897 |
| Health Ins. Counseling | 6,248 |
| Youth Programs | 2,500 |

PATIENTS VISITS 2011 151,235

| | |
|-------------------|--------|
| Primary Care | 87,507 |
| Behavioral Health | 20,497 |
| Other Services | 43,231 |

PATIENT DEMOGRAPHICS

95% Below Federal Poverty Level
12% Uninsured
40% Children
57% Female
35% White
30% Hispanic/Latino
26% Asian
8% African/Black
44% Limited English Proficient

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

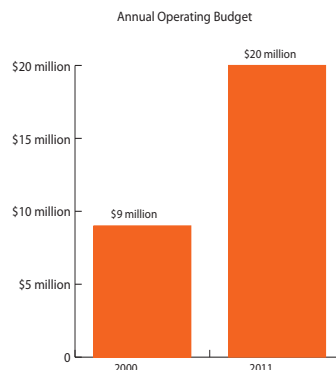
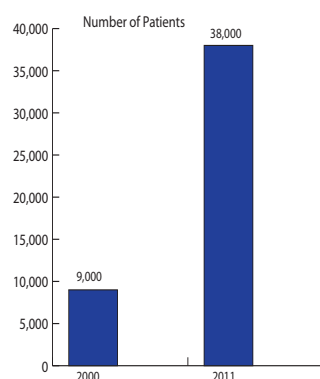
Listed here

About Our Health Center:

Anytown Community Health Center (ACHC) has provided caring, quality and culturally competent health services to the people of Anytown, regardless of their financial status, since 1975.

ACHC has an operating budget of \$20 million. 65% of revenue is derived from patient fees and insurance reimbursements, with the balance raised each year through federal and state grant funding.

Since we were founded, ACHC has experienced extraordinary growth.



ACHC has achieved Joint Commission accreditation and has been recognized for complying with rigorous national performance standards that promote quality health care delivery.

ACHC delivers services at six different locations, including school-based health services at two public schools. We offer Primary Care Medicine for adults, adolescents, children and families, Behavioral Health Services, OB/GYN and Family Planning, HIV/AIDS services and Health Promotion and Education.

ACHC's employees speak 20 different languages and there are over 70 staff trained in medical interpreting.

ACHC accepts most private insurances (such as Blue Cross, Harvard Pilgrim, Aetna) along with Anytown Health and Medicare. **No patient will be denied health care services because of inability to pay.**

ACHC stimulates an economic impact of over \$32 million in Greater Anytown, including \$24 million in personal income.

ACHC has over 250 employees and over 50% of staff live in Anytown.

Planning Your Outreach

An effective outreach strategy is the result of planning. If you don't think about whom you want to reach and what message you want to convey, you will miss the chance to advance your mission. This strategy doesn't need to be time-consuming or complex. Simply define your audience and develop key messages that demonstrate your health center's achievements.

Your outreach plan can be multi-dimensional, but it needs to be organized based on your desired goals. These goals can range from gathering input, seeking discussion and direction and encouraging ongoing involvement. Your approach should be proactive, which involves consistent, personal efforts to help the community understand who you are, and what you do. With that foundation, you then will have a much greater likelihood of a positive response when you try to interest stakeholders in supporting new programs, annual appeals, special events or capital projects.

Methods of Communicating

There are varying methods to achieve your outreach goals. For example, a newsletter to the community may be used to inform community members about a project, whereas a needs assessment survey or one-on-one interviews may help to identify some key issues and needs within the community. Also, consider the diversity of the groups you want to reach when selecting your outreach methods. Your approach to consulting with business or political leaders may differ from conversations with current patients. Below are some different approaches based on your goals:

| | |
|--|--|
| Goal: Informing and educating the community on a project, your values and goals, and your future operations. | Methods: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Health fairs, open houses & face-to-face tours• Updates on your web site• Newsletters and flyers• Press releases, media advisories and op-eds• E-Bulletins or social media updates• Participating in broader community events |
| Goal: Identify key issues in the community | Methods: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interviews• Focus groups• Roundtable discussions• Email and web surveys• Serve on local boards and committees |
| Goal: Seeking Discussion and Direction from the Community | Methods: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with select community leaders• Small group workshops• Roundtable discussions |

Goal:

Ongoing Stakeholder Involvement

Methods:

- Membership on a steering committee
- Inviting qualified community leaders to join the Board of Directors
- Involvement in programming and operations through volunteer role
- Sponsorship of an individual attendee or full health center education event

Identifying Local Groups and Leaders to Engage

Networking is essential to community activation, and a good place to begin is through your staff and Board. Other options include the list of possibilities below:

Community Members

Elected officials
Local hospitals
Colleges and universities
Major employers in your area/employer groups
Local business organizations
Major local charities or social groups
The school board
School and post-secondary institutions
Municipal staff responsible for community development
Planning board
The chamber of commerce
Economic development organizations
Local human resources groups

Tracking and Sharing Your Impact

Communicating outcomes is important, but this is easier to say than to do unless your health center is talking about a clearly defined project with measurable objectives. Inputs and outputs are easy to measure, but cause and effect relationships are more elusive. The goal is to provide credible evidence of your position as a community anchor, placing you on an even par with other employers. So, you need to look for good information that conveys your impact and your progress towards solving key problems.

Impact can be communicated through stories about and by beneficiaries, especially patients, documentaries about positive changes in health risks resulting from program changes, and face-to-face stories by visionary providers. Consider using quality data to further illustrate your point. How is your health center performing in relation to Healthy People 2020 goals? Are you exceeding national or state quality benchmarks? Are you increasing access to preventive care and making progress treating chronic conditions?

One way to ensure that you are able to back up your claims with statistics is to conduct an economic impact analysis (EIA). With the help of economic modeling software, an EIA quantifies the benefits health centers provide to local communities. These reports generally contain information on job creation and overall economic impact—including direct, indirect and induced impact on local communities. They make the case that health centers are not only providers of high-quality health care; they are neighborhood anchors that also purchase goods and services locally and regionally, employ residents and attract new businesses and investments to the community.

Conclusion

Cultivating relationships with community leaders and stakeholders will provide your health center with a firm foundation for achieving your mission. An ongoing dialog will give you an excellent understanding of the changing needs of your service area and if your efforts to meet those needs are successful or if they need modification. Strong community engagement is also essential before seeking financial support, so begin connecting with local leaders well in advance of capital campaign planning.