



Public Health
Accreditation Board

MESSAGING TOOLKIT



*Advancing
public health
performance*

Introduction to the Accreditation Message Guide

Thank you for your interest in the accreditation or reaccreditation of your health department through the Public Health Accreditation Board.

As part of this process, you will want to engage with members of the community to explain why accreditation matters and get their support. Accreditation evaluations have shown that accredited health departments are actively engaged in performance improvement and engagement with their communities, and are generally stronger health departments. In our years of working with public health departments that successfully obtained accreditation, we have found that some of the best champions for accreditation are community relations staff at hospitals, small business owners and policymakers.

To help you in your outreach efforts, PHAB recently undertook a series of research activities to better understand what will motivate these audiences to support accreditation. Based on our findings, we developed this toolkit to provide you with resources to help you in your outreach efforts.

THE TOOLKIT INCLUDES:



How to talk about public health



Talking points that make the case for accreditation



Template outreach emails for business owners, hospital staff and policymakers



Messaging tips

This toolkit is the culmination of a multi-year project to expand PHAB's national standards nationwide. Following interviews with key stakeholders across the country, we identified three primary audiences – hospital community relations staff, local policy makers and business owners – who have a strong influence on a community's decision to pursue public health department accreditation. We also conducted online focus groups to learn more about what messaging and communication approaches would best persuade these audiences of the value of accreditation and developed tailored and audience-specific messaging based on our findings.

Taken together, we hope these communication materials will help you build a strong case for public health department accreditation in your community. If you have any questions – or need additional materials – please reach out to the PHAB team. We're here to help however we can.

How to Talk About Public Health

PHAB's research shows that business and hospital staff audiences need to improve their understanding of public health in order to grasp the value of health department accreditation.

When communicating with these audiences, include a brief description of what public health is upfront so they are better grounded in why public health accreditation is important.

These definitions use real-world examples to contextualize public health in terms that are clear to these target audiences, while expanding their understanding of public health beyond the confines of public health systems. We have provided language in both short and long forms depending on your needs. Please include specific examples from your community, if relevant.



SHORT VERSION

While doctors treat individual patients, public health looks at the big picture of what it takes to make and keep a community healthy by preventing disease and injury in the first place and encouraging healthy behaviors.

LONG VERSION

While doctors treat individual patients, public health works in parallel with the health care system to find large-scale solutions that make and keep entire communities healthy. Public health departments address the root causes of disease and injury and work with their communities to encourage healthy behaviors. From conducting research, preventing and responding to disease outbreaks to making sure food and water are safe and informing people about issues such as nutrition, child safety, public health departments promote and protect the health of residents in the communities they serve.



Talking Points

The following talking points will help you explain what accreditation is and the value it brings to health departments and their communities. We recommend you include examples that are relevant to your specific community and your target audiences.

1

Health departments are essential to ensuring that communities are healthy and safe, and our work can be improved by integrating the best practices used by other health departments around the country.

- *Include examples or testimonials of how accreditation can improve the work of your public health department.*

2

By working toward, achieving and maintaining accreditation status, the *[Name of Health Department]* will be equipped with the knowledge and skills we need to engage the community and protect and promote the health of the people we serve.

- *Include examples of the knowledge and skills accreditation provides to public.*

3

Similar to hospital and education accreditation, the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) provides public health departments with a set of nationally-recognized standards to assess strengths and weaknesses, and then will work with us to improve accountability and performance – ultimately delivering better services and strategies to our community.

- *Add additional examples, if needed.*

4

By obtaining our accreditation, *[Name Health Department]* we will help *[City/State/ANS]* be healthy, work productively and raise their families safely.

- *Include further explanation of the ways in which public health contributes to a healthy, productive workforce and community.*



Template Outreach Emails

For small business owners, hospital staff and policymakers

We believe effective messaging reflects the values of your target audience. We know that small business owners, community relations staff at hospitals and policymakers have different values based on their individual communities and their specific circumstances. As such, we are including several options for each audience based on the predominant values we identified in our research. Please select the one that you think will be most effective with the audience you are trying to reach and tailor as appropriate.

EMAIL TEMPLATES



Business Owners

- Who value economic growth
- Who value quality of life
- Who value community safety



Hospital Staff

- Who value community safety
- Who value health equity



Policymakers

- Who value economic growth
- Who value community safety
- Who value quality of life



EMAILS TO BUSINESS OWNERS

BUSINESS OWNERS WHO VALUE ECONOMIC GROWTH

Dear *[Name of Business Owner]*:

The *[Name Health Department]* is seeking accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) and as a small business owner in *[Name Community]*, we would greatly appreciate your input and support in this process.

Health departments are essential to keeping communities healthy and safe, and we know our work can be improved by integrating the best practices used by other health departments around the country.

We address the root causes of disease and injury and work with the community to encourage healthy behaviors. While doctors treat individual patients, public health works in parallel with the health care system to find large-scale solutions that make and keep entire communities healthy. Similar to hospital and university accreditation, the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) provides public health departments with a set of nationally-recognized standards to assess strengths and weaknesses, and then works with departments to improve accountability and performance – ultimately delivering better services and strategies to their communities.

I'm sure you would agree that our community is better off when your employees spend less time sick or injured and more time on the job contributing to your businesses success and to the local economy.

Accreditation is an investment that really pays off by creating a more productive workforce and building a healthy and safe community that attracts residents and business. From encouraging healthy behaviors, to preventing the spread of disease, public health departments touch so many aspects of people's lives, including their ability to be productive workers. And, health department accreditation counts towards your STAR Community Rating Index.

We would greatly appreciate the opportunity to talk to you more about the value of accreditation and the role we hope you will play in asking policymakers *[add names of local policymakers and tailor ask for policymakers based on your community's needs]* to support our efforts. With your help and our accreditation, our local economy will be even stronger because we will have the skills we need to make our residents as productive and healthy as they can be.



EMAILS TO BUSINESS OWNERS

BUSINESS OWNERS WHO VALUE QUALITY OF LIFE

Dear *[Name of Business Owner]*:

The *[Name Health Department]* is seeking accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) and as a small business owner in *[Name of Community]*, we would greatly appreciate your input and support in this process.

Health departments are essential to keeping communities healthy and safe, and we know our work can be improved by integrating the best practices used by other health departments around the country.

We address the root causes of disease and injury and work with the community to encourage healthy behaviors. While doctors treat individual patients, public health works in parallel with the health care system to find large-scale solutions that make and keep entire communities healthy.

Similar to hospital and university accreditation, the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) provides health departments with a set of nationally-recognized standards to assess strengths and weaknesses, and then works with departments to improve accountability and performance – ultimately delivering better services and strategies to their communities.

Our *[town/city/county]*'s future depends on building a strong, healthy community where people want to live, work and raise their families.

Accreditation is an investment that really pays off by ensuring that we are doing all we can to improve our residents' overall quality of life. From encouraging healthy behaviors to preventing the spread of disease, strong health departments improve the lives of the people they serve.

We would greatly appreciate the opportunity to talk to you more about the value of accreditation and the role we hope you will play in asking policymakers *[name specific decision makers and tailor ask for decision makers based on your community's needs]* to support our efforts.

With your help, our health department will have the skills it needs to help residents lead vibrant, healthy lives.



EMAILS TO BUSINESS OWNERS

BUSINESS OWNERS WHO VALUE COMMUNITY SAFETY

Dear *[Name of Business Owner]*:

The *[Name Health Department]* is seeking accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) and as a small business owner in *[Name of Community]*, we would greatly appreciate your input and support in this process.

Health departments are essential to keeping communities healthy and safe, and we know our work can be improved by integrating the best practices used by other health departments around the country.

We address the root causes of disease and injury and work with the community to encourage healthy behaviors. While doctors treat individual patients, public health works in parallel with the health care system to find large-scale solutions that make and keep entire communities healthy.

Similar to hospital and university accreditation, the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) provides health departments with a set of nationally-recognized standards to assess strengths and weaknesses, and then works with departments to improve accountability and performance – ultimately delivering better services and strategies to their communities.

As a business owner, I'm sure you agree that we cannot afford to cut any corners when it comes to protecting the health and safety of our residents. From encouraging healthy behaviors to preventing the spread of disease, strong health departments improve the lives of the people they serve. It's also an investment that really pays off by supporting a healthy workforce and reducing health care costs.

We would greatly appreciate the opportunity to talk with you more about the value of accreditation and the role we hope you will play in asking policymakers *[name specific decision makers and tailor ask for decision makers based on your community's needs]* to support our efforts.



COMMUNITY RELATIONS STAFF AT HOSPITALS WHO VALUE COMMUNITY SAFETY

Dear *[Name]*:

The *[Name of Health Department]* is seeking accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) and as *[title]* at *[Name of Hospital]*, we would greatly appreciate your input and support in this process.

Health departments are essential to keeping communities healthy and safe, and we know our work can be improved by integrating the best practices used by other health departments around the country. We address the root causes of disease and injury and work with the community to encourage healthy behaviors. While doctors treat individual patients, public health works in parallel with the health care system and hospitals like *[Name of Hospital]* to find large-scale solutions that make and keep entire communities healthy.

And like you, our top priority is protecting the health and safety of our community. Together, we can work to not only treat people who are sick, but also support prevention strategies and programs that reduce injury and disease in the first place to keep people out of your emergency room.

You are already familiar with hospital and university accreditation; however, PHAB accreditation is different in that it is voluntary and based on principles of providing health departments with a set of nationally-recognized standards to assess strengths and weaknesses. PHAB then works with health departments to improve accountability and performance – ultimately delivering better services and strategies to their communities. A strong health department has great potential for impacting population health in a positive way.

We would greatly appreciate the opportunity to talk with you about the value of public health accreditation and the role we hope you will play in asking policymakers *[name specific decision makers and tailor ask for decision makers based on your community's needs]* to support our efforts.

With your help and our accreditation, our community will be more resilient in the face of health threats because we will have the tools and skills we need to protect *[City]* residents.



HOSPITAL STAFF WHO VALUE HEALTH EQUITY

Dear *[Name]*:

The *[Name of Health Department]* is seeking accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) and as *[title]* at *[Name of Hospital]*, we would greatly appreciate your input and support in this process.

Health departments are essential to keeping communities healthy and safe, and we know our work can be improved by integrating the best practices used by other health departments around the country. We address the root causes of disease and injury and work with the community to encourage healthy behaviors.

While doctors treat individual patients, public health works in parallel with the health care system and hospitals like *[Name of Hospital]* to find large-scale solutions that make and keep entire communities healthy. Similar to hospital and university accreditation, PHAB provides health departments with a set of nationally-recognized standards to assess strengths and weaknesses, and then works with departments to improve accountability and performance – ultimately delivering better services and strategies to their communities.

And like you, our top priority is protecting the health and safety of our community. Together, we can work to not only treat people who are sick, but also offer every person in our community the opportunity to live a better, healthier life, no matter their income, race or zip code. A strong health department has great potential for impacting population health in a positive way.

We would greatly appreciate the opportunity to talk with you more about the value of accreditation and the role we hope you will play in asking policymakers *[name specific decision makers and tailor ask for decision makers based on your community's needs]* to support our efforts.

With your help and our accreditation, we will have the skills to remove barriers to good health and ensure that every single person in *[city]* can lead a healthier life.



POLICYMAKERS WHO VALUE ECONOMIC GROWTH

Dear *[Policymaker]*:

The *[Name Health Department]* is seeking accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) and as a *[name position]* in *[Name of Community]*, we would greatly appreciate your input and support in this process.

[Include this language only if the policymaker is not directly involved in public health issues.]

Similar to hospital and university accreditation, the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) provides health departments with a set of nationally-recognized standards to assess strengths and weaknesses, and then works with departments to improve accountability and performance – ultimately delivering better services and strategies to their communities.

I'm sure you agree that our community is better off when employees spend less time sick or injured and more time on the job contributing to our local economy. Accreditation is an investment that really pays off by building a healthy and safe community that attracts residents and businesses alike. By utilizing these accreditation standards, which have been proven to help health departments around the country, we will also be held more accountable to the best practices in the field. And, health department accreditation counts towards your STAR Community Rating Index.

With your support for accreditation, our community will have the skills we need to make our residents as productive and healthy as they can be. *[Insert specific ask relevant to your accreditation approval process.]*



POLICYMAKERS WHO VALUE COMMUNITY SAFETY

Dear *[Policymaker]*:

The *[Name Health Department]* is seeking accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) and as a *[name position]* in *[Name of Community]*, we would greatly appreciate your input and support in this process.

[Include this language only if the policymaker is not directly involved in public health issues.] Similar to hospital and university accreditation, the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) provides health departments with a set of nationally-recognized standards to assess strengths and weaknesses, and then works with departments to improve their accountability and performance so they can ultimately deliver better services and strategies to their communities.

Like you, our first priority is to protect the health and safety of residents – whether we’re responding to an epidemic like the opioid crisis or informing people about issues such as nutrition or child safety, or making sure our water and food supplies are clean and safe.

I’m sure you agree that our community cannot afford to cut any corners when it comes to protecting our residents from harm. To keep our residents safe, we need to hold ourselves accountable to nationally recognized standards that have been proven to help health departments around the country keep communities safe.

With your support for accreditation, our community will be more resilient in the face of health threats because we will have the skills we need to protect *[City/State]* residents. *[Insert specific ask relevant to your accreditation approval process.]*



POLICYMAKERS WHO VALUE QUALITY OF LIFE

Dear *[Policymaker]*:

The *[Name Health Department]* is seeking accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) and as a *[name position]* in *[Name of Community]*, we would greatly appreciate your input and support in this process.

[Include this language only if the policymaker is not directly involved in public health issues.] Similar to hospital and education accreditation, the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) provides health departments with a set of nationally-recognized standards to assess strengths and weaknesses, and then works with departments to improve accountability and performance – ultimately strengthening the services they provide to their communities.

Our *[town/city/county]*'s future depends on building a strong, healthy community where people want to live, work and raise their families. Accreditation is an investment that really pays off by ensuring we are doing all we can to improve the quality of life of the people we serve. Utilizing these nationally-recognized standards, which have been proven to help health departments around the country, will hold us more accountable to the best practices in the field.

With your support for accreditation, we will have the skills we need to help our residents lead vibrant, healthy lives. *[Insert specific ask relevant to your accreditation approval process.]*



Messaging Tips



Provide real-world, easy-to-follow examples that illustrate the services health departments offer their communities. Stay clear of examples that do not make an intuitive connection to public health that might confuse audiences.



Use positive phrases like “tools and resources” and “prevention strategies” by “assessing strengths and weaknesses” to clearly explain what health department accreditation does for health departments and communities.



Health care staff are great messengers to communicate the value of accreditation for preventing problems before they occur.



Accountability and transparency are strong message points for policymakers and other governing bodies.



Focus on the need for accreditation **to improve the work you are already doing.**



Business owners come to the issue with the least amount of information, so begin those conversations with more of the 101-level approach to what health departments do.



In making comparisons to other forms of accreditation, **use hospitals, schools, fire departments, and others** that match the use of accreditation for the audience that you are engaging.