

A large group of approximately 30 people, mostly women, are posed for a group photo on the steps of a modern building with large glass windows. They are dressed in a variety of casual and business-casual attire. The photo is taken from a low angle, looking up at the group.

IMPACT REPORT

2023

VISION

A high performing governmental public health system that supports all people living their healthiest lives.

MISSION

Advance and transform public health practice by championing performance improvement, strong infrastructure, and innovation

December 15, 2023

MESSAGE FROM CEO

To Our Partners in Public Health,

The population health challenges facing health departments and the communities they serve are complex, and wide-ranging, from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and other communicable diseases to the persistent issues of gun violence, maternal and infant mortality, and the opioid epidemic. Addressing these complex challenges requires coordinated, collaborative efforts that involve community members, leaders, and organizations working together with the health department. Mutual respect and trust are the foundation on which such collaboration is built.

Unfortunately, both trust and respect are in short supply. Recent polls find that trust in all levels of government is at an all-time low. In many communities across the country the erosion of trust in public health has been exacerbated by the mounting politicization of public health and active disinformation campaigns. Not only does the politicization and disinformation undermine trust, it leaves public health leaders and staff feeling isolated, disrespected, and under siege. Stress levels rise and staff and leaders alike leave the departments. Positions go vacant. Connections with the community are lost—and the cycle of mistrust and disrespect continues.

How do we interrupt this cycle and rebuild trust in public health?

First, we lead with our hearts. Along with other community members and leaders, public health can create and support spaces and rituals that acknowledge the tremendous losses our communities experienced over three years of the COVID pandemic. Finding ways to mark losses helps the healing begin—giving all of us the ability to re-engage with each other and ready ourselves for tackling the complex challenges before us. Building on the work of our hearts we can then engage our minds and our hands to build the programs and systems we need to make it possible for all communities and all community members to thrive.

Doing our work in this way, we restore confidence and build mutual respect and trust. Trust in public health is further enhanced by our commitment to active communications, transparency, and accountability. PHAB works every day to build trust in public health by promoting transparency, collaborating with partners, and fostering spaces for shared learning and scalable innovation. In 2023, a growing number of accredited and reaccredited health departments demonstrated their commitment to quality, accountability, and the highest standards of public health practice.

PHAB also continued to work alongside our national partners and accredited health departments to be responsible stewards of the CDC's historic investment in public health: the [Public Health Infrastructure Grant \(PHIG\)](#). With resources from this grant, PHAB has been agile in responding to the needs of health departments with tools, resources, and technical assistance that supports them in their mission to serve their communities.

We are in a unique and potentially transformative moment in public health in the U.S. and across the globe. Our efforts can ensure that our public health system is equitable, responsive, and able to restore the public's trust in our ability to protect health and promote well-being. This work is done not only through tools, resources and investments that strengthen infrastructure, but also through our shared values, partnerships, and commitment to service. Leading with hearts while fully engaging our creative minds, we can rebuild trust in public health. Together with our communities we will create a better future for the next generation and champion fair and just opportunities for all. PHAB is unwavering in our commitment to this journey.

Paul Kuehnert, DNP, RN, CPH, FAAN

President & CEO

In 2023, PHAB continued its mission to advance and transform public health practice through strategic initiatives, collaboration, and transformative efforts. This impact report highlights key accomplishments, program developments, and the organization's commitment to inclusion, diversity, equity, and antiracism.

PUBLIC HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT

PHAB continued to execute key aspects of the [Public Health Infrastructure Grant \(PHIG\)](#), a historic investment by the CDC to strengthen infrastructure. The Year 1 kick-off meeting was held in May 2023 to connect with PHIG recipients and share information and resources from the national partners – PHAB, ASTHO, and NNPHI.

92

technical assistance
requests

In Year 1 of the grant, PHAB:

- Provided technical assistance to PHIG recipients focused on the [Foundational Public Health Services \(FPHS\) Capacity & Cost Assessment](#), accreditation training, and more.
- Attended Regional Hub meetings that fostered connection and collaboration among PHIG recipients.
- Hosted a successful [FPHS webinar](#) with over 200 registered attendees and developed new resources for health departments to facilitate service and resource sharing.
- Formed the National Evaluation Team and an Evaluation Advisory Group of PHIG recipients and CDC staff, in collaboration with NNPHI and NORC, to support evaluation efforts of the grant.

PH-LIFT

In 2023, PHAB began work on the design of PH-LIFT (Leveraging Infrastructure for Transformation), a one-stop-shop for health departments to access the data and tools to support their work. It will collect, compile, and visualize/report data across various sources to drive health department action to transform public health systems. PHAB held four engagement sessions to introduce PH-LIFT functionality, solicit health departments for design considerations and feature requests, beta test new features, and increase our understanding of user needs. Three partner organizations have signed on to integrate data into the platform with more to come in 2024.

240

attendees at the
engagement
sessions

FOCUS ON STATE SYSTEMS



PHAB engaged with the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (accredited in 2016) to launch a statewide Readiness Assessment opportunity, available to all of their 115 local health departments. The Readiness Assessment is not only the first step in the accreditation and Pathways Recognition process, but also a way for health departments to identify strengths and areas of opportunities. which will support accreditation and transformation efforts.



INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, **EQUITY**, AND **ANTIRACISM**

EMBEDDING EQUITY INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY

On June 30, 2023, PHAB officially adopted its IDEA framework: **L**ift-up, **E**xploration, **A**ccountability & **A**ccessibility, **D**econstruct barriers rooted in racism, injustice and inequalities (L.E.A.A.D.). The framework is a progressive point of reference for PHAB and its relevant parties to maintain a daily focus on IDEA principles and integrate those principles into practice. The framework informed the development and implementation of a learning agenda, resources, and tools to assist PHAB with necessary individual and organizational development needed to move the needle forward in social justice and health equity.

ACCREDITATION **BY THE NUMBERS**

A growing number of public health departments have made a commitment to quality improvement, accountability, and transparency.

Visit the [Accreditation Activity webpage](#) for all accreditation activity, including vital records/health statistics units and Tribal health departments.

21

health departments accredited in 2023

25

health departments reaccredited in 2023

82

health departments entered the Readiness and Training process

317

volunteer peer reviewers for accreditation documentation

378

total accredited health departments as of December 15, 2023



ACCREDITATION & RECOGNITION

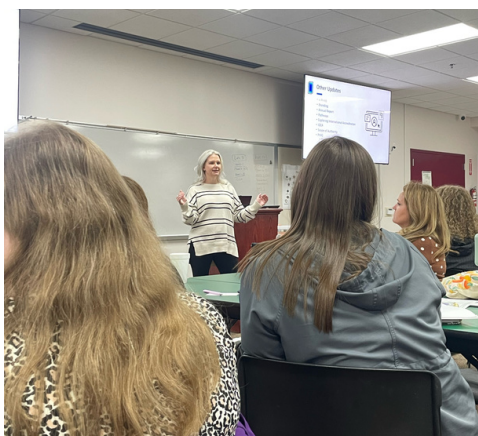
IMPROVING QUALITY & PERFORMANCE

PHAB continued to support health departments to continuously improve quality, accountability, and performance through accreditation and the new Pathways Recognition program.

First Pathways Recognition Cohort

The first cohort for the [Pathways Recognition program](#) was formed in August 2023. The cohort approach allows for shared learning and peer connection as health departments are going through the program and preparing their documentation.

The second cohort launched in December.



Increased Support for Military Installations

[Military Supplemental Guidance](#), Policies, and the annual report process were developed to support the interpretation of requirements for Pathways Recognition, Initial Accreditation, and Reaccreditation. A Military Readiness Assessment tool was also developed. A cohort of 10 military installations was formed to move through the Initial Accreditation process together.

New e-PHAB System Launched

The new [e-PHAB system](#) went into effect January 2023. The system has better functionality and improved features for health departments, including access to reports and communications, a streamlined document library, and more. e-PHAB is the platform used by applicant and accredited health departments to submit documentation for Initial Accreditation, Reaccreditation, or Pathways Recognition consideration and review.

New Annual Report Process

The new Annual Report process went into effect January 1. The Annual Report is a valuable way for health departments to continuously assess their performance and improve their processes while preparing for reaccreditation. The new process and its requirements were redesigned to be more streamlined, flexible, and reflective of the work that health departments do and their efforts.



INNOVATION & TRANSFORMATION

TRANSFORMING PUBLIC HEALTH PRACTICE

PHAB has continued to support health departments in their work to serve their communities with many tools and resources, and help strengthen health department infrastructure, workforce, and data modernization efforts to promote public health system transformation.

New Capacity & Cost Assessment

In March 2023, PHAB launched the [FPHS Capacity & Cost Assessment](#) in partnership with the University of Minnesota Center for Public Health Systems. Health departments and health department systems can use this tool to assess their current spending and capacity towards the FPHS, determine the needed investments to fully implement the FPHS, and identify the resources needed to transform governmental public health systems.



PHNCI Becomes the PHAB Center for Innovation



On July 1, 2023, the Public Health National Center for Innovation (PHNCI) became the [PHAB Center for Innovation](#). PHNCI has always been part of PHAB's transformation efforts; this change better reflects our mission to advance and transform public health practice by championing innovation.

With this change, PHAB updated its logo to integrate all aspects of our mission into one visual identity. The new logo is more modern and reflects the transformative impact of PHAB tools and programs.

Leaders in Public Health Transformation

PHAB continued to engage with members of the [21st Century Learning Community \(21C\)](#), a group of 18 states focused on public health transformation. To foster shared learning and peer connection among 21C members, PHAB hosted an in-person 21C convening in May 2023, facilitated affinity groups on important public health topics, and hosted office hours. 21C states continue to be leaders in implementing the FPHS and strategically transforming their public health systems.



DATA & RESEARCH

BUILDING THE EVIDENCE BASE

PHAB has continued to uplift research, evaluation, and data to drive quality improvement and build evidence around public health systems.

Public Health Workforce Mental Health and Well-Being

PHAB, in partnership with Johns Hopkins University and with funding from the CDC Foundation, completed a yearlong project to develop and disseminate ways to institutionalize workforce protection, mental health, and well-being into health department operations in alignment with accreditation processes. Our team identified three priority action areas: a positive and supportive organizational work culture & environment; leadership support and training; and workforce policies and practices. These efforts resulted in a discussion guide for health departments to engage staff in key workforce challenges and opportunities and will inform Version 2027 of the PHAB Standards & Measures.



Think Tanks

PHAB convened two Think Tanks to explore international accreditation and discuss future enhancements for the Vital Records Health Statistics accreditation program.

Excellence in Data

With funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, PHAB began work to develop a set of criteria to recognize governmental public health departments for collecting, using, and sharing data in a way that promotes equity. PHAB has contracted with Equitable Data Solutions to conduct research and provide recommendations for those criteria in early 2024.

Assessing the National Accreditation Program

For the past ten years, NORC at the University of Chicago (NORC) conducted several independent evaluations to assess the effects of the national public health department accreditation program. In 2023, PHAB brought the implementation of these evaluations in-house and has undergone a QI process to ensure that the questions being asked of health departments are used to inform PHAB's decision-making.



OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT

CONNECTING WITH THE FIELD

PHAB remained committed to fostering meaningful connections with accredited health departments, public health partners, and the field. Refining and expanding our communication efforts have resulted in substantial growth and engagement across various platforms.

Stories of Impact

PHAB launched the [Stories of Impact series](#), highlighting accredited health departments and leaders in their efforts to advance accreditation, innovation, transformation, and health equity. These stories have increased engagement and sparked the attention of health departments wanting to share their stories.



Learning Opportunities

PHAB hosted several webinars and conducted many presentations around the country focused on accreditation, innovation, transformation, and the FPHS.

“

“I am so impressed with everyone who has hosted or been a panelist today! Your leadership in your respective states and in the profession is fantastic! This quite possibly has been the best webinar I have heard on this topic ever.” - webinar attendee

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17

Stories of Impact
produced

2,500+

new social
followers gained
across platforms

200

average attendees
per webinar

15+

presentations
to the field

PHAB Hosts Inaugural Advisory Council

On November 12, 2023, PHAB hosted its inaugural Advisory Council meeting. The Advisory Council is comprised of PHAB Board Members and representatives from public health organizations and serves as a forum to explore how PHAB's strategic priorities align with the evolving landscape of public health. During the meeting, the Council discussed opportunities to support accreditation and transformation for governmental public health systems (e.g., state, local and Tribal health departments working together) and discussed technical and capacity building assistance needs in the field.

