

GPS Navigation

A metaphor for how the field of public health engages data to support the work of other sectors in innovative and forward-thinking ways.



The story you're telling

GPS is a powerful tool for visualizing and navigating complex terrain and public health professionals serve this function too. We draw on a wealth of data to chart out routes from where we are as a community to where we want to be. Most of all, we put our data expertise to work to drive positive outcomes and move needed solutions forward.



Tasks that can be accomplished using this frame element:

- Foster greater understanding of data's problem-solving power, beyond its monitoring and tracking function.
- Build awareness among professionals in other sectors about the value and extent of public health's data expertise.
- Illustrate for potential partners how public health data, and public health professionals' data skills, could be harnessed to enhance the work they do.



Concepts and ideas included in this frame element:

- Careful and informed planning is required to successfully navigate the complex terrain of community health.
- Data is an essential tool—not only for visualizing the landscape, but for mapping out a range of possible routes that lead from point A to point B.
- Expertise is required to seek out, sort, and make sense of relevant data—and public health professionals have the necessary skills.
- Like GPS, public health’s data expertise is a practical and versatile instrument. It provides information and generates recommendations, based on user input, but doesn’t give commands or take control.
- Public health’s proficiency with data offers other sectors access to a wealth of practical knowledge—about intersecting priorities, important landmarks, optional shortcuts, and potential roadblocks that lie ahead.
- Forward-thinking ingenuity and social innovation are enabled by public health’s data expertise. It functions like an infinitely adaptable device—accounting for numerous dynamic factors, enabling interactive step-by-step course-plotting, troubleshooting unexpected conditions, and maneuvering through traffic jams as needed to rev up community health outcomes and drive positive change.



User notes:

- Steer clear of messages that put public health professionals in the driver’s seat. (Other sector professionals don’t necessarily want to hand over the wheel!)
- Avoid describing public health’s role as “giving directions.”
- Be careful not to imply that public health professionals know how to pick “the best” route. In fact, it’s best to show how data can be used to help identify multiple routes, rather than focus on any single one.