

When You Say... They Think

When communicating with sectors outside of public health, often what we say can come across in a very different way than we might anticipate. This tool shows commonly used phrases from public health, explains what the other sector might be thinking in reaction, and provides framing tips and guidance for reframing our communications.



Housing



Education



**Health
System**



Business



WHEN YOU SAY... THEY THINK

Housing



When You Say

"Adopting smoke-free policies will keep your tenants healthy."

They Think...

That sounds time-consuming, costly, and difficult to enforce. It's up to individuals to adopt healthy lifestyles and to make good personal choices about things that affect their health, like smoking, diet, and exercise. What do public health professionals know about the responsibilities of my job? What's in it for me?

What Helps?

Use the **Foundation of Community Health** metaphor to explain that positive health outcomes require active construction and maintenance by a whole team of people working together.

Demonstrate familiarity with the target sub-sector group (for example, landlords) by acknowledging relevant assets, pressing concerns, and sub-sector particularities.

Use **Value of Investment** to prompt thinking among housing professionals about how devoting money, time, and other resources to improving residents' health outcomes pay off—and how the benefits increase over time.

When You Say

"If you give me access to your affordable housing data, I think I can help you integrate health into the design and development of new housing properties."

They Think...

We're not asking for your help.
Public health is a different world and entirely separate from the housing.
We don't want to be told by outsiders what to do.
Data-sharing is complicated.

What Helps?

Use the **GPS Navigation** metaphor to explain how public health's data expertise can be used by the housing sector to drive innovative solutions.

Demonstrate how collaboration, cross-sector partnerships, and data-sharing can be empowering for professionals in the housing sector.



WHEN YOU SAY... THEY THINK

Housing (continued)



When You Say

“We know environmental triggers like mold and dust are a problem for you. We have partners in the community that can help with home inspections.”

They Think...

To me, public health means big government. I don't want more regulations and requirements constraining the ways I do my work.

What could public health professionals tell us about the problems we're facing that we don't already know?

What Helps?

Choose words that speak to empowerment—like “energize,” “fuel,” “boost,” “strengthen,” and “enhance”—to convey public health's interest in supporting, rather than dictating, the work of the housing sector.

Highlight established cross-sector partnerships, and feature current partners as messengers.

When You Say

“We can help make this area more walkable and accessible for pedestrians of all ages.”

They Think...

Public health professionals are book smart, but they don't have the practical skills to help with projects being carried out on the ground.

It sounds like public health is stepping outside of its field. Shouldn't they be focused on vaccinations and disease outbreaks?

It's hard to see how this collaboration could be beneficial, or even feasible.

What Helps?

Tell a detailed 21st-century story about public health and the innovative ways it is responding to the needs of the modern world.

Vividly illustrate how cross-sector collaboration can work by sharing successful recent, ongoing, or fully conceived near-future examples that highlight the “new-and-improved” aspects of Public Health 3.0.



WHEN YOU SAY... THEY THINK

Education



When You Say

“Partnerships between schools and public health just make sense in order to address the social determinants influencing students’ health outside the walls of the school.”

They Think...

Public health professionals may have book smarts, but I doubt they can do anything to help those of us working on the ground.

There’s not a lot we can do for our students’ health beyond the walls of the school. That’s outside our jurisdiction.

It’s hard to see how partnerships like this would even work. Health is not the focus of the work we do.

What Helps?

Use the **Foundation of Community Health** metaphor to explain that positive health outcomes require active construction and maintenance by a large crew of people working together, and to connect the dots between student and community health.

Emphasize that well-being entails much more than just avoiding sickness.

Offer an explanation of what it means to take a proactive, intersectional, and structural approach to thinking about health, rather than relying on the phrase “social determinants of health” to do this important explanatory work.

When You Say

“You should add more opportunities for physical activity during the school day to improve grades and behavior.”

They Think...

Why are public health professionals interfering in our work and telling us what to do?

We have enough on our plates as it is. Clearly people in public health don’t understand the resource shortages and other challenges we face, and the number of responsibilities we’re juggling already, or they wouldn’t be suggesting that we should do even more!

What Helps?

Demonstrate familiarity with the target sub-sector group (such as teachers, school administrators, or district superintendents) by acknowledging relevant assets, pressing concerns, and sub-sector particularities.

Use Value of Investment to prompt thinking among education professionals about how collaborations with public health can facilitate more efficient and effective use of their limited resources. Where possible, point to “costs” associated with poor health outcomes (for example, in school days missed due to illness, reading levels unattained due to difficulties with concentration, or teacher time spent dealing with behavioral issues) that would be saved if student and community health outcomes were improved.



WHEN YOU SAY... THEY THINK

Education (continued)



When You Say

“Please share illness reports so that we can provide disease surveillance in our community.”

They Think...

Why would we want to get involved in surveillance? That sounds intrusive, and unrelated to what we do.

Public health is a totally different world and completely separate from education.

How is it worth our time and effort to sort through information and share it with public health professionals?

What Helps?

Highlight public health’s data expertise beyond talking about datasets themselves. Describe what the field’s professionals can do with data.

Use the GPS Navigation metaphor to explain how public health’s data expertise can be used by the education sector to drive innovative solutions to current challenges.

Demonstrate how collaboration, cross-sector partnerships, and data-sharing can be empowering—rather than burdensome—for professionals in the education sector.

When You Say

“To improve student test scores, schools need to address student health needs.”

They Think...

How would public health professionals know what our school needs? Our challenges are complicated and constantly changing.

Who’s got time or energy to start up a new program—especially one that is separate from our mission and commitment to our students?

What Helps?

Tell a detailed 21st-century story about public health and the innovative ways it is responding to the needs of the education sector in a modern world.

Feature current partners in education as messengers, and vividly illustrate how cross-sector collaboration can work by sharing success stories that highlight the “new-and-improved” aspects of Public Health 3.0.

Choose words that speak to empowerment—like “energize,” “fuel,” “boost,” “strengthen,” and “enhance”—to convey public health’s interest in supporting, rather than dictating, the work of the education sector.



WHEN YOU SAY... THEY THINK

Health System



When You Say

"Strengthening community health takes the burden off our health care system."

They Think...

Sure, but there's only so much we can do about that.

We have our own mission and don't want to be told by outsiders what to do.

What Helps?

Tell a detailed 21st-century story about public health and the innovative ways it is responding to the needs of the modern world.

Vividly illustrate how cross-sector collaboration can work by sharing successful recent, ongoing, or fully conceived near-future examples that highlight the "new-and-improved" aspects of Public Health 3.0.

When You Say

"It would be helpful if you would share EHR data in a timely manner so we can improve community health."

They Think...

Why would we hand our health data over to others? We are the health experts and have collected this valuable information for our own purposes. It's not clear why public health professionals would want access to it anyway.

What Helps?

Use the **GPS Navigation metaphor** to explain how public health's data expertise can be used by health systems professionals to drive innovative solutions.

Demonstrate how collaboration, cross-sector partnerships, and data-sharing can be empowering for professionals in the health systems sector.



WHEN YOU SAY... THEY THINK

Health System (continued)



When You Say

“As the people responsible for the community’s health, public health professionals are convening a meeting and we’d like you to join.”

They Think...

Actually, as frontline professionals in the health field, we’re leading our own initiatives. If public health is attempting to move in on this role, it’s hard to see how collaborations between our sectors could be productive or beneficial.

What Helps?

Choose words that speak to empowerment—like “energize,” “fuel,” “boost,” “strengthen,” and “enhance”—to convey public health’s interest in supporting, rather than dictating, the work of health systems professionals.

Highlight current cross-sector partnerships, and feature established partners as messengers.

When You Say

“Public health strategies could help you address the challenges you face with new reimbursement mechanisms and policies.”

They Think...

What do you know about our challenges, and why would we ask you to solve them for us?

You say public health strategies could help us, but what kind of strategies, and how exactly could they help?

What Helps?

Demonstrate familiarity with the target sub-sector group (for example, hospital administrators) by acknowledging relevant assets, pressing concerns, and sub-sector particularities.

Use Value of Investment to prompt thinking among health systems professionals about how collaborating with public health can facilitate more efficient and effective use of money, time, and other resources.



WHEN YOU SAY... THEY THINK

Health System (continued)



When You Say

"We need to address the social determinants of health to improve population and community outcomes."

They Think...	What Helps?
<p>Right, we've got to think carefully about how to avoid major illnesses and reduce or eliminate risk factors wherever possible.</p>	<p>Use the Foundation of Community Health metaphor to explain that health can be actively built and promoted across the community. It's not just about avoiding hazards and treating problems.</p> <p>Emphasize that positive health outcomes require active construction and maintenance by a whole team of people working together.</p>



WHEN YOU SAY... THEY THINK **Business**



When You Say

“The business sector is critical to improving the health of our community. There’s a role for you to play outside the four walls of your workplace.”

They Think...

How can I possibly help people make better decisions to take better care of their health?
My employees have health insurance thanks to me, so I’m doing more than my share already.

What Helps?

Use the Foundation of Community Health metaphor to explain that positive health outcomes require active construction and maintenance by professionals in all sectors—including business.
Offer examples of the links between business practices and community health outcomes to demonstrate what a proactive, intersectional, and structural approach to thinking about health entails, beyond just health care provision.

When You Say

“If you work with public health and help fund community health programs, you’ll get a return on your investment.”

They Think...

Show me on a balance sheet!
If I’m going to enter into this deal, I need to know exactly how and when it is going to pay off.

What Helps?

Use Value of Investment to redirect thinking away from a transactional understanding of collaboration, and toward longer-term thinking about the benefits that will accrue to the business sector over time.
Complement the value with an appeal to social responsibility and the importance of company image.
Offer vivid success stories of past collaborations between business and public health to demonstrate collaboration as possible, practical, and mutually beneficial in the long-term.



WHEN YOU SAY... THEY THINK

Business (continued)



When You Say

"We think this policy has implications for your employees and would like to partner with you to get the city council to change it."

They Think...	What Helps?
<p>It's our responsibility to think about what our employees need, not yours.</p> <p>How would public health professionals understand the issues we're most concerned with anyway?</p>	<p>Choose words that speak to "empowerment" to describe how public health would serve in a supportive rather than directive capacity. Show how collaborations with public health can "energize" the work of business professionals, "fuel" their ongoing initiatives, and "power-up" their potential for impact and sustained success.</p> <p>Demonstrate familiarity with the target sub-sector group (for example, CEOs within a particular industry or a local Chamber of Commerce) by acknowledging relevant assets, pressing concerns, and sub-sector particularities.</p>

When You Say

"Starting a worksite wellness program can reduce your insurance premiums."

They Think...	What Helps?
<p>Maybe, but it's not a priority for us to scope that initiative right now, and without knowing the details it wouldn't make sense for us to move forward.</p> <p>What would public health professionals be able to contribute to such a program anyway?</p>	<p>Highlight public health's data expertise. In particular, demonstrate how the field's professionals can use data to scope out potential endeavors, identify opportunities, and explore future possibilities.</p> <p>Use the GPS Navigation metaphor to explain how public health's data expertise can be used by the business sector to drive innovative solutions to current challenges.</p>



WHEN YOU SAY... THEY THINK

Business (continued)



When You Say

"Public health professionals can help you regulate workplace safety."

They Think...	What Helps?
<p>No thanks! Government regulations are onerous enough as it is. The last thing we need is more restrictions and constraints on how we work.</p>	<p>Tell a more complete story about how public health is transforming, including by working in expansive and innovative ways to meet the business needs of a modern world and adapt to a changing economic landscape. Share success stories that highlight the "new-and-improved" aspects of Public Health 3.0.</p> <p>Feature current partners in the business sector as messengers to vividly illustrate how cross-sector collaboration can benefit all parties involved.</p>