



#3 Illustrate how the field of public health is transforming to meet 21st century needs

The Goal & The Challenge

When the goal is... to help other sectors appreciate the expansive, adaptive, and forward-thinking nature of the public health field...

The challenge is... their thinking easily reverts to the field's more traditional roles, like responding to disease outbreaks or running awareness campaigns to encourage healthy behaviors. This limited view makes it difficult for other sectors to understand why public health is involved in broad social issues, like job training or homelessness, which they see as not directly related to health.

Before Framing

When You Say... *Public health is moving beyond the narrow focus of preventing and managing the spread of infectious disease to help communities thrive. We're committed to working with doctors and nurses, but also teachers, landlords, counselors, business owners, policymakers, and others to ensure that all people have access to the essential resources that optimize health.*

They Think... *Why are public health professionals getting involved in issues so far outside of their domain? They should stick to what they're good at, like conducting restaurant inspections and reminding people to get their flu shots.*

Framing can help

Framing can help alleviate some of the confusion for other sectors by acknowledging that, historically, the field did serve a narrower function, but that it has evolved and is still transforming. Be sure to highlight where the field is going by referring to specific attributes of Public Health 3.0, and make clear that it is adopting innovative approaches that are increasingly responsive to the needs of an interconnected and modern world.

An effective reframe would look something like this:

New health challenges require new solutions and innovative partnerships. Public health is adapting to meet 21st-century needs, and generating cutting-edge knowledge about how health outcomes are influenced—in both positive and negative ways—by nearly all aspects of social life. For example, public health research has shown that teen suicide rates can be significantly reduced when teachers receive standard professional training in how to support positive mental health for their students, and are able to recognize early signs of mental illness.

Remember, the reframe isn't a ready-made talking point. It's a sample iteration that models the framing recommendation in action.

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HOUSING SECTOR | An effective reframe would look something like this:

We've learned a lot in recent years about how a person's health is impacted by where she or he lives, and it's no secret that the supports available in different residential areas are not all the same. Public health professionals are committed to collaborating with housing partners to translate these insights into actions to improve community health.



Tip: *Pointing to social explanations for disparate health outcomes between different regions or groups can be an effective entry point into more extensive conversations about public health's understanding of, and growing commitment to, health equity.*



EDUCATION SECTOR | An effective reframe would look something like this:

Public health is evolving to meet the health needs of a changing world. For example, given the evidence we've collected on how student health drives academic performance, which in turn has implications for health outcomes across the entire community, we're actively pursuing collaborations with local school districts to address the obstacles that can keep children from completing their education.



Tip: *In emphasizing that cross-sector collaborations play a central role in public health's future vision, be sure to describe how they serve shared interests and common goals.*



HEALTH SYSTEMS SECTOR | An effective reframe would look something like this:

Public health is becoming more strategic all the time about identifying the social and environmental factors that influence community health, just like health systems professionals are increasingly recognizing the impact that these factors have on their patients' health. Our sectors can work together to assess community health needs in order to design more tailored prevention and intervention efforts.



Tip: *Referring to the ways that other sectors are transitioning can help facilitate thinking around the idea that public health today is not what it was 50, or even 10, years ago.*



BUSINESS SECTOR | An effective reframe would look something like this:

Public health is re-envisioning itself as a critical player in efforts to build a thriving workforce and economy. Beyond expanding access to employer-sponsored wellness programs, we're identifying the unmet upstream health needs of employees, consumers, families, and the future workforce, and then building the sector's capacity to address them.



Tip: *Help the business sector appreciate why public health professionals see it as an essential partner by describing the field's expanding definition of health—specifically, from a standalone topic to one that sits at the intersection of countless issues that all have social causes as well as consequences.*