



#5 Frame collaboration as empowerment

The Goal & The Challenge

When the goal is... to convince other sectors that collaborating with public health can help them address some of their most pressing and difficult problems...

The challenge is... they're wary of being told what to do. (Particularly by folks they see as outsiders.)

Before Framing

When You Say... *Public health can partner with health systems to help create communities that keep people well rather than make them sick. This way, doctors, nurses, and hospitals can provide quality healthcare services and not have to worry that the benefits of treatment will be lost once they send their patients back home.*

They Think... *It's true that we're increasingly thinking about how to support patient health before and after we treat them, but what does public health know about it, and more importantly, why would we hand this essential component of our work over to them?"*

Framing can help

Framing can help assuage other sectors' fears of being asked to hand over the reins by affirming their existing priorities and acknowledging their ongoing efforts. Likewise, conveying how public health proposes to support another sector's mission goes a long way toward helping its professionals see collaboration as an asset rather than a liability.

An effective reframe would look something like this:

Health systems can partner with public health to help create the healthy community conditions needed to keep people well after they return home from the hospital. For example, together we can advocate for evidence-based improvements to the public transportation system that will help connect your patients to the services, stores, housing, and jobs they need to live healthy lives.

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:

The housing authority's focus on eliminating substandard housing is a high priority for public health professionals too. We can propel this agenda forward by providing evidence to other sectors about the vast extent of substandard housing's harmful effects—on mental health, child nutrition, educational achievement, workforce capacity, life expectancy, and more—and therefore expanding the coalition of problem solvers.



Tip: *Avoid focusing solely on problems that the housing sector currently faces, which its professionals certainly know about already. Move quickly to a description of how public health professionals can lighten the load of addressing them.*



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

Public health is eager to bolster a range of school improvement projects, which have the potential to enhance both student health and community resilience. For example, we can ramp up public support for renovated gym facilities by finding ways to make them available to the wider community outside of school hours. At the same time, we can drive enhancements to city parks and other public spaces so that students can be physically active even when they're not in school.



Tip: *Framing collaboration as empowerment is a way to affirm the priorities, efforts, and skills of education professionals. It also signals public health's openness to improving conditions within a community by building on its existing strengths, rather than introducing outside influences or external interventions, which is extremely important to the education sector.*



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

Public health can amplify regional health systems' efforts to reduce substance use-related harm by drawing on our deep knowledge of the social causes and mitigating factors of addiction. This will help ensure that supportive services and other targeted resources are routed to the areas where they're most needed.



Tip: *Health systems professionals are particularly suspicious of the alternative agenda and competing expertise that public health professionals might bring to a collaboration. Use the empowerment frame to illustrate how public health would contribute to health systems' pre-established priorities and goals.*



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

Businesses are key influencers of community life, and public health experts want to dial up their efforts to ensure we all thrive. Through collaborative projects, like increasing mass transit options and diversifying roadway use, we can ease commutes, energize workers, fuel greater productivity, and promote healthy living.



Tip: *Choose words that speak to "empowerment," like "energize" and "power up," to describe how collaborating with public health can help "fuel" the business sector's mission.*