

# WORKING TOGETHER:

## Building Health in All Policies Partnerships



The Public Health Institute's Health in All Policies team has been a national and international leader in building the Health in All Policies movement. Health in All Policies is an innovative approach to addressing the social determinants of health, such as transportation, housing, and economic policy, which are key drivers of health outcomes and health inequities. It is founded in the recognition that public health practitioners must collaborate with partners outside of public health to address the root causes of poor health and inequities.

While Health in All Policies initiatives vary in structure and scope, all require building trusting relationships between partners. **These tips can help you establish, maintain, and deepen partnerships over time, including through potentially difficult processes.**



These tips were drawn from *Health in All Policies: A Guide for State and Local Governments* ([bit.ly/HiAPguide](https://bit.ly/HiAPguide)), which was developed through a partnership between the Public Health Institute and the American Public Health Association. The Guide is a comprehensive overview to starting a Health in All Policies initiative.

Want to go further? PHI's Health in All Policies expertise includes:

- Technical assistance and consultations by email, phone, and in-person
- Workshops with tailored curriculum
- Presentations and keynote addresses on the Health in All Policies approach

Contact [hiap@phi.org](mailto:hiap@phi.org) to find out more.

# TIPS FOR WORKING TOGETHER

## Develop a shared vision.

Every person who comes to a Health in All Policies initiative brings personal and organizational values with them. You and your partners may have an easier time identifying shared goals if you have explicit conversations about vision and values early in your process.

## Pursue mutuality and practice generosity.

Health in All Policies requires a cultural shift from individual agencies pursuing siloed, topic-based interests to embracing shared beliefs and pursuing mutual goals across all of government. Executive level leaders can support broad, cross-cutting goals for all of government, such as promotion of health, environmental sustainability, and equity. Health in All Policies leaders and staff can model generosity by committing time and resources to partners' agendas and sharing credit with others whenever possible—which can go a long way in supporting your partners' ongoing participation and good will.

## Acknowledge what you don't know.

When we acknowledge that we don't have all the answers, others feel more willing to speak up. Remember to be open to learning from everyone you speak with and recognize the expertise of your partners. Approach differences of opinion with curiosity, and treat them as opportunities to learn.

## Understand your partners' goals and context.

Ask your partners about their goals and priorities, and pay attention to the political and organizational context in which they work. This can include past interagency interactions, successes and failures, or other issues that may shape perspectives.

## Identify win-wins and co-benefits.

Intersectoral collaboration works best when all partners can see tangible gains for themselves. Potential partners may ask themselves, "What's in it for me or my organization?" Identifying win-win opportunities helps establish buy-in, allows partners to leverage resources, and increases efficiency by pursuing multiple goals.

## Be thoughtful about language.

Every discipline, including public health, has its own jargon and acronyms. Encourage all partners to avoid abbreviations, be mindful of language that is hard to understand, and be aware of situations where differences in use of terms may cause disagreement or confusion.

## Assume good intentions.

If a partner says or does something that seems insensitive or irrational, you may be missing key information. If you can assume good intentions and ask for more information, you can deepen your understanding of the issue, increase your ability to move collaborative solutions forward, build trust, and gain friends along the way.

## Be flexible.

Health in All Policies requires tremendous flexibility, as it is a long-term strategy that takes place in an environment characterized by administration changes, staff turnover, continuously developing legislation, and funding that is often insecure or short-term. These changes also create relationship-building opportunities if you are ready to respond. For example, in cases where organizations have not worked well together, changes in administration or leadership can provide new partners for collaboration.

## Collaboration takes time.

Allow sufficient time to build relationships, learn about your partners' goals and priorities, and develop agreements. Be flexible and allow for delays when warranted, but also maintain momentum on slow-moving projects. The trust established through initial easy wins can lay the groundwork for sustained partnership as you navigate more difficult issues.

