



# IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES: THE WISCONSIN WAY

Health is everyone's business. It enhances our individual quality of life and it impacts educational attainment, worksite productivity and costs, and the economy in general. Maintaining and improving health status can have a significant impact on a community. People from many types of organizations care about and are invested in improving the health of their communities. While each may have a different organizational mission and even different reasons for addressing health improvement, they share the same goal: making the community a healthy place to live, learn, work, and play.

Many organizations have processes for assessing and addressing the health of their community. These processes may be called different things – Community Health Needs Assessment or Community Health Improvement Processes, for example – but they share the same aim. Ideally, in any given community, these organizations will collaborate on improving health to leverage the greatest impact. By having complementary goals and sharing resources, community organizations can combine and focus their efforts to address key issues. This document provides a shared framework to help local communities in Wisconsin proactively and strategically act to measurably improve the health status of their communities. By sharing an understanding of what shapes health and how to improve it, we can better work together.

To be most effective in their efforts, local community members and organizations working to improve the health of their community will:

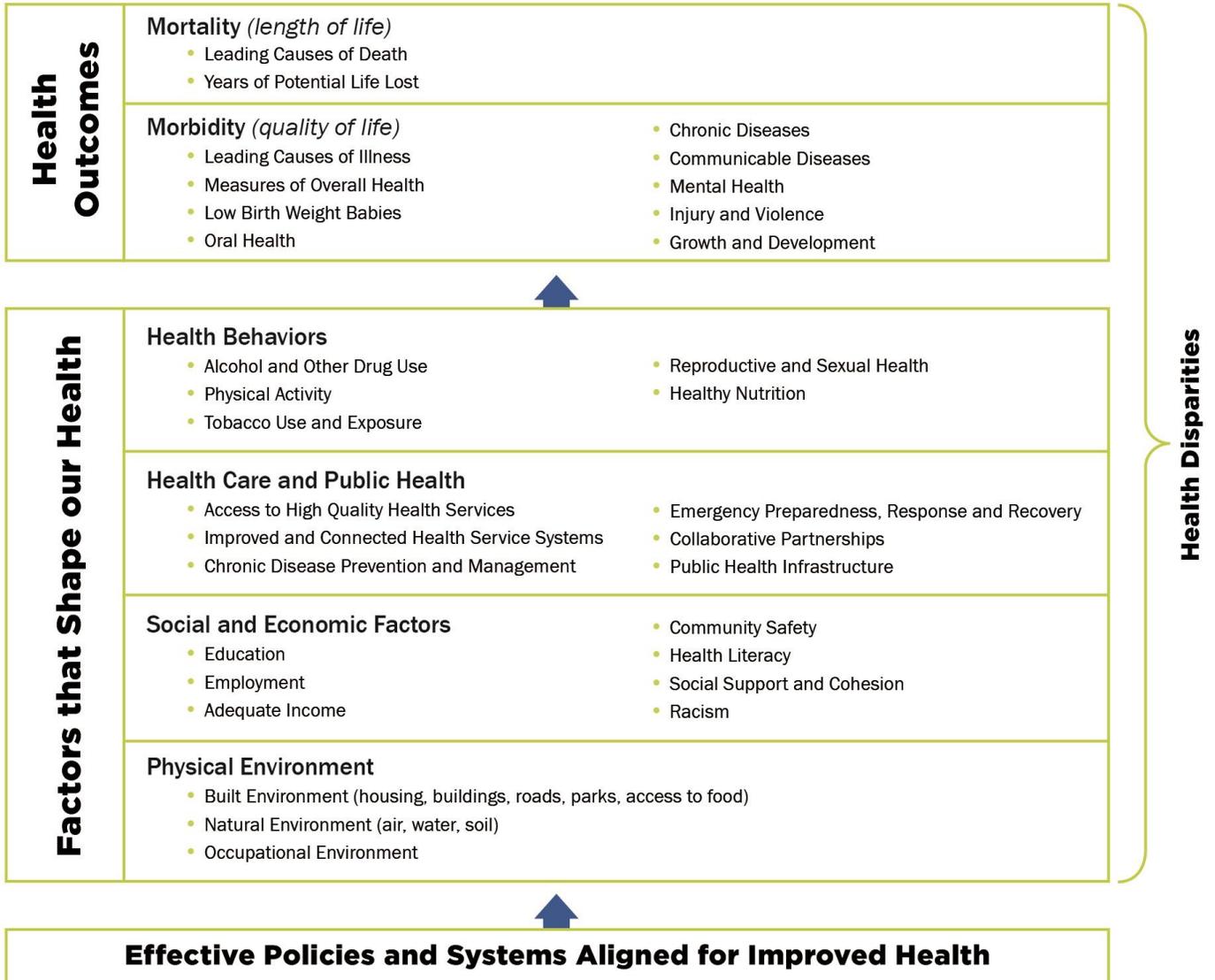
- work collaboratively to effectively address health issues
- pay attention to the forces that shape health outcomes
- emphasize the powerful impact of policy-based approaches on change
- root their efforts in the best evidence of effective implementation strategies; and
- assure that improvement processes meet any mandates held by stakeholders, notably hospitals and health departments.

The two diagrams below describe:

- **What makes a community healthy**  
In order to successfully improve key health status indicators in local communities, it is essential that the approach take into consideration all of the factors that influence health outcomes. This first diagram combines categories that describe what healthy (and not healthy) look like and the factors that drive those outcomes.
- **How a community can become healthier**  
The second diagram describes the process – based on the best evidence available – for communities to improve their health status.

## What Makes A Community Healthy

While it is often health outcomes that capture our attention and motivate efforts for change, it is important to focus efforts on all of the factors that influence or drive those outcomes. That is where the greatest opportunity lies for real change.



Note: The majority of the health outcomes and factors listed in the diagram above are included in the Wisconsin State Health Plan, [Healthiest Wisconsin 2020](#), as health objectives, infrastructure objectives, or pillar objectives.

## How a Community can Become Healthier

Working together, community leaders and members can have a significant impact on the health of their community through a continuous cycle of assessment, implementation and evaluation. Based on the best evidence, this model for improving the health of communities can guide their efforts.

### Assess Needs & Resources

- Collect and analyze community health data
- Consider data to analyze health disparities
- Examine data on the underlying determinants of health
- Consider issues and themes identified by the stakeholders and the community
- Identify community assets and resources

### Focus on What's Important

- Identify a set of priority community health issues to address
- Align the local health improvement plan with state and national priorities
- Summarize and disseminate the results of the assessment to the community

### Choose Effective Policies and Programs

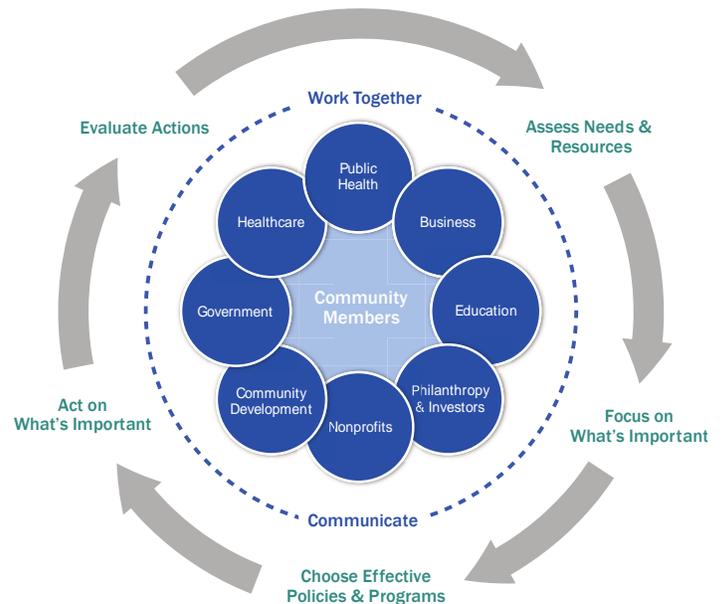
- Engage partners to plan and implement strategies
- Choose effective (evidence-informed) strategies
- Have multi-level approaches to change, including policy approaches

### Act on What's Important

- Develop a detailed action plan
- Use a workplan to actively track progress
- Maintain momentum

### Evaluate Actions

- Evaluate and monitor the process and the outcomes/indicators
- Revise the action plan based on evaluation results



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### Work Together and Communicate: Collaborate with Stakeholders and Community Members Throughout

- Include broad participation from the community
- Actively involve stakeholders throughout the process

Stakeholders can include: hospitals, public health, tribes, business, elected officials, faith communities, education, clinics, health care providers, law enforcement, human services organizations, community advocacy organizations, funders, concerned citizens and others.

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**Sources that Inform the Wisconsin Way Framework:**

- *The Community Tool Box (University of Kansas)*
  - *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps*
  - *Healthiest Wisconsin 2020*
  - *Institute of Medicine “Improving Health in the Community: A Role for Performance Monitoring”*
    - *Chapter 4: A Community Health Improvement Process*
  - *National Prevention Strategy*
  - *Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP)*
    - *National Association of City and County Health Officials (NACCHO)*
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