Multistakeholder Input on a National Priority:
Improving Population Health by Working with Communities

Project Overview Involving Field Testing Groups
September 2014

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Project Purpose

This overview describes the purpose of the overall project and the role of the “Field Testing Groups” that will be selected to work with the National Quality Forum (NQF) and the multistakeholder committee.

*Multistakeholder Input on a National Priority: Improving Population Health by Working with Communities* is a three year project of NQF, sponsored by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The purpose of the project is to create a step-by-step “Action Guide” (or “Guide”), a practical resource to support efforts at any level to improve population health. In addition to findings from leading edge research, the final Action Guide will be informed by insight from people with direct experience working on population health improvement.

This work is varied and challenging. Working to improve health within and across subpopulations requires a range of individuals and organizations, from different backgrounds and focus areas, to work together. Achieving total “health” ultimately involves our communities, neighborhoods, workplaces, schools, living spaces, health care, and social or spiritual support networks.

The first version of the Action Guide was developed in year one of the project and is based on research findings and input from a multistakeholder committee and the public. The Guide includes brief summaries of ten key elements important to improving population health, metrics and data sources to assess population health status and measure progress along the way, and links to other useful resources. The next stage of this project is to explore the Guide’s usefulness in practical settings and situations in which efforts to improve population health are actually taking place.

Role of Field Testing Groups

Up to ten groups will be selected to “field test” the first version of the Action Guide, including the key elements, measures, data sources, and other resources. These groups will then provide feedback and ideas to the NQF team and multistakeholder committee members.

The groups involved in field testing will spend about 18 months participating in a mix of activities, including applying the content of the Guide to their new or existing population health improvement projects, and offering examples and ideas for revised or new content, as needed, based on their own experiences. This on-the-ground insight is important to ensure that the refined Guide is both leading edge and practical about the opportunities, challenges, and barriers to effectively improving population health.

Value to the Field Testing Groups

Although this project does not include direct funding for the Field Testing Groups, there are a number of benefits for participants, including:
Recognition by HHS and NQF as a Field Testing Group for this national project to support population health improvement, including being named in the refined Action Guide, on the NQF website, and through other public announcements

Expanded network of peer leaders and organizations at the national, state and regional levels who are also engaged in improving population health

Insight about how others have successfully addressed various population health improvement issues

Opportunities to brainstorm with national, state, and regional experts about practical approaches to addressing challenges that they may be facing

Ability to impact regional and national population health resources, such as data sources and measures, so that they can be used more easily and effectively.

The field testing phase of the project is intended to be a two-way learning process for the Field Testing Groups and the multistakeholder committee. By contributing to the refinement of the Action Guide, Field Testing Groups will play an essential role in creating a valuable national resource for population health improvement efforts.

How to Apply to be Designated as a Field Testing Group

Anyone can apply to be a Field Testing Group, including current members of the multistakeholder committee for the project. Interested groups should complete the online survey no later than October 14, 2014. The Field Testing Groups will be selected in October 2014. See below for a description of the information that will be required in the online survey.

Timing of the Field Testing

With the first year of the project completed, the remaining two years will be dedicated to refining the Action Guide to reflect the experience-based input from the Field Testing Groups. Field Testing Group activity will begin by October 2014 and conclude mid-summer, 2016. While this timing is based on a solid estimate, it is subject to change based on a number of factors, including direction from the funder, the Department of Health and Human Services.

Criteria for Selecting Field Testing Groups

Input is needed from a diversity of groups, so the selection process will involve two steps. First, each interested group will be evaluated based on the extent to which the following four individual criteria are met:

1. The group already has two or more different types of organizations (public health, social services, healthcare, business, education, housing, corrections, transportation, etc.) working together to improve the health of a total population or subpopulation.
2. The group already has, or plans to have, meaningful involvement in the population health improvement work by organizations from all three of the following areas: a) public health; b) health care; and, c) other sector(s) whose primary purpose is not public health or health care.

3. The statement of interest clearly identifies the scope and focus of the group’s intended population health improvement work (e.g., a specific geographic region; a particular group of people or subpopulation regardless of geography; a subpopulation within a specific geographic area).

4. The group agrees to participate in the testing activities described in this Project Overview, including using the draft Action Guide, reporting verbally and in writing on their experience, and participating in all project calls and meetings (see specifics below).

Second, informed by the individual evaluation noted above, up to ten Field Testing Groups will be chosen so that, together, the selected Field Testing Groups reflect a mix of characteristics, including:

- Varied geographic focus, both in level (local, regional, state, nationwide, or global) and type of setting (e.g., urban versus rural);
- Different levels of experience or stage of development, ranging from relatively limited to fairly extensive prior experience and success engaging in population health work. More experienced groups should be seeking to expand and/or improve their efforts;
- Various topic or focus area(s);
- Distinctive subpopulation characteristics (such as age or stage of life, race, ethnicity, primary language, income, disability, LGBT or other commonly underrepresented groups).

All groups who complete the online survey (or submit an equivalent statement of interest with the required information) will be notified of the decision regarding selected Field Testing Groups. Those who are not selected will still be encouraged to provide feedback throughout the rest of the project (during meetings, calls, etc.) to garner additional insight for refining the Action Guide.

**What Field Testing Groups Will Be Expected To Do**

Field Testing Groups must be willing and able to actively engage in this project. Each Field Testing Group will participate in calls and meetings, and provide both structured and unstructured feedback to inform the refinement of the Action Guide. This will include input on usability, barriers to use, and opportunities for enhancement. Field Testing Groups will measure progress against their own defined goals and share the results with NQF.

During the course of this phase of the project, Field Testing Groups will participate in the following activities:

1. One in-person “kick off meeting” (travel expenses will be reimbursed)

2. Monthly conference calls to share experiences and give input on a range of topics:
a. The usefulness of the Action Guide and its specific content for population health improvement

b. Knowledge, approaches, and tools the Field Testing Groups used and found most valuable / relevant to their own work, or that the Field Testing Groups needed but were not able to obtain

c. Data and metrics or indicators used by the Field Testing Groups to measure improvements in behavioral, social, and environmental determinants of health and/or health overall

d. Obstacles encountered by the Field Testing Groups in their efforts to improve health, in particular those that could be addressed by one or more federal agencies

3. Participation in one site visit by several members of the multistakeholder committee at the location of the Field Testing Group to document and analyze issues encountered in the Field Testing process, and other information, tools or resources that the Field Testing Groups found necessary to support their efforts.

**Expected Time Commitment from Each Field Testing Group**

Ultimately, the value of the Action Guide as a useful resource for population health improvement projects depends on the insight provided by Field Testing Groups. As such, active participation by the Field Testing Groups throughout this process is essential. Based on the planned activities described above, the selected Field Testing Groups must be able to spend time reviewing the Action Guide and trying out the resources and advice listed in the Guide. How much time that will require depends on the situation and decisions by each Field Testing Group. In addition, Field Testing Groups will have the following estimated commitments:

1. About two (2) hours per month to participate in conference calls/webinars and group or individual check-in discussions by phone

2. One two-day in-person kick-off meeting per year, in addition to travel time to and from the meeting, (travel expenses will be reimbursed) at NQF offices in Washington, DC. This meeting will be held on November 20-21, 2014.

3. Staff allocated time to participate in the project, including a designated key contact person who can be available by phone, email, and online (e.g., web meetings)

**What to Include in the Online Form to Express Your Interest to NQF**

When completing the online form, you will be asked to provide information about each of the questions below. Please provide this information no later than **October 14, 2014**.

While it is important to provide the information in response to each question, there are no right or wrong answers. The information you provide will be used to ensure that each of the chosen Field
Testing Groups meet the individual criteria listed on page 3, and that the final Field Testing Groups selected are a diverse mix.

1. What is the name of your primary contact organization? (either overall group or an organization leading the group)
   a. Describe the primary contact organization (type of organization, location, history, number of years and type of prior experience or involvement in population health improvement)
   b. List the names of each organization that is (or will soon be) meaningfully involved in your population health improvement efforts, noting the type of organization and the degree of current or planned involvement

2. What is the name of the person who will be the primary contact during the Field Testing process?
   a. Describe the primary contact person’s role in the population health improvement effort
   b. Include this person’s contact information, including email, phone, mailing address, and website address if applicable

3. What are the scope, focus, and plans for your population health improvement work?
   a. What is the history and current status of the project?
   b. What would you like to achieve in the next two to five years?
   c. What is/are the primary area(s) of focus, including the subpopulation(s) who is/are or will be directly affected and the key characteristics of that subpopulation (such as age range, race or ethnicity, disability, etc.)?
   d. What geographic areas are involved (e.g., name of neighborhood, city, state, region, national, or virtual / online, if applicable)?

4. Please provide two letters from partner organizations or agencies that state their understanding of the time commitment and expected activities, and agree to support the involvement in the project. At a minimum, the letters should state:

   As a representative of [NAME OF ORGANIZATION OR AGENCY], we are working with [name of contact person submitting the statement of interest] at [name of organization] to [brief description of the local population health improvement efforts]. We have reviewed the Project Overview for Field Testing Groups and understand the activities and related commitment involved in participating as a Field Testing Group. We support involvement in the project and look forward to participating as a Field Testing Group, if selected.
Issues That Field Testing Groups Will Be Asked To Explore

Field Testing Groups will apply the first version of the Action Guide to test its utility as a practical resource, and provide input on its contents and approach. Throughout the project, Field Testing Groups will be asked to share examples or stories illustrating the approaches that they took, the impact they had, the challenges they faced, and other insights and experiences. These examples or stories may be used in the final Action Guide to highlight practical issues encountered during implementation of population health improvement efforts.

Field Testing Groups will be asked to provide input and share ideas about various aspects of the Action Guide, including the title and format of the Guide. For example, an important question that will be discussed is whether the Guide should exist as a stand-alone document, an interactive online tool, or presented in some other format. Ongoing development will require feedback about how often the Action Guide should be updated, and what criteria should be applied to decide which resources are added or removed over time. Specific items that will need to be evaluated include:

The ten key elements

The ten key elements described in the Action Guide are intended to provide guidance to groups starting or continuing population health improvement projects. Field Testing Groups will assess the usefulness of the individual elements and overall set of elements as a whole, and suggest refinements. Through applying the elements in a practical setting, Field Testing Groups will assess the impact of each element, lessons learned through the process, and whether the impact was consistent with the intended outcome. Field Testing Groups will also help identify if any elements are missing.

Data sources

The Action Guide lists various data sources for use in population health improvement projects. Field Testing Groups will identify each data source they use, describing who uses it, how it is used, and for what purpose. The Field Testing Groups will provide feedback on whether the data sources listed in the Action Guide are useful and the impact of using those data sources, if any. Feedback will include suggested refinements and lessons, as well as information on data sources that may be more useful than those listed in the Action Guide.

Measures

Field Testing Groups will provide feedback on the measures and indicators listed in the Action Guide, describing which measures or indicators they used or attempted to use, who used them, how they were used, and for what purpose. The Field Testing Groups will assess whether or not the measures and indicators were useful, and if the impact was consistent with the intended outcome. Feedback will include any suggested refinements and lessons learned; information on measures or indicators that may be more useful than those provided in the Action Guide; and input on whether the Action Guide should list a relatively small set of measures that are recommended for everyone, or provide a larger menu of measures from which to choose.
Tools

The tools and resources listed in the Action Guide include surveys, communication materials, online calculators, and mobile apps, among others, that can be used to help improve population health. Field Testing Groups will use or review a selection of these tools, describing which tools they use or have tried to use, who used them, how they were used, and for what purpose. The Field Testing Groups will assess whether or not the tools were useful, and if the impact was consistent with the intended outcome. Feedback will include any suggested refinements and lessons learned, as well as information on tools that may be more useful than those provided in the Action Guide.

Terminology and Language

Field Testing Groups will be asked to provide input on the key terms and language used in the Action Guide, and whether or not certain words and phrases are being defined and used to convey the appropriate meaning in the most understandable way.

Summary

Field Testing Groups will help shape the future Action Guide, and in the process will have a valuable opportunity to participate in shared learning with each other – while also benefiting from the expertise of the multistakeholder committee. Through providing feedback based on real-world experiences, the Field Testing Groups will help ensure that the Action Guide continues to evolve in a meaningful way. This collaborative effort can thereby highlight the best practices and resources for carrying out coordinated efforts to improve population health.