



CHAPTER 8

Building Capacity to Respond to Your Data

If you have implemented PRAPARE® and identified social risks that are impacting your patient population, you likely want to act on your data. But where should you begin?

For some organizations, there may be a need to build capacity to address the social drivers of health before actual interventions can be developed. This chapter will outline how best to assess your own setting, abilities, and resources, and how to develop a few key building blocks so as to increase your capacity to act on your data.

Assess Your Setting	74
Develop Cross-Sector Partnerships	76
Engage in Advocacy Work	81



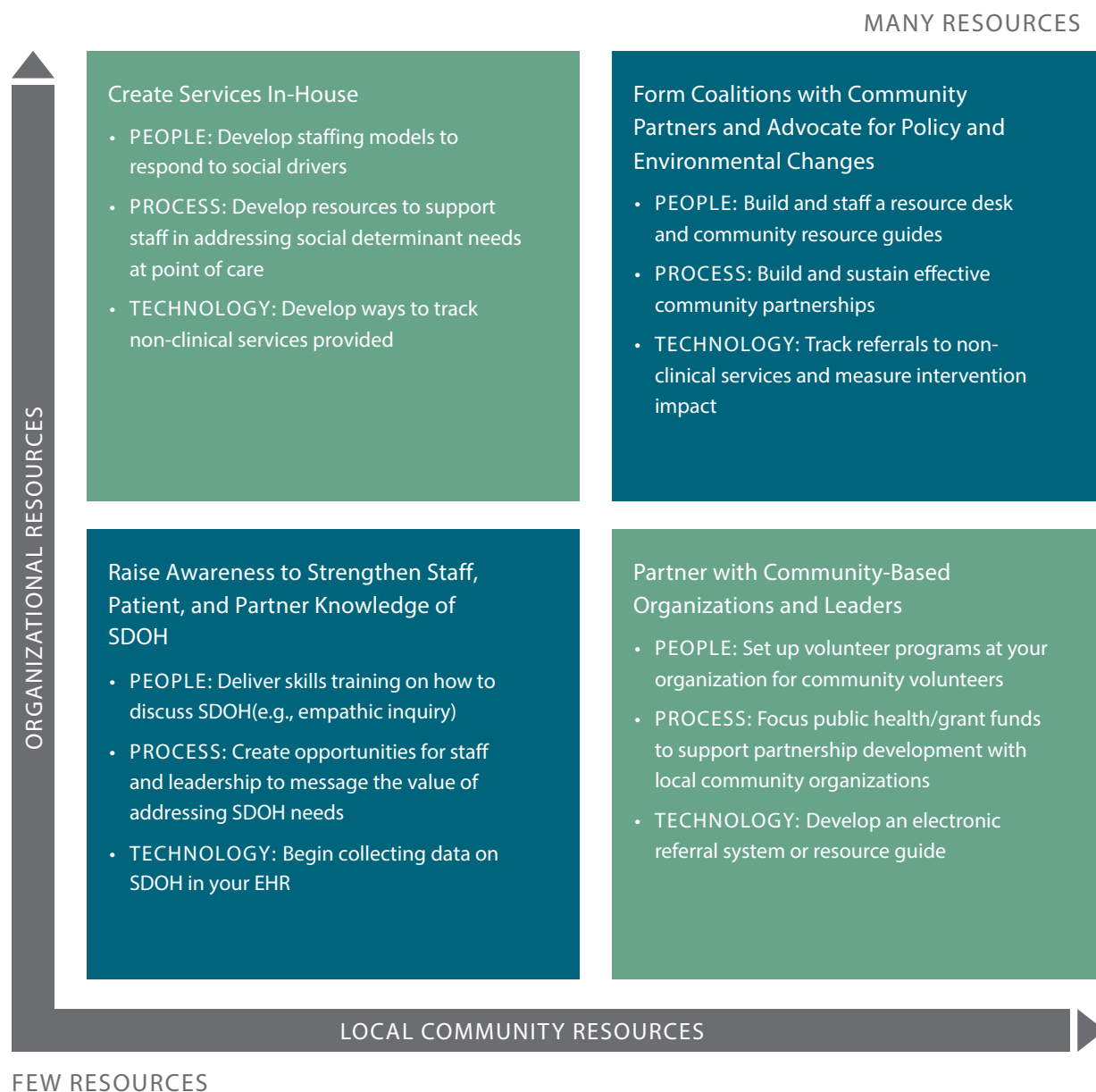
Assess Your Setting

Building capacity to address the social drivers of health begins with an assessment of your organization's current capacity. What resources does your organization have available to focus on addressing identified needs and in what context do these resources exist? Are they internal to your organization or do they exist outside of your organization?

Consider the following resource categories when you assess resources within your own organization to address SDOH needs:



After you assess your own organizational resources, it is then important to assess what resources exist in your community. By assessing your setting in terms of the type and extent of resources in your organization and in your community will give you a sense of where to start in bolstering your capacity to address SDOH needs.



Develop Cross-Sector Partnerships

Why Form a Partnership?

Interventions to address the social risk factors that are impacting your patients' health outcomes can feel daunting, but it is important to remember that you do not have to develop all of your SDOH interventions in-house or do this work all on your own. Partnering with community-based organizations who have already developed services and programs that address the social needs of your patients can be a great way to get a patient's social needs met and lessen the resource burden placed upon your health organization. Furthermore, as more health organizations form cross-sector partnerships with non-clinical organizations outside of the medical setting, our healthcare system will further increase its abilities to not only manage disease, but address factors that lead to poor health.

While health care organizations may not always be expert in addressing social needs, they are well-placed to witness the impact of social risk factors that remain unaddressed and are great gateways to receive and then refer patients to resources to meet their needs.



Marin Community Clinics in Novato, California hosts weekly "Health Hubs" where they provide free bilingual services to their community, such as health screenings, nutrition education, Zumba classes, as well as food distribution. Photo credit: Marin Community Clinics in Novato, CA

Who Should Your Partners Be?

As you expand your efforts to impact social drivers of health, there's a wide world of potential partners to consider. How can you narrow down the list of organizations with whom you might connect? TABLE 8.1 shows various factors to consider and user stories detailing the benefits of these partnerships:

TABLE 8.1. Factors to Consider When Deciding Partnerships

Start with the data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which social risk factors were most prevalent when you screened your patient population? • If there were a handful of issues that rose to the surface, identifying community-based organizations that are focused on addressing those needs might be a good place to start. 	EXAMPLE: A health center in Iowa found that 1 in 5 of their patients had transportation needs. This health center was able to use this data to form a partnership with local and regional transportation authorities to provide bus tokens and taxi vouchers as well as work to develop more bus routes to areas in need.
Identify strategic opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there well-resourced partners in your community who are looking to serve your patient populations, but don't have the relationships or access points that your clinic offers? Perhaps you can work together. Do not feel that you have to tackle all of these needs on your own! • Alternatively, there might be an under-resourced organization that is already addressing the social drivers you'd like to work on, but could benefit from your financial or staff support. 	EXAMPLE: The Maine Primary Care Association (MCA) joined state-wide transportation coalitions with other organizations also interested in addressing transportation needs. The Maine PCA was able to share PRAPARE® data demonstrating the extent and location of need with the coalition while also benefiting from the resources and staff of the other partners to help address the transportation needs so that they didn't have to address them alone.
Go where the resources are	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you located in a rural area or small town where resources are scarce? Consider reaching out to social service organizations in the next closest city to see if they would be willing to partner with you to serve your community. 	EXAMPLE: A health center in rural Massachusetts discovered that they had high food insecurity amongst their patients after administering PRAPARE®. Their town did not have a food bank, but they called a food bank in Boston 70 miles away to see if they could help. Because the health center had data to demonstrate their need, the Boston food bank was happy to form a partnership where the Boston food bank delivers a truckload of food (both fresh and non-perishable) every week to the health center.

Table continued on page 78.

TABLE 8.1. Factors to Consider When Deciding Partnerships (continued)

Let the needs of your population segmentation guide you

- If you are working to improve care management for a specific patient subpopulation (i.e. uncontrolled diabetics), consider partnering with external organizations who are also focused on serving this same population, or ones that are addressing social risk factors that have an impact on the target population's health outcomes.

EXAMPLE: Health center and Primary Care Associations in different states have partnered with organizations interested in sub-populations such as state chapters of the American Heart Association or organizations focused on the opioid epidemic to work together on addressing social drivers of health that affect these populations. These partnerships can often be a source of funding to do this work.



Marin Community Clinics in Novato, California partners with CalFresh to help make healthy foods affordable for their community. CalFresh and other community partners set up booths at Marin's weekly Health Hubs to bring more awareness about available community resources and services. Photo credit: Marin Community Clinics in Novato, CA

How Do You Form a Successful and Equitable Partnership?

When forming a partnership, it is important to consider these key phases through which a partnership happens:



It is important at the beginning of forming partnerships that you clarify the common agenda between the participating organizations and identify clear objectives. Once shared goals, roles and responsibilities have been agreed upon, partners can all sign a Memorandum of Understanding to secure commitment and accountability. Partners can revisit these goals and responsibilities throughout their partnership to ensure that they continue to align.

Here are sample Memorandums of Understanding between various health organizations and non-clinical organizations:

- [Memorandum of Understanding between Redwood Empire Food Bank and Diabetes Wellness Project](#)
- [Memorandum of Understanding with a Medical-Legal Partnership for the Elderly](#)

Once partners are committed, they should all collaborate to develop a strategic action plan that helps them achieve their shared goals. As you implement your work together, it is important to regularly check-in on the partnership to discuss what is working well, what could be improved, and to evaluate your collective work. This may require sharing data across organizations. Data Use Agreements can be helpful agreements to safely share data and secure the privacy of the data.

- [Sample Data Use Agreement between Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations and a health center](#)



KEEP IN MIND THAT A NECESSARY
INGREDIENT FOR ALL PARTNERSHIP
ELEMENTS IS PLENTY OF TIME!

Potential Barriers & Challenges to Consider When Forming a Partnership

HIGH FRONT-END INVESTMENT

Forming a partnership often requires a high investment of resources at the onset (i.e. staff time spent writing grants to secure funding) with returns not seen until later on.

Consider starting off your partnership by seeking out low-hanging fruit which requires less effort from partners. An example of this might be sharing informational materials or referring patients to another organization's services.

LACK OF RESOURCES TO SUPPORT PARTNERSHIP

As previously mentioned, partnerships require an investment of resources from the partner organizations involved. If those resources are unavailable internally and cannot be secured externally, the partnership may fizzle out or see limited success.

Be sure to discuss how you'll support your partnership from the onset of the collaboration. Getting clarity on resource needs early on can help determine the feasibility of a partnership and may help you decide with whom you should partner.

POWER IMBALANCE AMONG PARTNERS

Trust and respect are key ingredients of any partnership, and if there is an imbalance of power amongst partners, it can impact how they feel about each other. If both (or all) partners do not have a voice in the partnership, it will suffer.

From the onset of each partnership, there should be a clear understanding of how everyone involved will contribute to the collaborative in a meaningful way. Recognition of each partner's contributions will go a long way in creating trust and respect.

DIFFERING AGENDAS AMONG PARTNERS

It is important that partners maintain clarity on and commitment to their shared agenda. A partnership can't succeed if the parties involved aren't on the same page, and working to achieve the same outcomes.

Honest and clear communication is the key to ensuring everyone is on the same page in a partnership, and that partners have alignment in their expectations and goals for the collaboration. Continue to revisit goals throughout the duration of the partnership to ensure they continue to align.



CASE STUDY

Read [this case study](#) on how a health center in Oregon partnered with a local farm to provide healthy foods to patients and the facilitators and challenges of forming this partnership.



RESOURCES

[Tools to Guide Effective Collaborations](#): Developed by the Centers for Disease Control

[Guide to Developing Effective Coalitions](#): Developed by The Prevention Institute

[The Partnering Toolbook](#) detailing the essential elements that form effective partnerships: Developed by The Partnering Initiative

Engage in Advocacy Work

What's the Value of Engaging in Advocacy Work?

In some cases, taking steps to address the social drivers of health begins with advocacy—acting as an advocate and speaking up about the importance of addressing the social, environmental, and economic conditions in which people live and advocating for the financial support of social resources both within and outside of the four walls of your organization. Without such support and resources, it is difficult to develop sustainable and impactful interventions to address the social drivers of health.

Engaging Your Representatives

To engage in advocacy work, a good starting place is forming relationships with your representatives. But how can you gain access to your elected officials? Think about connecting with them at events or meetings that they attend – Town Hall meetings, community planning gatherings, or campaign events are a good place to start. You might also connect with professional networks (i.e. Primary Care Associations, National Association of Community Health Centers), to connect with your elected officials as part of a larger, organized concerted effort.

Introduce yourself and your organization and invite them to come for a visit and a tour. It is hugely valuable for you to create opportunities for your elected officials to meet your patients, hear from you and your staff, see the work that you do, and the work that you would like to do.

Creating Effective Messaging

How do you tell an effective story about the conditions in which your patients live and how those conditions impact their health outcomes? TABLE 8.2 highlights some elements to consider as you message the importance of addressing the social drivers of health.

TABLE 8.2. Factors to Consider When Deciding Partnerships

Choose The Right Messenger	<p>Policymakers love to hear from their constituents, so try and create opportunities for your patients and clients to share their own stories about the social conditions in which they live, and how those conditions impact their health, and how the services that your organization provides (either in-house or through partnership) have positively impacted their lives.</p>
Use Heroes and Villains	<p>Does your story have a protagonist? Think about sharing a story about a specific patient and how the conditions of their life have impacted their health. It is important for your audience to connect with your patient and to see the negative conditions in which they live as things that should be addressed or ameliorated.</p>
Focus on Action & Conflict	<p>A memorable story has both of these elements. When you share your story, think about how to keep it engrossing and how to incorporate a sense of urgency. What negative conditions have your patients experienced in their lives have had led to their poor health? Did they try to combat those conditions? If so, what happened?</p>
Use Your Data	<p>Think about connecting your PRAPARE® data to your story. While a protagonist or character gives your message heart, data demonstrates the weight of the issue on which your advocacy efforts are focused. Simple graphs, pie charts, and/or maps can quickly demonstrate the complexity of the patients served at your organization.</p>
Close with a Solution	<p>Research shows that people prefer messages that offer direction, so consider closing your story with a “call to action”. This should be relatively simple if you’re engaged in advocacy work. What are you advocating for? Resources to support your organization or a partner organization in addressing the social drivers of health? Public policy that ameliorates the impact of social or economic inequality? Close with an ask.¹</p>

The Art of Finding Alignment

In your advocacy work, you will encounter audiences (including your own stakeholders) who do not always share your view. It is important to have a clear understanding of what their views are and where they align or differ from your own. There may be good opportunities for working together even when your views diverge, and knowing their stance can help you tailor your conversation and seek areas of common ground.



RESOURCES

[Advocacy Toolkit](#): Developed by the National Association of Community Health Centers

[Storytelling for Advocacy](#): Developed by the National Community Land Trust Network

¹ <https://www.hcadvocacy.org/advocacytools/>