

3. Determine How the Assessment Will Be Structured and Facilitated

This step involves exploring options for structuring and facilitating the assessment process to determine which approach is most appropriate for the system in which the assessment will be conducted.

Review Options for Structuring the Assessment Process

The lead organization or planning committee should structure the assessment meetings in a way that will best meet the needs of their participants. Many sites indicate that the State and Local Instruments can take 1-2 hours per Essential Service, while the Governance Instrument can take 15-45 minutes per Essential Service. There are several possibilities for structuring the meetings:

- **Hold a “retreat” where the assessment is completed in one sitting** – this may be done in 1-2 days. This allows for a shorter timeframe and helps to maintain momentum. However, it requires an initial commitment of time on behalf of all participants which may seem overwhelming. In a retreat format, all participants typically attend an orientation session which is followed by the full group completing the instrument together, or work in several small groups on assigned Essential Services. For example, five small groups may be assigned to work on two Essential Services each.
- **Use small groups to address pieces of the instrument** – small groups may be tasked with specific sections of the instrument (e.g., a group to address Essential Services 1, 2, and 3). This allows for the inclusion of expertise, as needed, and allows for a more manageable time commitment. However, it may decrease cross-learning, which is a major benefit of this assessment. This method may also create less consistency in developing responses. Therefore, if this approach is used, a kick-off meeting can help to ensure that all groups approach the assessment in a similar way. A follow-up debriefing meeting may provide the opportunity for all participants to hear the major points from each group.
- **Conduct a series of meetings** – a series of meetings may be held, addressing one or more Essential Services at a time. Through this process, a core group may be involved to assure a consistent process and cross-learning. In addition, individuals with specific expertise may be invited to specific meetings as needed. This method is often seen as a manageable process since it allows the work to be accomplished in small chunks; however participants sometimes report that this process seems to drag on and delay improvement.

Tip!

- Many larger sites use small breakout groups during a large meeting process.
- The series of meetings option works especially well for boards of health, which may choose to address one or two Essential Services at each board meeting until the assessment is complete.
- Many local public health systems find that using the small group option over a series of meetings works best to engage system partners and accommodate their busy schedules.
- If the assessment will be completed in breakout groups, consider the following groupings of Essential Services which may maximize common themes across Essential Services:
 - For Five Work Groups (two Essential Services per Work Group):
 - 1 & 2; 3 & 4; 5 & 6; 7 & 9; and 8 & 10.
 - 1 & 2; 3 & 4; 5 & 6; 7 & 8; and 9 & 10.
 - 1 & 2; 3 & 7; 4 & 5; 6 & 8; and 9 & 10.
 - For Four Work Groups:
 - 1 & 2; 3, 4, & 5; 6 & 7; and 8, 9, & 10.
 - 1 & 2; 3, 7, & 9; 4, 5, & 6; and 8, 9, & 10.
 - For Three Work Groups:
 - 1, 2, & 5; 3, 4, & 7; and 6, 8, 9, & 10.
 - 1, 2, & 3; 4, 5, & 6; and 7, 8, 9, & 10.
 - For Two Work Groups:
 - 1, 2, 6, 8, & 10; and 3, 4, 5, 7, & 9.
 - 1,2,3,4,5; and 6,7,8,9,10.

While considering options for structuring the assessment process, sites are encouraged to review various approaches for completing the optional questionnaire on the priority of model standards and determine if it will be completed during the assessment process. This questionnaire is best completed by one group so that there is a consistent approach to responding to the questions across the model standards. Therefore, the manner in which the assessment itself is being completed impacts the options for completing the priority questionnaire (see Appendix B). Consider these possibilities:

- If the assessment is being completed by more than one group (whether in a retreat format or a series of meetings) identify participants from among the various groups to form a representative small group to complete the priority questionnaire. The questionnaire may be completed by this small cross-cutting group at scheduled intervals or at the end of the assessment process.

- If the assessment process includes participation of a core group (in addition to a variety of other participants) in completing all 10 Essential Services, invite the core group to respond to the priority questionnaire. With this approach, the core group may meet after each Essential Service, or at the conclusion of the assessment process.
- If the assessment is being conducted by one group addressing all 10 Essential Services, the priority questionnaire may be included as part of the assessment process, incorporating questions either after each model standard, at the end of each Essential Service, or at the conclusion of the assessment process.

State and local public health systems are encouraged to determine whether they will complete the agency contribution questionnaire as part of their NPHPSP assessment. This questionnaire is also best completed by a single group so that there is a consistent approach across the Essential Services. Members of the group completing this questionnaire may be agency-only personnel or systems partners. However, if systems partners are engaged to respond to this questionnaire, it is not recommended that the questionnaire be completed at the end of each model standard, or Essential Service, even if the entire assessment is being completed by the same group. With the agency questionnaire, participants are asked to set aside the systems perspective with which the rest of the assessment is addressed and consider only the public health agency perspective. This may have the effect of disrupting the flow of the assessment process and present a confusing dynamic for participants. For this reason, it is recommended that the agency questionnaire be completed at a time when only the agency perspective is considered, perhaps during a time or session devoted to this purpose alone.

Tip!

- Plan to ensure a comfortable environment and provide food and beverages, if possible.
- State how long the process will take and stick to the commitment!

Examples from the Field – A Series of Meetings

A local health official in upstate New York convened a group of community partners to respond to the Local Instrument. She promised that the process would take three meetings of two hours each. During the first meeting, the entire group worked through the first two Essential Services. Once the group understood the tool and the process, they were able to divide into two groups to respond to the remainder of the tool during the two subsequent meetings. By adhering to her promise of three meetings, the local health official sustained good participation and enthusiasm throughout the three meetings. In retrospect, however, the local health official indicated that four or five meetings could have provided a more manageable timeframe.

In Ohio, the City of Kent's local board of health spent time at each of its regular monthly meetings completing the Governance Instrument. Over the course of a year, and in conjunction with the local health department, the board discussed and answered questions for each of the ten Essential Services. The health officer briefed the board on the findings from the local public health system assessment for each Essential Service. The board used that information to assess the breadth of activities being conducted by the city and health department, and to examine their role as board members. The board discussed each model standard and came to consensus on each assessment question through discussion and by majority vote. Participation remained strong throughout the process.

Example from the Field – A Large Assessment Meeting

Holding a large one or two-day assessment meeting is a common method for completing the State Instrument. States such as Arkansas, New Hampshire, Illinois, Montana, New Mexico and Florida have used this approach successfully. Most commonly, the state convenes approximately 75-125 participants for a 1½ day meeting. The morning of the first day is generally devoted to supporting statements from the state health official and other key leadership, an orientation to the concepts of the NPHPSP and the assessment instrument (sometimes given by representatives from the NPHPSP partner organizations), an overview of the assessment process and ground rules, and discussion of how the assessment will fit into current state efforts. During the remainder of Day One and the morning of Day Two, participants break into assigned groups. Several states have tasked five groups with two Essential Services each, with approximately 15-25 individuals participating in each small group. Facilitators and recorders assist the groups in completing their assigned Essential Services. Often this is done by holding interactive discussions about the model standards and then walking through the questions to identify votes (e.g., using colored cards) that create a consensus response. During late morning on Day Two, the groups reconvene and share the key points and major insights that emerged during the discussions. The meeting generally concludes with a discussion of next steps and how participants can continue to remain engaged.