

Visioning

The second phase of MAPP — Visioning — guides the community through a collaborative and creative process that leads to a shared community vision and common values. Vision and values statements provide focus, purpose and direction to the MAPP process so that participants collectively achieve a shared vision of the future. A shared community vision provides an overarching goal for the community — a statement of what the ideal future looks like. Values are the fundamental principles and beliefs that guide a community-driven planning process.

Because visioning is done at the beginning of the MAPP process, it offers a useful mechanism for convening the community and building enthusiasm for the process, setting the stage for planning and providing a common framework throughout subsequent phases.

Recommended Participants and Roles

- Core Support Team or subcommittee — designs the visioning process, works with the facilitator, prepares for the visioning sessions, records the results of the session and drafts the resulting vision and values statements.
- MAPP Committee — oversees the visioning process and solicits community participation.
- Broad Community Involvement — is included in the visioning sessions. This sets the tone for broad participation throughout the MAPP process.

Introduction

A Step-by-Step Overview of the Visioning Phase

1. Identify other visioning efforts by revisiting the inventory of earlier community initiatives. Make connections as needed.
2. Design the visioning process and select a facilitator. The facilitator should possess strong facilitation skills and be perceived as neutral and fair.
3. Conduct the visioning process. Participants should identify their shared vision by looking five to ten years into the future. Also address the identification of common values.
4. Formulate the vision statement and common values based on the results of the sessions.
5. Keep the vision and values statements alive throughout the MAPP process. Refine both as needed.

What is Visioning?

A vision is a compelling and inspiring image of a desired and possible future that a community seeks to achieve. Health visions state the ideal, establish a 'stretch,' link explicitly to strategies, inspire commitment, and draw out community values. A vision expresses goals that are worth striving for and appeals to ideals and values that are shared throughout the local public health system. Through the visioning process, the community develops a shared vision and common values.

Having a vision can show how all of the pieces fit together. Like the picture on a jigsaw puzzle box, it is easier to assemble the puzzle when you can see the box cover.

A vision provides a picture of the long-range results of the planning process and what will be accomplished when the strategies developed are implemented. It illustrates what community health will look like when a successful public health system is in place.

Vision statements may be easily confused with mission statements and strategic plans. The following questions may help to better distinguish them:

- Mission Statement — why do we exist now?
- Vision Statement — where should we be headed?
- Strategic Plan — how do we plan to get there?

During the visioning process, the MAPP tool recommends developing common values. Values are the fundamental principles and beliefs that guide a community-driven process. These are the central concepts that define how community members aspire to interact. The values provide a basis for action and communicate expectations for community participation throughout the process. The focus of the values should be on the community, and not on how the committee operates.

The following are examples of community values:

- Mutual Respect — “We believe that all community residents should be treated with courtesy and respect.”
- Commitment — “We are dedicated to fulfilling our shared vision while embracing the challenges of the future to assure the public's health.”
- Teamwork — “We believe that a community working together toward a common goal can achieve better results than individuals can achieve independently.”

How Does Visioning Benefit a Community?

Vision development is an important tool for discovering common values, developing a shared sense of purpose, and fostering communication. It is this shared understanding that provides the foundation for honest, creative interaction. Conducting a visioning process and establishing a shared vision accomplishes the following purposes:

- *provides a focus, purpose and direction for the planning process — something the community can “strive” to achieve.*
- *serves as an incentive to mobilize assets and resources across sectors and boundaries toward a shared vision of the future.*
- *is a powerful method for convening the community and mobilizing participation in the MAPP process.*
- *ensures that the process moves forward in a community-driven fashion.*
- *communicates the goals of the MAPP process and the resulting strategies to organizations within and outside of the community.*
- *provides a source of inspiration and motivation for implementing the plan and for keeping the effort on track.*
- *generates enthusiasm and kindles excitement about the direction the community is heading.*
- *unites participants.*
- *shows participants with conflicting viewpoints the common ground that they share, creating a willingness to share resources and overcome turf issues.*

- *illustrates that there will be a sustained level of commitment to the process.*
- *gives participants the courage to tackle issues that seem insurmountable, such as financial barriers or cultural, organizational or personal differences.*
- *fosters creativity by providing the opportunity to think collaboratively in innovative ways.*

The Development of a Common Set of Values

- Provides a common expectation of how we treat one another.
- Establishes the climate for successful planning.
- Unites individuals with differing perspectives by focusing on their common beliefs and values.
- Establishes a supportive environment for working together collaboratively and creatively.
- Clarifies what the community believes to be important.
- Provides a framework for assuring congruence between beliefs, plans, and actions.

Visioning as Part of the MAPP Process

Visioning is an instrumental part of MAPP. Developing a shared vision and common values during this early phase helps to move the process forward with energy and enthusiasm.

Visioning can be undertaken in a variety of ways. The recommended approach involves engaging the community broadly by conducting visioning sessions with more than 50 participants. An alternative approach is to conduct visioning with a broad-based advisory committee of key stakeholders, leaders, and community residents, including organizational and unaffiliated members. Either method is effective for developing a shared vision, although the community approach garners broader community support for the vision, as well as for the overall MAPP process.

With either approach, dialogue skills and effective facilitation will serve to enhance the outcome. Dialogue can lead to a better understanding among participants and help identify the linkages that will serve as the foundation for the shared vision and common values. See the section on Engaging the Community for suggestions on how to incorporate dialogue into the visioning sessions.

How to Conduct the Visioning Phase

As with other phases of the MAPP process, visioning should be customized to fit the needs of the community.

Step 1 — Identify Other Visioning Efforts and Make Connections as Needed

An inventory of related community efforts was conducted during the Organize for Success/Partnership Development phase of MAPP. At this point, the MAPP Committee should revisit this inventory to see whether or not visioning efforts have already taken place. It is a good idea to rescan community efforts to ensure that similar efforts have not recently emerged. If a similar visioning process is in progress or has been completed, an attempt should be made to create links with the MAPP process. For example, a visioning process conducted for the education or transportation sectors of the community might be easily adapted to the MAPP process, offering added momentum to both initiatives.

Step 2 — Design the Visioning Process and Select a Facilitator

While MAPP strongly recommends the community visioning process, either of the two listed below may be used, depending on the specific needs and capacities of the community.

Community visioning process — A broad-based community visioning process with 40 – 100 community participants is an effective way to inform the community about MAPP and gain its collective interest. Open invitations may be extended to all community residents through the media. However, if this approach seems too unwieldy, invitations can be extended to diverse groups of residents identified by the MAPP Committee and other key leaders. Community visioning is useful for engaging and mobilizing the broader community and ensures that input is garnered from throughout the community. This type of visioning process is more challenging to manage and requires more resources to implement.

Advisory committee/key leadership visioning process — Participants include members of the MAPP Committee, as well as other key leaders in the community. This type of visioning process may be easier to manage and requires fewer resources. If the appropriate individuals and organizations are included, the vision generated can provide a good focus for the future.

With either approach, it is useful to have a smaller group (either the Core Support Team or a designated subcommittee) prepare for the visioning sessions, work with the facilitator, record the results of the session, and draft the resulting vision and values statements.

As part of the design of the visioning process, the MAPP Committee selects a facilitator. The facilitator should possess skill in managing a large group process and should be recognized as a neutral or fair individual. A strong facilitator ensures that the final statements are representative of the entire community. All substantive conflicts need to be resolved so that commitment and positive feelings toward the vision and values statements are created.

Selection of the facilitator should be customized to the visioning approach used (i.e., will the facilitator be working with a large group of 40-100 community residents or with a group of key stakeholders and leaders?). If resources allow, the MAPP Committee may wish to obtain a consultant to lead the visioning process. Alternatively, there may be qualified facilitators in neutral organizations within the community, in a neighboring community or at the state level.

Once a facilitator is selected, the small group that is preparing for the process will need to work with the facilitator to design the process. When preparing for the process, the following issues should be considered:

- a.** What kind of introductory information should be presented at the beginning of the session? There should be some time devoted to an introduction to the MAPP process and to the concept of a shared vision and common values. It is especially important that participants understand that they are developing a vision and values for the whole community and not for one organization.
- b.** What kind of ice-breaker exercises should be conducted? Creative exercises may ensure that everyone is comfortable and open to the experience.
- c.** What are the logistics of the visioning sessions? How many should be held? It is suggested that this be done in 1-3 sessions, with follow-up work done by a small group. How long should each session be? Where and at what time should they be scheduled? Consider how logistics might affect the level of participation.

- d. Who needs to be involved? Seek a careful balance that includes individuals representative of the community and the various organizational components of the local public health system. The group should not be so large that the process becomes unwieldy.
- e. At what point during the session will values be addressed? Should they be addressed before visioning occurs, in the second part of the visioning session or in a separate session held later? Some communities prefer to address the “what” (vision) before the “how” (values), whereas others choose the reverse order. If values are addressed in a follow-up session, it is recommended that the session be held no more than 2-3 weeks after the vision is developed.

Step 3 — Conduct the Visioning Process

Once preparations are made, the MAPP Committee should move forward with the visioning process, using the Step-by-Step Process for Visioning or another method. As the process is implemented, ensure that the appropriate people are included and that all participants are contributing fully to the effort.

Regardless of whether a community or committee approach is selected, visioning participants will undergo similar processes. Useful visioning questions might include:

1. What does a healthy community mean to you?
2. What are important characteristics of a healthy community for all who live, work, and play here?
3. How do you envision the local public health system in the next five or ten years?

Responses to these questions should focus on broad concepts rather than details. These questions can be answered through written surveys, open brainstorming sessions or both. After the vision is brainstormed, common values should be identified. In doing this, participants consider the following questions:

1. Taking into consideration the vision that has been developed, what are the key behaviors that will be required of the local public health system partners, the community and others in the next five to ten years to achieve the vision?
2. What type of working environment or climate will be necessary to support these behaviors and achieve the vision?

By compiling the most commonly agreed-upon ideas, the community should develop common values that speak to the beliefs of the community. The values should be instrumental in guiding the participants throughout the remainder of the MAPP process.

Step 4 - Formulate Vision and Values statements

A small task force should formulate the vision and values statements based on the outcomes of the visioning session. A small group can do this most effectively, so that the visioning process does not become a writing exercise. The vision statement should be strong and powerful and represent the ideal future. It should be a statement that has the force to mobilize and energize many organizations and individuals. The values statement should emphasize a positive climate and supportive behaviors that contribute to the achievement of the vision.

The format and length of vision statements can vary widely. There is no “right” way; however, the final statement should be easy to read, easy to understand and easy to remember. It should also be compelling, motivational and inspirational. It should speak to the entire community.

One statement can be developed that encompasses both the vision and the values. The values can be included in the vision statement to show they are an intrinsic component of how the vision will be achieved. On the other hand, many communities list the values separately so that they are explicit and strongly promoted. As with other steps of MAPP, development and promotion of the statements should be tailored to the needs of the community.

Identify ways that the creation of the vision and values statements can be celebrated; this is a major milestone for the community and should be recognized as such.

Step 5 - Keep the Vision and Values Alive Throughout the MAPP Process

The most vital component of visioning is ensuring that the vision statement is not forgotten and that it continues to drive the MAPP effort. The vision statement should be kept at the forefront of the community effort and should drive work towards community health improvement. The vision and values statements can be read at the beginning of each MAPP Committee meeting, or the statements can be included in committee member materials. The MAPP Committee should also consider including the vision and/or values statements in marketing literature and informational materials about the community or about the MAPP process.

Additionally, the statements should be refined as the MAPP Committee progresses through the planning process. As the community conducts the four MAPP assessments, identifies strategic issues, and develops an action plan for implementation, new information may lead to refinement or adjustment of the vision or values statements.

A Step–By- Step Process for Visioning

The following is a useful method for structuring community visioning. A similar approach can be used with a committee visioning process. The process details the development of a shared vision as well as common values.

Preparations

Select a site that can readily accommodate 40-100 persons. Set up the room with participants seated in a circle. This encourages participation by all persons in attendance.

Invitations should be clear and be sent in a timely manner to avoid confusion. Care should be taken to ensure that the time and place facilitate broad attendance. Carefully consider the venue and schedule and how it will accommodate participants with differing schedules or lifestyles.

Key individuals to support the visioning process include 1) a facilitator who can effectively manage the large group process in a neutral way and 2) one or two note-takers to record the discussion. Recording is a task that should not be assigned or undertaken lightly. The recorder(s) should be skillful at organizing and synthesizing material and should strive to capture the exact wording — to the extent possible — used by participants. You may also want to designate some individuals to act as observers; these individuals can assure everything is on track and can provide suggestions to the facilitator if needed.

Welcome/Introduction

Set the tone of the visioning session by greeting participants when they arrive, arranging for clear signage and offering light refreshments. Helping people feel comfortable upon arrival and communicating to participants the importance of their presence can go a long way toward building trust and commitment.

The facilitator or a MAPP Committee representative should open the meeting with an explanation of MAPP and why a visioning process is important. The list of benefits cited in the MAPP Visioning guidance can be a useful reference. Be sure to emphasize that the goal is to create a shared vision for the community and not a vision for any one organization.

Building Rapport/Icebreaker

After the introduction, a small amount of time should be dedicated to building rapport among the participants. Everyone in the room should be given a chance to introduce themselves. Consider having participants engage in icebreaker exercises; these can help to ease tension in the room and get everyone comfortable. Icebreaker activities might include the following.

1. As people introduce themselves, ask them to state their expectation for the meeting. They can also be asked to state a "fun fact" about themselves, to help ease the tension.
2. Since all of the participants may not know each other well, participants can be divided into groups of two to four to "chat" for ten minutes, then return to the larger group to introduce each other.

Vision Brainstorming and Development

Once participants are comfortable with the topic and with each other, the dialogue should be

moved toward discussing a vision for the community. Questions should be formulated beforehand to drive this discussion. Useful visioning questions might include:

- *What does a healthy Community mean to you?*
- *What are important characteristics of a healthy community for all who live, work, and play here? and*
- *How do you envision the local public health system in the next five or ten years?*

Responses to these questions should focus on broad concepts, not details. Responses can be collected through brainstorming activities or by writing ideas down and then sharing them. The group can be organized to gather information through small group processes, or the questions can be addressed by the group as a whole.

Possible approaches for brainstorming include:

- Ask each person to write down what they believe about healthy communities. Then ask participants to pair up, share their thoughts, and develop a joint list. Participants should clarify each other's ideas and discuss any conflicting information. Then each pair can join another pair and repeat the process. The process is repeated until the entire group is back together.
- Ask each participant to write down their ideas. Then, in round-robin fashion, go around the room, posting all ideas on a flip chart (this can be shortened by limiting the number of ideas offered). After all ideas are shared, the group discusses and organizes them.
- Distribute small pieces of paper and ask participants to write down their ideas — one idea on each piece of paper. Then have participants tape their ideas to a wall. A small group then moves the ideas around until common ideas are grouped together. List and discuss the common ideas.

Values Brainstorming and Development

Once many ideas have been gathered and there is consensus about the concepts contained in a community vision, the group can move on to identifying common values (this may be done in the second part of the first session, or during a second session). It is strongly recommended that the actual drafting of the vision statement be done by a small task force or staff group.

The values brainstorming process should be similar and can use the same brainstorming techniques. Questions to elicit thoughts on common values include:

Taking into consideration the shared vision that has been developed, what are the key behaviors that will be required of the local public health system partners, the community, and others in the next five to ten years to achieve the vision?

What type of working environment or climate is necessary to support participants in performing the above behaviors and in achieving the vision?

Closing the Session /Check-out

At the end of each session, the facilitator should ensure that everyone is comfortable with the results of the session. Give participants a chance to make final comments or express concerns about the results or the process. This helps to ensure that participants leave the session without feeling frustrated and may also improve future group processes. Close the meeting with a discussion of next steps. Discuss the need for and timing of future meetings. Make sure everyone understands the next steps and how follow-up will occur.

Follow-up to the Session

After the visioning session, a small group should compile the results and draft statements for the shared vision and common values. The draft statements should be presented to the visioning group participants (through a follow-up session or through other mechanisms). Participants should be given a chance to make minor adjustments.

Once everyone is satisfied with the vision and values, each should be formally adopted. The statements should then be kept alive through the remainder of the MAPP process. All MAPP materials, such as brochures, leaflets and reports, should include the statements. References to vision and values statements should be made at the beginning of each MAPP committee meeting.