

## **Guide for NPHII Focus Groups**

### **Background and Introductions**

[To be read by focus group facilitator.]

Welcome, and thank you for participating in this conversation today. My name is [insert] and I'm from [insert]. I'm a member of the team that is assessing the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Public Health Improvement Initiative or NPHII. The assessment team includes both external partners from the National Network of Public Health Institutes, like me and my co-facilitator, and internal staff who are from CDC.

We're interested in learning about your agency's experience with the NPHII program, and especially how various programmatic elements of NPHII have, or have not, helped your agency achieve success. Results will be used to help CDC understand the contributions of these NPHII program elements to date and plan for the future of the NPHII program.

My job today is to facilitate our discussion, making sure we stay on topic and hear from everyone. Your job is to provide honest feedback that can help us understand what is working well in NPHII, areas where CDC can make improvements, and areas that CDC should reconsider supporting.

Throughout this conversation, I'll be referring to "Programmatic Elements of NPHII" and "NPHII Intended Outcomes." In order to ensure that what I mean by these terms is clear to the group, we've prepared large post-its and stuck them to the walls with "Programmatic Elements of NPHII" and "NPHII Intended Outcomes" listed.

[Read aloud to the group.]

Today's conversation will take about two hours. If you need to step out for a few minutes, please do feel free to excuse yourself at any time. The restrooms are [insert]. Please also help yourself to coffee or water [modify as needed] at any time. Please refrain from using your cell phone and ensure it is turned off or placed on silent mode.

Public reporting burden of this collection of information is estimated to average 120 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to CDC/ATSDR Information Collection Review Office, 1600 Clifton Road NE, MS D- 74, Atlanta, Georgia 30333; ATTN: PRA (0920-0879).

Your participation in this conversation is completely voluntary. You can choose to not participate, you can end your participation at any time, and you can choose to decline to answer any particular question. The information you provide will be kept anonymous by the assessment team. The discussion will be recorded in order to ensure that we capture your feedback accurately.

The recording will begin after introductions are finished, and it will not be shared with anyone outside of assessment team members from the National Network of Public Health Institutes. Once the recording has been transcribed, we will erase the recording, and the transcription will exclude all identifying information, such as individual or agency names.

The transcription will be available to the full assessment team, including staff from CDC, but it will not be shared with anyone outside of that team. In addition, results will be presented without reference to any specific individual, agency, or jurisdiction. I'd also like to ask that you protect one another's anonymity by refraining from sharing what we discuss after the focus group ends.

I have a document here that describes what I've just said in writing for you to keep [pass out]. If there's anything you'd like to share with me after we end today, my contact information is [provide].

Do you have any questions before I ask you to introduce yourselves?

[Respond to questions.]

Let's take a moment to introduce ourselves before we get started. We'll go around the table beginning with my co-facilitator and our note taker. Please provide your name, the name of your agency, and the length of time you've been in your position.

[Complete introductions.]

[BEGIN RECORDING]

**Today I'd like to learn how the various programmatic elements of NPHII have helped your agency achieve outcomes, as well as how these NPHII elements could be improved. But first, let's begin with some discussion about what your agency has achieved so far through NPHII.**

1. How has NPHII helped your public health agency? What have been your agency's accomplishments to date or what do you expect to achieve?  
[Probe for NPHII *outcomes*, recognizing that some agencies might not have achieved outcomes in some of these areas]  
Do you have examples of successes in
  - a. Accreditation readiness
  - b. Increased efficiencies/effectiveness via QI initiatives
  - c. Increased performance management capacity
  - d. Improved organizational culture of QI

**Having identified some of the outcomes you've achieved so far and what you hope to achieve in the future, I'd like to now learn how the different programmatic elements of NPHII have or have not helped you get there. I'd like to learn what is working well, how the various NPHII elements can be improved, and what aspects of NPHII are not adding value.**

**First, I'd like to gather your feedback on the support available to help you understand CDC expectations associated with the NPHII Cooperative Agreement and Continuation Guidance. I'm thinking of things like the individual support you get from your Project Officers and Grants Management Specialists, as well as proactive information and support provided through the NPHII TA Team mailbox, the performance measure guidance, teleconferences and QA documents, and so forth that are intended to provide clarity on the guidance and associated expectations.**

2. How has the support you've received from CDC helped you better understand the expectations of the Cooperative Agreement?  
[Probe to cover NPHII outcomes not mentioned, as well as aspects of support not mentioned.]
  - a. What aspects of this support, if any, were not helpful in clarifying expectations? How could CDC support be improved to ensure expectations are clear from the outset?

**Let's now talk about the technical assistance that's available to help NPHII grantees achieve what you've laid out in your work plans. I'm thinking about the support available to help you achieve program outcomes provided by CDC and partner organizations such as ASTHO, NACCHO, PHF, and APHA.**

3. What kinds of technical assistance have helped your organization make progress toward the outcomes you identified?  
[Probe to cover NPHII outcomes not mentioned, referencing responses to Q1.]
  - a. What aspects of TA have not been as helpful? What other types of TA do you need to help you achieve the outcomes you are working towards?
4. What barriers or challenges have you encountered to accessing the TA your agency needs?

**Now I'd like to transition to learning more about your role as a PIM. In particular, I want to understand how having a PIM has made a difference in your organization, as well as how CDC could better support your success in this role.**

5. How has having a PIM helped your agency achieve the outcomes you mentioned?  
[Probe regarding NPHII outcomes not mentioned.]

- a. What challenges or barriers have you faced as a PIM in working toward NPHII outcomes?  
[Probe to identify how barriers could be addressed.]
  - b. How does where a PIM organizationally resides in an agency impact a PIM's ability to make progress, if at all?  
[Probe regarding ability to influence or gather support from leadership, degree of integration or visibility across the organization, ideal placement within their organization, ability to influence the culture of the organization as a whole.]
  - c. To what other factors do you attribute the successes and challenges you've experienced as PIMs?  
[Probe specifically for CDC support that has been helpful.][Examples might include networking with other PIMs, leadership support, early successes, support from key players.]
6. How could CDC better support PIMs to achieve NPHII outcomes in their organizations?

**Next I'd like to learn more about your experiences networking with other PIMs and how that has helped you achieve your NPHII cooperative agreement outcomes. I'd like to learn about your informal interactions with other PIMs, your experiences with the PIM Network, and other ways CDC could support PIM networking and peer learning.**

7. In what ways have other PIMs helped your organization make progress?  
[Probe regarding informal connections & the PIM network.]
  - a. What barriers have you encountered in engaging with other PIMs?
  - b. How can the CDC better foster peer learning and networking among PIMs?  
[Probe regarding improvements to the PIM Network.]

**My last set of questions are about your general, overall perceptions of the NPHII program. As you answer, please help me ensure we've captured all of your ideas and feedback about NPHII's strengths and opportunities for improvement.**

8. If NPHII were to go away, what would your agency lose?
9. Are there recommendations you would make to the CDC NPHII program office to increase the likelihood your organization will be able to achieve the outcomes NPHII is intended to achieve?
10. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us today?

### **Summary & Wrap-up**

Before we end our conversation, I'd like to go over some of the themes we've heard discussed today. As I go over these themes and as you reflect on our conversation, please let me know if

I've misunderstood any component of our discussion or missed any critical points that you want to ensure I capture.

[Review themes & reflect on additional input.]

Thank you for your time and feedback. The information you've provided will be most valuable. Results will be shared with you through a brief report that will be available later in the year.