

## **Case Studies - Santa Clara County Public Health Department**

### **Situation**

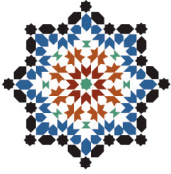
In January 2011, the Santa Clara County Public Health Department (SCC) set out to develop a Strategic Plan to serve as a roadmap for creating and sustaining health improvements. The SCC Leadership saw an opportunity to promote local “winnable battles” and define specific outcomes to address disparities in county health. Leadership also formulated a framework or “north star” to articulate county direction and action. Abinader Group was asked to operationalize SCC’s “north star” and facilitate a strategic planning and community engagement process. This strategic planning process would establish a renewed vision, mission, set of values, and priorities.

### **Actions**

The Executive Leadership Team felt strongly about their “north star” framework for developing a strategic plan. They wanted to build excitement and buy in from staff, stakeholders, and the community about a new health agenda. This health agenda would target specific health areas that had the greatest traction and impact in reducing disparities. Outcomes for each health area would identify the strategies, interventions, and target populations to focus on. Abinader Group was challenged with developing an inclusive process to define and operationalize SCC’s health agenda. We worked closely with various levels of leadership to build an understanding of the internal shifts, external forces, and future challenges affecting the provision of public health services. Through several meetings Abinader Group helped SCC leadership distill and articulate a cohesive message for staff about the “north star” framework and the opportunity for consensus on a health agenda.

To further develop the “north star” framework Abinader Group solicited the help of a Design Team. The Design Team, made up of staff representatives, provided advise to the lead staff on the process design. The Design Team assured that strategic planning efforts connected with ongoing work of SCC departments. They were instrumental in determining the process design and timeline while also advising on messaging and communication. Through five meetings the Design Team determined strategies for engaging broader staff, requesting community input and promoting buy in for the strategic planning process.

With Design Team direction Abinader Group convened SCC leadership to create a vision, mission and set of values to guide the department effort. Abinader Group led a practical visioning process to articulate the mission and vision statements. A set of underlying values and core beliefs were also developed. All three elements were presented for input at a stakeholder convening. Abinader Group designed and facilitated two large stakeholder meetings to determine SCC’s health priorities and outcomes.



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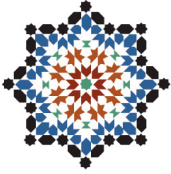
The health priorities meeting gathered 77 participants from Public Health departments, community organizations, and the health and hospital system. The new SCC vision and mission were presented to the group for feedback. Abinader Group facilitated the group through a consensus and decision making process to distill four health areas to focus SCC efforts. Through diverse participant discussion, voting, clarification, and small group work four health areas were identified. Obesity, tobacco use, violence, and unintentional injury became the four “winnable battles” for SCC. With the “winnable battles” in place, the design team and leadership team met to finalize the department core values. Afterward a health outcomes meeting invited SCC staff and leadership to define three to five specific outcomes within each “winnable battle” health area. Forty participants reviewed county data, developed outcome criteria, and established specific, measurable health outcomes to carry out over the following 3-5 years. Each outcome specified the primary target population, the influential behavior or condition, the baseline rates, the degree of desired change and the time frame for evaluation.

Abinader Group engaged SCC staff and leadership in a causal mapping workshop to further define the relationship between social determinants and health disparities within the “winnable battle” areas. Forty participants convened to consider the root causes of health disparity within the county. The meeting aim was to distinguish between health equities and disparities while identifying partnerships or methods to achieve health outcomes and address upstream factors. Abinader Group utilized the BARHII framework to demonstrate root causes of health and to invite feedback about the upstream implications of achieving SCC’s health outcomes.

It was important for SCC to engage community voices in understanding environmental conditions and developing strategies and interventions within the “winnable battle” areas.

Abinader Group developed regional agendas for each of the six community meetings. Since community meeting attendance ranged from 15 to 150 people it was crucial to allow for flexibility and accessibility of agenda materials. Meetings included diverse participation from various age groups, cultural backgrounds, and neighborhood perspectives. Emphasizing inclusion, translation, and follow through was key to community engagement.

As SCC’s “north star” framework included internal development, community engagement, and external collaboration SCC led efforts to establish a regional data collaborative. This data collaborative invited various county agencies to discuss methods for improving health impacts through data sharing. Abinader Group assisted SCC and regional leaders in determining possible partnerships and defining the intention for collaboration. Abinader Group facilitated the first collaborative meeting, which outlined a vision and purpose highlighting key activities for the following year.



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### **Results**

As a result of their effort and work with Abinader Group the Santa Clara County Public Health Department articulated and defined a strategic plan to guide health improvements. SCC Leadership clearly outlined a “north star” framework and built staff engagement. SCC created a vision and mission that reflected their desire to reduce health disparities. With staff and stakeholder participation SCC defined organizational values as well as local “winnable battles” with specific health outcomes. Through community dialogue local conditions affecting health helped inform SCC strategies. With Abinader Group guidance SCC considered the social determinants of health related to their “winnable battles” and convened regional partners to develop a data collaborative and positively impact health.