



2011

# Local Public Health System Assessment

Knox County, Tennessee

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## Introduction

### Together! Healthy Knox

In 1998, the Institute of Medicine defined public health as “what we as a society do collectively to assure the conditions in which people can be healthy.”

Improving health is a shared responsibility of health care providers and public health officials, as well as a variety of organizations and individuals who contribute to the well-being of our community. No single entity can make a community healthy. So much more can be accomplished by working together with a common vision to improve health.

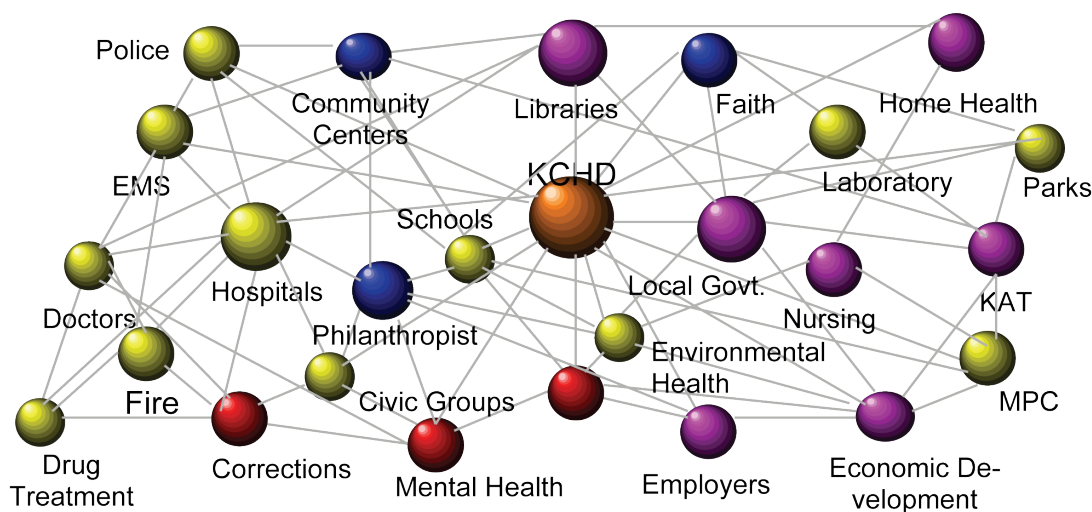
From	To
Operational planning	Strategic planning
Focus on the agency	Focus on community & entire public health system
Needs assessment	Emphasis on assets and resources
Medically oriented model	Broad definition of health
Agency knows all	Everyone knows something

**Together! Healthy Knox** provides a framework for bringing together the individuals, groups and organizations that make up our local public health system, and guides our community to identify and take action on priority health issues. The approach used by **Together! Healthy Knox** is a paradigm shift from operational to strategic thinking, from a needs-based to an asset-based emphasis, and from an agency focus to a broad community focus — a new way of doing business.



**Together! Healthy Knox** uses the *Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships* (MAPP) model for community health planning, developed through a cooperative agreement between the National Association of County & City Health Officials and the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (above).

**The Local Public Health System** It takes more than healthcare providers and public health agencies to address the social, economic, environmental and individual factors which influence health. The local public health system is comprised of agencies, organizations, individuals and businesses that must work together to create conditions for improved health in a community (below).



## The Local Public Health System Assessment

The *Local Public Health System Assessment* (LPHSA) is one of four MAPP assessments that inform the development of a strategic community health improvement plan. The purpose of the assessment is to identify the activities and capacities of our local public health system and identify areas for strengthening the system’s ability to respond to day-to-day public health issues and to public health emergencies. The LPHSA uses the National Public Health Performance Standards Program local instrument, developed collaboratively by seven national public health organizations. The assessment focuses on standards, designed around the Ten Essential Public Health Services, by which local public health system performance can be determined.

<b>The Ten Essential Public Health Services</b>	
1.	<b>Monitor</b> health status to identify community health problems.
2.	<b>Diagnose and investigate</b> health problems and health hazards in the community.
3.	<b>Inform, educate,</b> and empower people about health issues.
4.	<b>Mobilize</b> community partnerships to identify and solve health problems
5.	<b>Develop policies and plans</b> that support individual and community health efforts.
6.	<b>Enforce</b> laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety.
7.	<b>Link</b> people to needed personal health care services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable.
8.	<b>Assure</b> a competent public health and personal health care workforce.
9.	<b>Evaluate</b> the effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services.
10.	<b>Research</b> for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems.
From the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s website, <a href="http://www.cdc.gov/nphsp/essentialservices.html">http://www.cdc.gov/nphsp/essentialservices.html</a>	

## Assessment Process

Seventy-two partners from Knox County’s local public health system convened for a five hour assessment meeting (see attendee list appendix, enclosed). Participants were assigned to one of five groups, each to complete a section of the assessment, and then re-assigned to complete the remaining five sections of the assessment. With guidance from trained facilitators, participants scored responses to assessment questions using individual voting cards (see below).

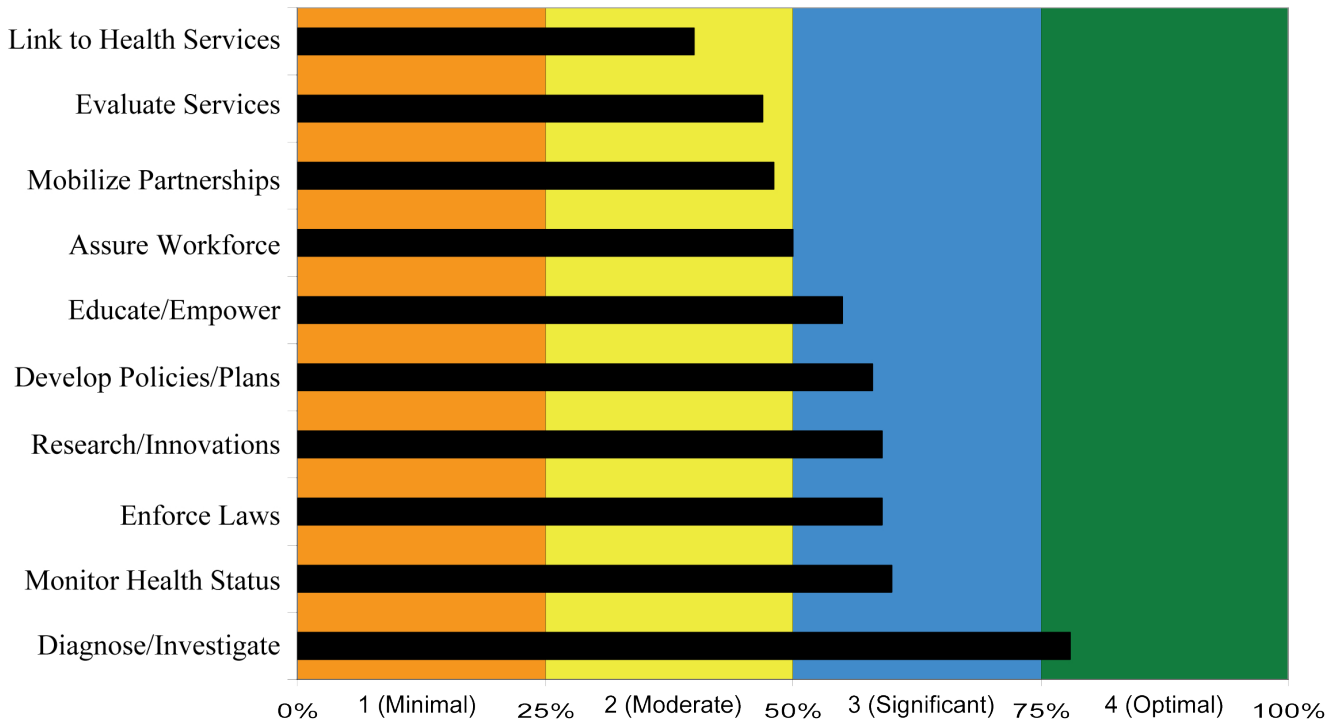
<b>NO</b>	<b>Minimal</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Significant</b>	<b>Optimal</b>	<b>Don’t Know</b>
<b>0</b>	<b>1</b> <b>0-25%</b>	<b>2</b> <b>26-50%</b>	<b>3</b> <b>51-75%</b>	<b>4</b> <b>76-100%</b>	<b>?</b>

After voting was complete for the assigned section, groups engaged in facilitated discussion about questions with the least consensus and voted on these questions again. Final scores were determined either by consensus or by averaging the votes. Data was submitted to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for analysis. The full report generated by the CDC may be found on the Together! Healthy Knox website (<http://www.healthyknox.org>). This summary report includes highlights from the full report along with relevant discussion comments from assessment participants.

## About this Report

Graphs on the following pages depict summary scores for a series of questions. Findings for each section highlight notable answers and scores related to the key questions represented by the summary graph. The complete list of assessment questions and results may be found at <http://www.healthyknox.org>.

### Executive Summary

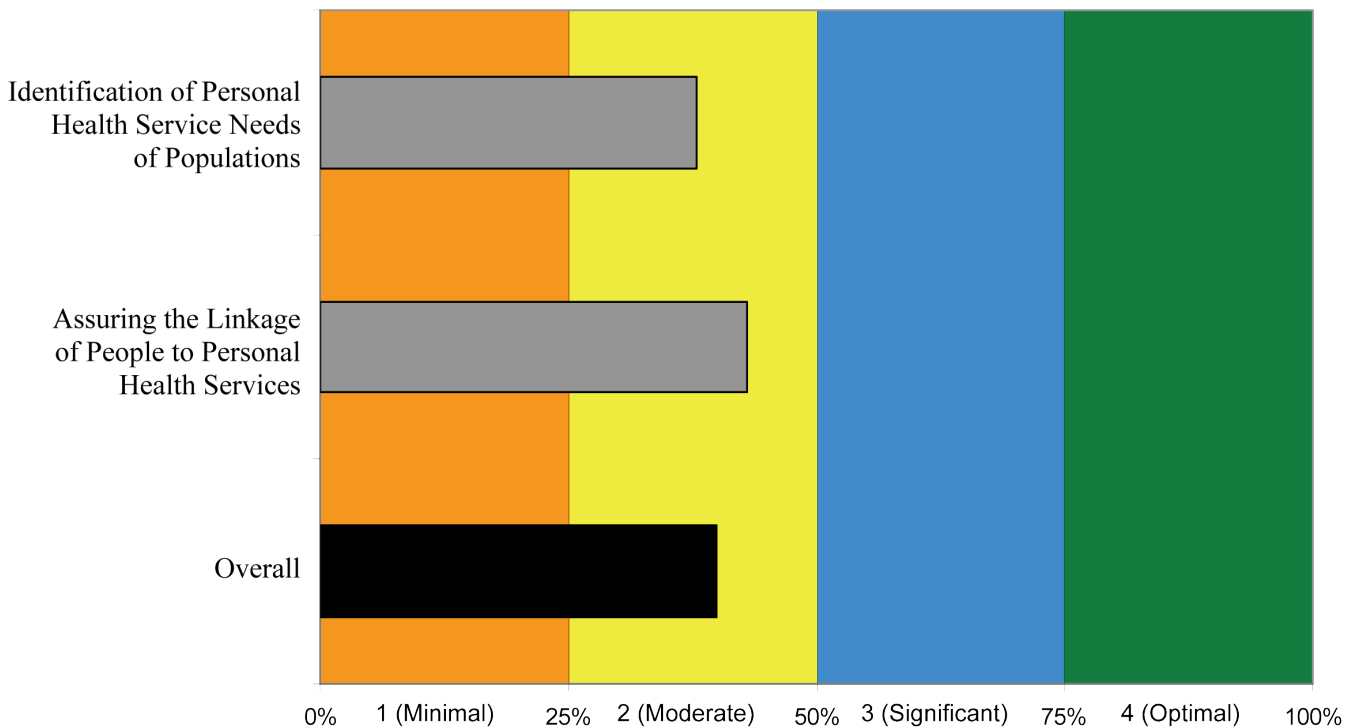


## Summary Findings

- Scores of zero activity of performance within the Knox County LPHS were assigned to three assessment items. These include: LPHS review of public health policies at least every three to five years; assessment of the LPHS workforce in the past three years; dissemination of workforce assessment/gap analysis.
- Within the lowest rated area of performance, linking people to needed health services, the greatest deficiencies included assessment of personal health services available to populations who experience barriers to care and coordination of personal health and social services.
- Some areas of relatively low performance may be enhanced through the Together! Healthy Knox initiative. These include assessing the effectiveness of community partnerships in improving community health and periodic evaluation of the local public health system. It is also likely general awareness of activities and capacities of the local public health system will improve as the THK initiative proceeds.
- Optimal performance was perceived within several areas of the Knox County LPHS, including: designation of an Emergency Response Coordinator; after action evaluation of public health emergency responses; ready access to laboratories and use of protocols for handling laboratory samples; presence of a community health improvement process; health department legal or regulatory powers to intervene during a public health emergency; awareness within the LPHS of workforce licensure and certification requirements; position descriptions and performance evaluations utilized at the health department.

## Link People to Needed Personal Health Services and Assure the Provision of Health Care when Otherwise Unavailable

**Key Questions:** Does the local public health system identify personal health service needs of at-risk populations? Do we assure the linkage of people to personal health services?

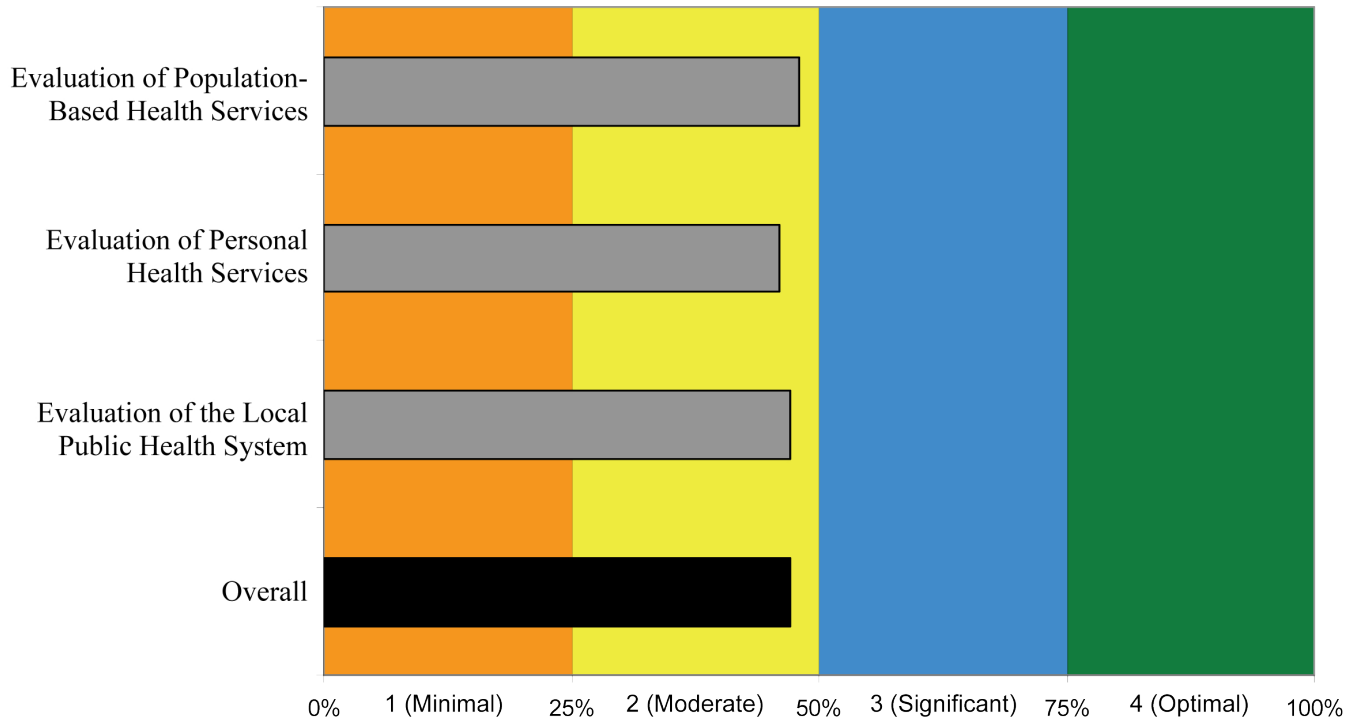


### Findings

- This essential service was ranked as the lowest scoring section of the assessment.
- Participants indicated a minimal level of activity around assessment of personal health services available to populations who experience barriers to care. Coordinating the delivery of personal health and social services to optimize access for populations with barriers was also rated as having a relatively low level of activity.
- It was noted in discussion the needs of some populations, including youth, have been assessed and barriers are being addressed. Other populations are difficult to reach and assess. Specific concerns were expressed regarding health care gaps among persons aged 19-64 years, non-English speakers, and gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered communities.
- It was perceived that many health care services and initiatives exist in our community to meet the needs of at-risk persons; however, there is not a comprehensive understanding of who is using these services and where gaps remain.

## Evaluate Effectiveness, Accessibility and Quality of Personal and Population-based Health Services

**Key Questions:** Have population-based health services been evaluated in our community? Have personal health services been evaluated in our community? Has the performance of the overall local public health system been evaluated?

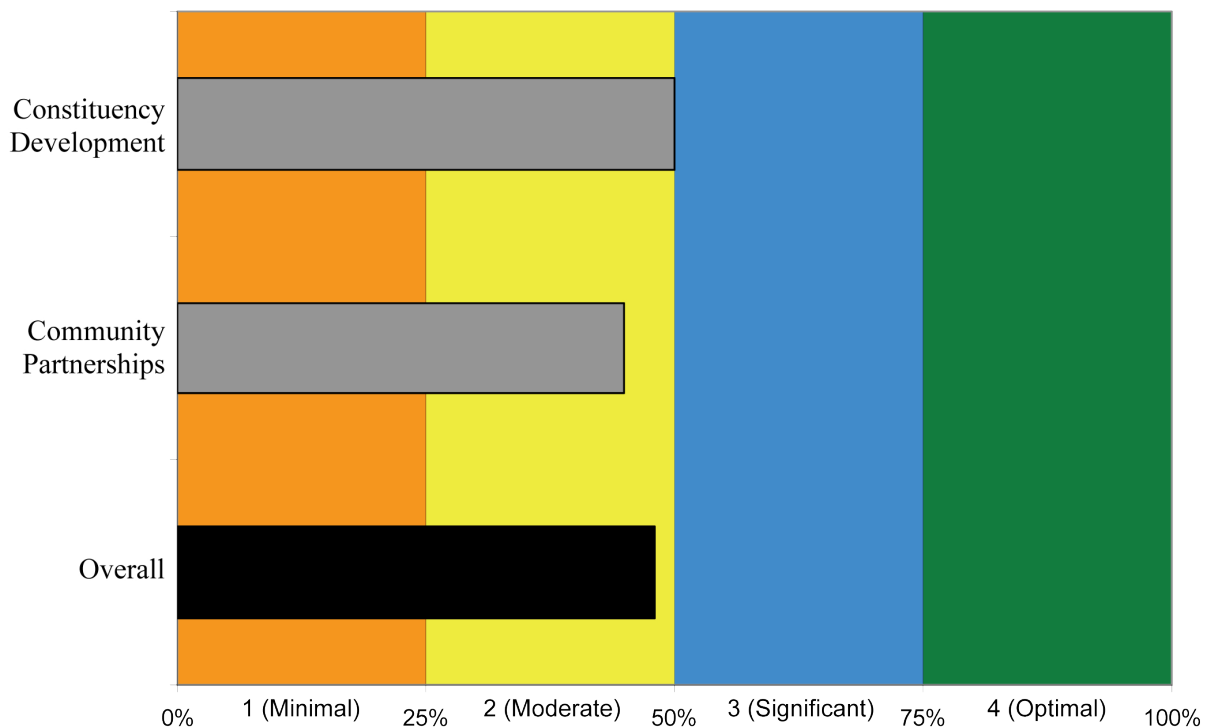


### Findings

- This essential service ranked as the second lowest performer of the ten assessment areas.
- Minimal activity was perceived regarding periodic evaluation of the local public health system. The local public health system assessment described in this report is the first of its kind in Knox County, and will need to be repeated every three to five years to improve performance in this area.
- Minimal to moderate activity was also indicated in the areas of assessing client and community satisfaction with health services and using data from the evaluation of personal and population health services for planning purposes.
- There was general uncertainty about the system's performance related to evaluating the local public health system, with more than half of participants responding "don't know" to questions in this area.

## Mobilize Community Partnerships to Identify and Solve Health Problems

**Key Questions:** Is there a process in place to develop collaborative relationships between current and potential constituents in the local public health system? Is there a broad-based community partnership to assure a comprehensive approach to improving health?



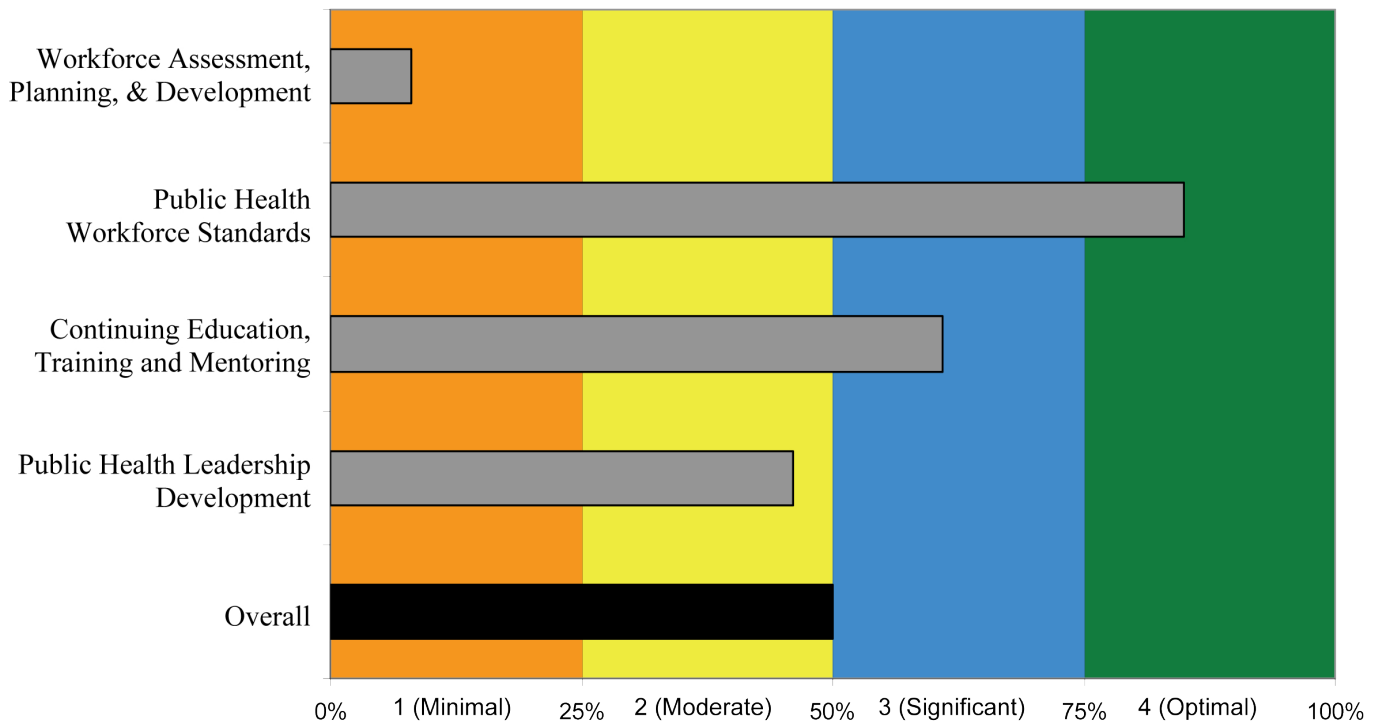
### Findings

- This essential service was ranked as one of the three lowest scoring sections in the assessment.
- Participants perceived a significant level of performance in the presence of a broad-based community health improvement committee, and noted in discussion that the Together! Healthy Knox partnership addresses this measure.
- Although the performance score was high for the maintenance of a directory of organizations comprising the local public health system, more than one-third of participants were uncertain of the accessibility of such a directory.
- It was noted in discussion that two areas with low or minimal activity – evaluation of progress toward community health goals and review of the effectiveness of community health partnerships – may be addressed as the Together! Healthy Knox partnership identifies strategic issues, launches its action plan, and matures as an organization.
- More than one-third of participants indicated “don’t know” when asked if organizations within the community health improvement partnerships alter or align activities related to the Essential Public Health Services.



## Assure a Competent Public and Personal Health Care Workforce

**Key Questions:** Is an assessment of workers within in the local public health system conducted, are gaps addressed, and are assessment results distributed? Does the local public health system develop and maintain standards for its workforce? Do life-long continuing education opportunities exist for the public health workforce? Are there leadership development opportunities in the local public health system?

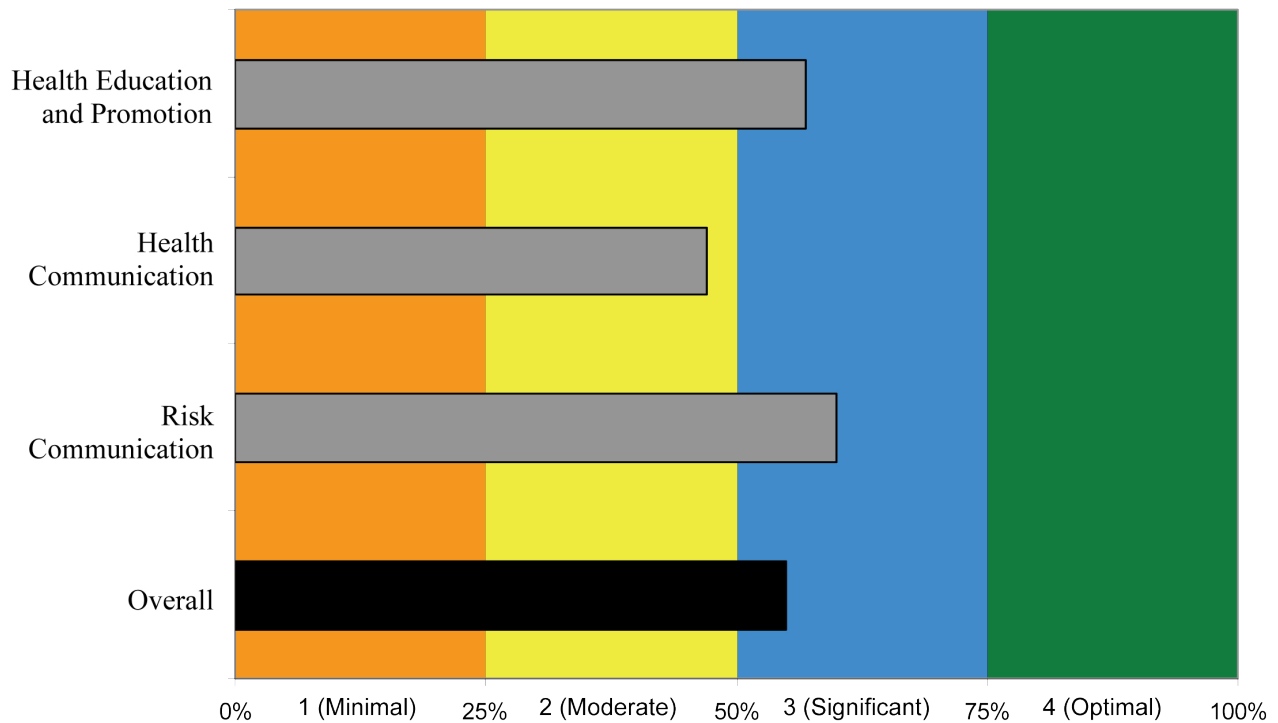


### Findings

- Two areas within this section of the assessment received a score of zero for no activity. Participants indicated that an assessment of the local public health system workforce has not been conducted, and therefore the results of a workforce assessment have not been disseminated.
- Participants noted in discussion that a public health workforce assessment and plan may be useful, as in the case of a perceived nursing shortage. Nevertheless, there was doubt expressed that agencies within the local public health system would share information about their workforce.
- Development of leadership skills in the local public health system and collaborative participation in decision making across organizations received only moderate performance scores.

## Inform, Educate, and Empower Individuals and Communities about Health Issues

**Key Questions:** Does the local public health system collaborate to create and deliver health education and promotion activities? Do we use health communication plans to inform and influence individual and community decisions about health? Are there risk communication processes in our local public health system to inform and mobilize the community in times of crisis?

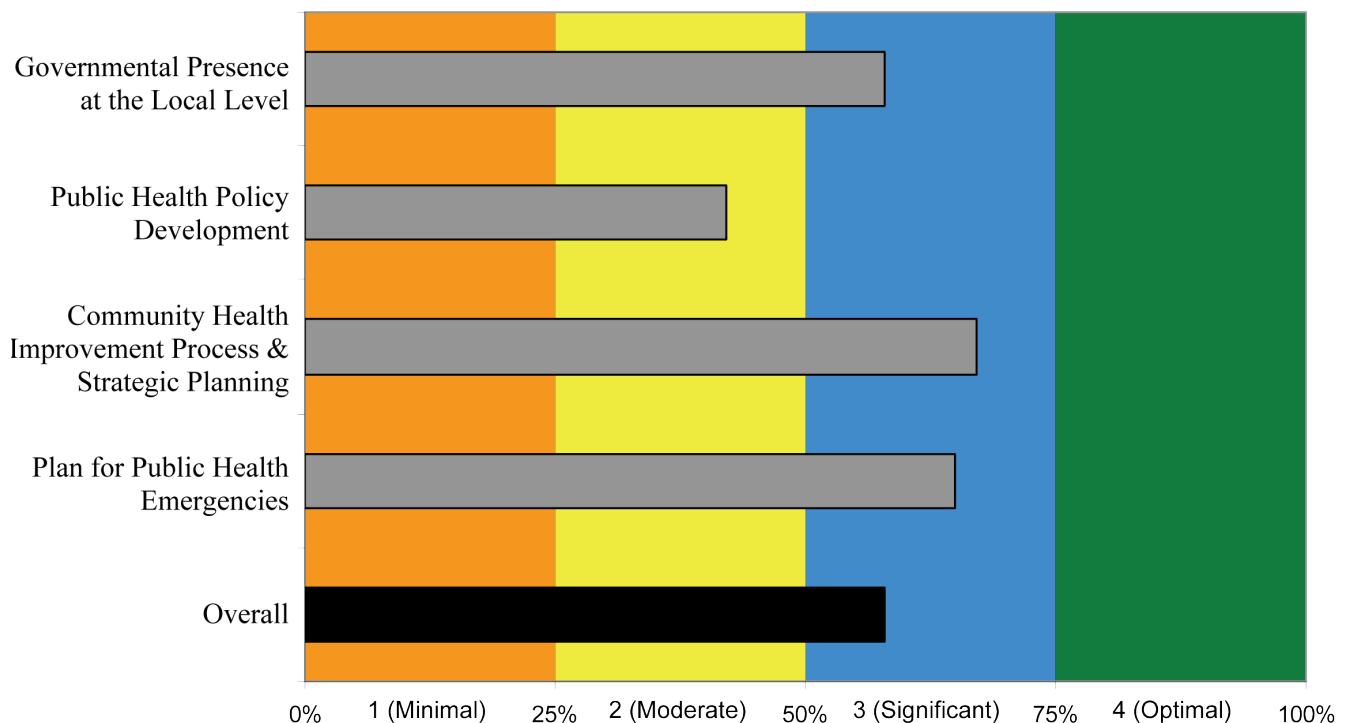


### Findings

- A significant level of activity was perceived around the development of emergency communications plans for use during times of crisis although only minimal activity was noted for the development of health communication plans to support the adoption of healthy behavior.
- Participants in the assessment were generally uncertain about our community's use of communication strategies to inform decisions which enhance health. More than half of participants indicated "don't know" when asked if the local public health system has policies and procedures in place to coordinate public announcements related to health promotion issues.

## Develop Policies and Plans that Support Individual and Community Health Efforts

**Key Questions:** Is there a local governmental public health presence in our community? Does the local public health system review and develop policies to protect and promote health? Does the local public health system have a strategic planning process for community health improvement? Is there community-level planning for responding to public health emergencies?

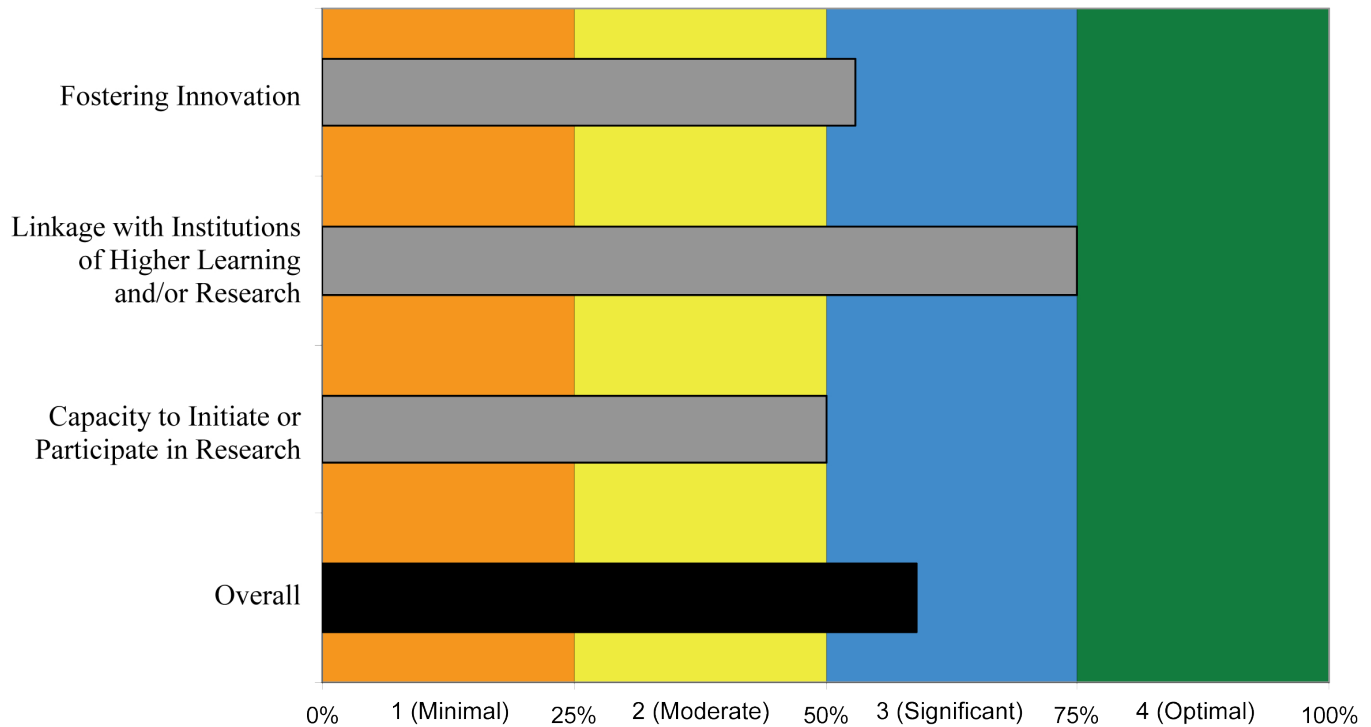


### Findings

- Participants perceived an optimal level of performance for the presence of a community health improvement process and a community partnership for emergency preparedness planning.
- There was a high level of uncertainty regarding many activities related to this essential service. Many participants did not know about the functions of the local board of health, legal responsibilities and legal resources of the health department, strategic planning at the health department, or about the contents and use of the local public health system's all-hazards emergency response plan.
- Participants also indicated low knowledge about review of public health policies by the local public health system, and this measure was ultimately scored as having no activity. It was noted that the health department has the credibility to engage constituents in health-related policy review and analysis.

## Research for New Insights and Innovative Solutions to Health Problems

**Key Questions:** Do organizations within the local public health system foster innovation to strengthen public health practice? Are there linkages with institutions of higher learning and research within the public health system? Is there capacity in our community to initiate or participate in public health research?

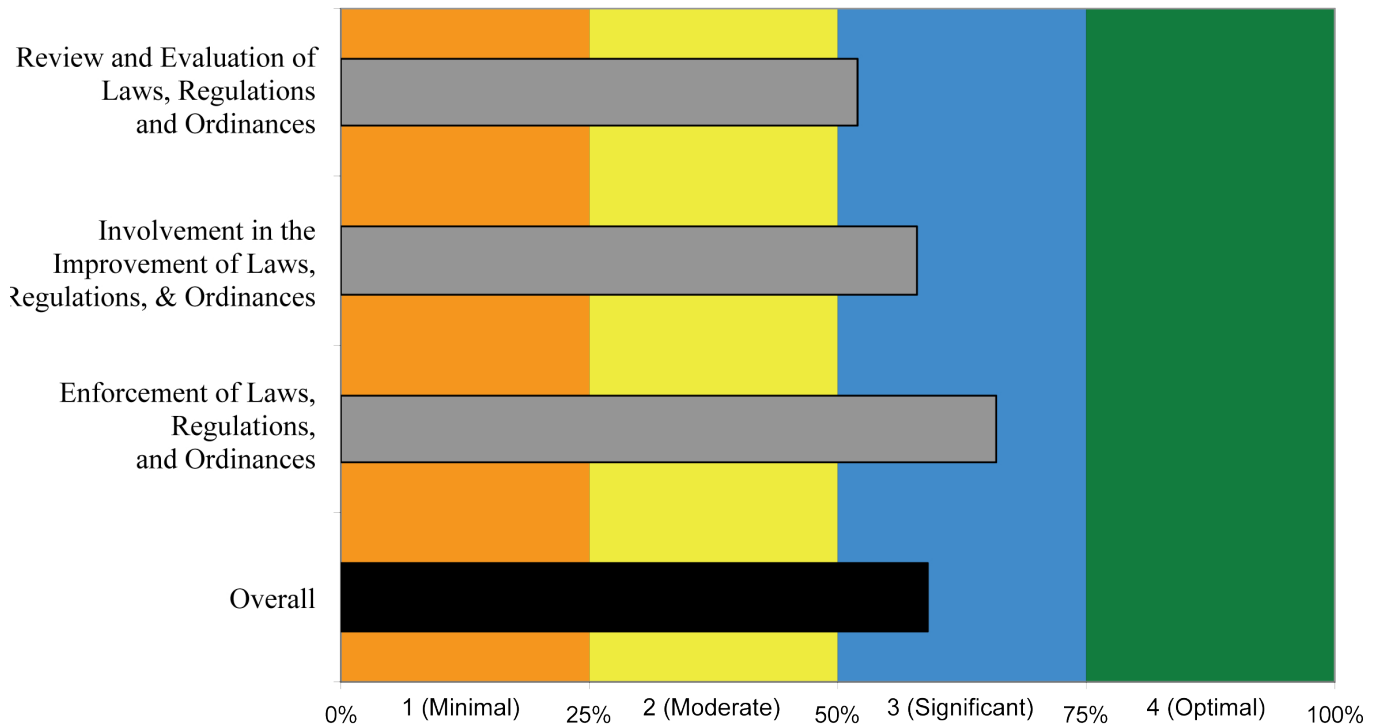


### Findings

- Although this essential services was scored by participants as having a significant level of activity and capacity, discussion indicates potential gaps between community needs and the research that is funded and conducted within our local public health system. Concern was expressed that institutions of higher learning do not adequately recognize the value of community service.
- Participants perceived there is a minimal level of activity around the evaluation of research activity in our local public health system.
- Participants discussed the advanced capacity to pursue and participate in research at the Knox County Health Department, and noted smaller organizations in our public health system may have a lower capacity.

## Enforce Laws and Regulations that Protect Health and Ensure Safety

**Key Questions:** Are health and safety laws, regulations and ordinances reviewed, and are they revised or improved to align with best practices? Are there appropriate enforcement activities in our local public health system to assure compliance with health and safety laws and regulations?

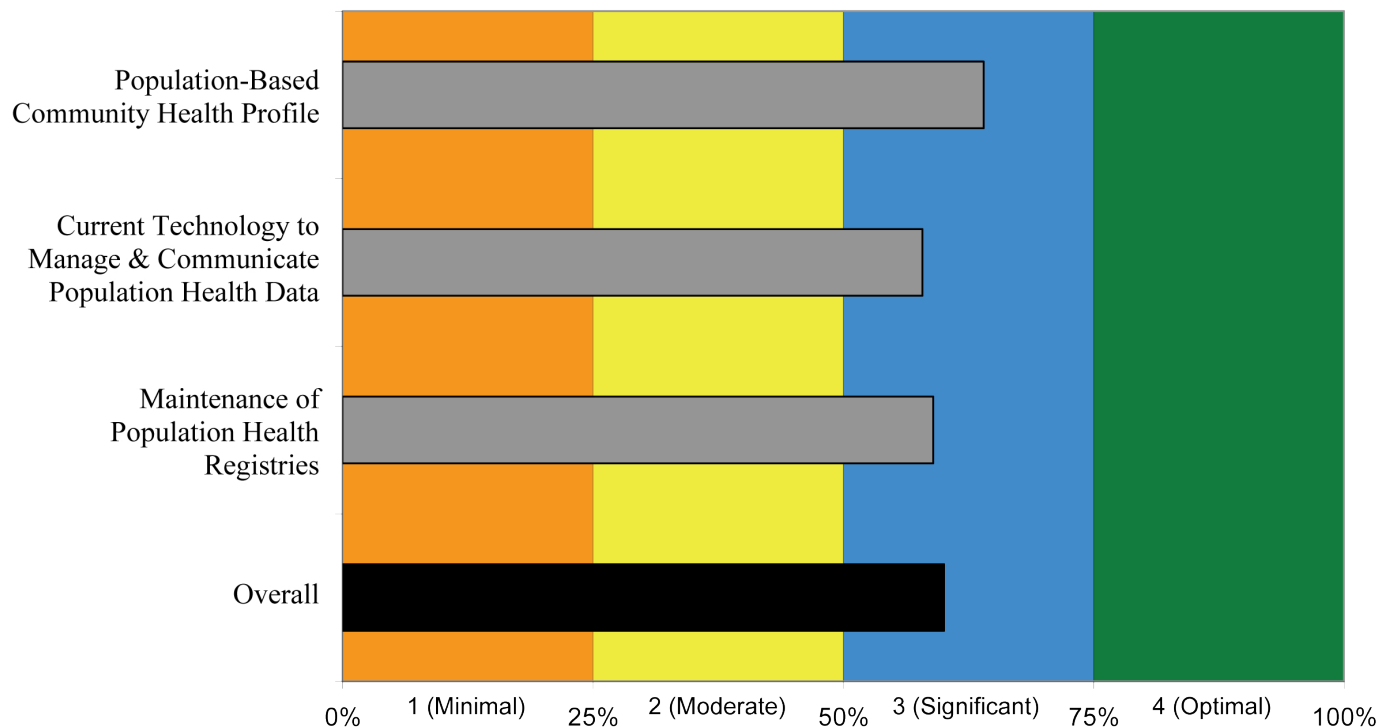


### Findings

- Participants indicated an optimal level of performance for the local health department's ability to implement enforcement interventions in a public health emergency; however, it was noted that state-legislated limits on non-compliance fines are insufficient to deter many public health violations.
- Review of health-protecting laws, regulations and ordinances every five years was perceived to be nearly non-existent among those who responded, although more than half of the participants were unsure of activity in this area.
- A minimal level of performance was also perceived for the identification of local public health issues that are not adequately addressed through existing laws and regulations.

## Monitor Health Status to Identify Community Health Problems

**Key Questions:** Does our local public health system conduct community-wide health assessments to create a community health profile on a regular basis? Do we use technology to interpret and communicate the assessment data? Is there collaboration in our local public health system to use population health registries?

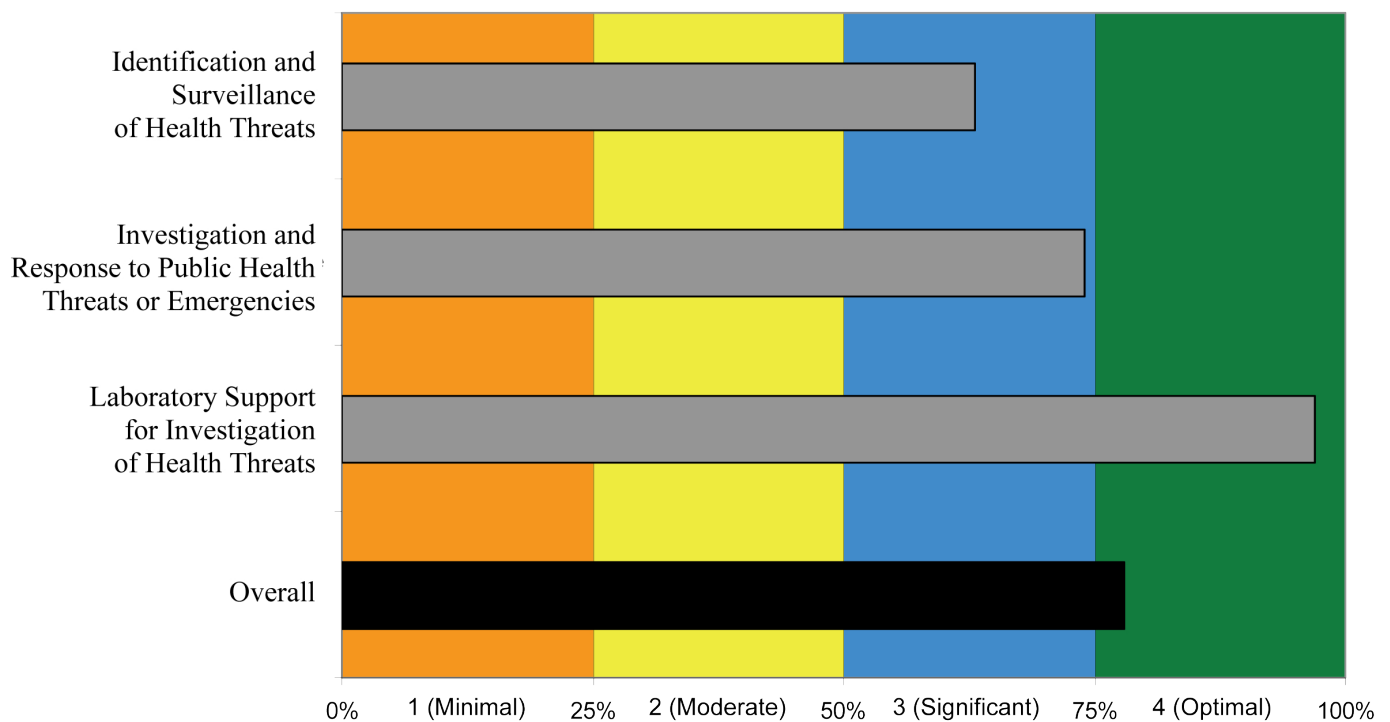


### Findings

- A significant level of activity was perceived in the Knox County local public health system for compiling data from community health assessments into a community health profile; however, only a moderate level of performance was noted in the communitywide use of health assessment and health profile data.
- Participants stated that although community health assessment data and community health profiles are accessible online, the general public often does not know how to find or interpret the data.
- Participants noted that data presented in a map format is user-friendly although half of the participants did not know if geographic information systems (GIS) are used to map health data in our community.

## Diagnose and Investigate Health Problems and Health Hazards in the Community

**Key Questions:** Does our local public health system conduct surveillance to identify health threats? How well do we investigate and respond to public health threats and emergencies? Is there access to laboratory support for investigation of health threats?



### Findings

- Diagnosing and investigating health problems received the highest overall score for Knox County Local Public Health System Assessment, and the only “optimal” score for performance.
- Participants indicated an optimal level of performance in the areas of laboratory access for diagnostic and surveillance needs, laboratory licensure, and following guidelines for handling laboratory samples.
- When discussing the compliance of our local public health system with national and/or state health information exchange guidelines, participants noted strong compliance with Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), but weak usage of the Public Health Information Network (PHIN). HIPAA’s purpose is to improve portability and continuity of health insurance coverage, to combat waste, fraud and abuse in health insurance and health care delivery, and to simplify the administration of health insurance. PHIN is a national initiative to increase the capacity of public health to exchange data and information electronically across organizational and jurisdictional boundaries.

2011

# Local Public Health System Assessment



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