

Benefits to public health agencies for completing the info-savvy process

The info-savvy process is an intensive multi-day agency-wide activity that assists public health departments to identify their strengths and possible ways of addressing processes related to data and information collection, access, use, and sharing that they would like to improve.

Public health data needs

In general, public health agencies are tasked with modernizing their infrastructure, including how they collect, store, and share data. To accomplish this, at minimum they need these.

- Timely and standardized access to resources
 - Methods to receive and send data with interoperability in mind
 - Ability to quickly access and evaluate data for rapid response situations
 - Ability to provide validated data in a timely manner
 - Understanding and use of data pipelines to automate data access and use
- Sufficient education and training in data and evaluation for staff
- Sufficient political support
- Reduced or eliminated silos between offices or departments

Minnesota-specific data needs

In Minnesota, Local Public Health (LPH) agencies have noted the following *intra-agency* needs.

- Greater capacity for staffing, time, skills, resources, and expertise to address data needs
 - Data visualization, identifying audience, knowing what data to display, ADA compliance
 - Differentiate between routine data activities and special projects
 - Skills in data cleaning, weighting, analysis, sampling types
- Training on free software or sustainable funds to pay for software licenses
- Higher survey response rates
- Job descriptions and titles that are industry-standard and reflect LPH needs

Below are additional intra-agency public health needs that are more likely to affect *rural* LPH, but all LPH may struggle with them.

- Time to improve data skills instead of always focusing on reporting
- Handling and utilizing small numbers

Minnesota LPH have noted the following *inter-agency* needs.

- Data sharing across state and LPH agencies
 - Usable tables, or application programming interface (API) with training, not portable document format (PDF) or web/dashboard
 - Timely, possibly automated, access
- Standardized survey measures while retaining the ability to show trends over time
- Sharing what tools and data other LPH use for their work

How any LPH can benefit from the info-savvy process

The info-savvy process is designed to increase information capacity across an agency, including identifying workforce needs and improving data interoperability both within the agency and with partners. Some benefits include:

- Opportunity for people from all levels of the agency to
 - Interact and work together
 - Identify common goals & challenges across the agency
 - Collaborate on shared agency-wide solutions
- Non-judgmental space to identify where agency is now and map out where they want to be
- Recognition that agency employees already do informatics
- Knowledge-sharing to help improve capacity and reduce individual burden
- Agency-wide collaboration to facilitate
 - Data-sharing
 - Development of ways to provide automated and near-real-time access to data
 - Communication regarding data needs, data security, and data structure
 - Transparency and consistency regarding data access and data policy
 - Reduced redundancy and reduced siloing
 - Identifying and utilizing mentors and trainers across the agency

How Minnesota LPH can benefit from the info-savvy process

The process brings together people from across your agency to share their experience and help them to identify

- What works well
- Common goals and challenges to work toward agency-wide solutions
- Solutions that work in part of the agency and could be expanded
- What could be resolved with improved communication of needs and expectations
- Informatics that agency employees already do without realizing it
- Ways to distribute the burden of enacting change so it does not fall on one person or group

Regarding LPH needs specifically, the process may also identify

- Staff who could mentor or train fellow employees
- Relationships the LPH has with other agencies and ways to leverage that
- Ways for different parts of the agency to pool talent or resources for some projects
- Ways to standardize and simplify data storage, access, curation, and use
- Ways to improve job descriptions and better tailor job postings

For more information on the info-savvy process, visit the [Public Health Informatics Institute](#) or contact health.dsi-datata@state.mn.us.

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