

Iowa Health and Human Services Partnership Assessment Tool

Introduction and Purpose

This tool can help users reflect on their current partnerships as they relate to health-related issues/topics affecting Iowans. Several different terms often are used to describe a partnership, such as collaboration, alliances, cooperation, and coalition. This tool uses the following simple definition for partnerships: “When two or more people or organizations work together toward a common goal.” Partnership development is a powerful tool for taking on the complexity of health-related issues/topics. Because of this complexity and reach across multiple sectors, partnership development is critical to making the biggest impact in addressing health-related issues/topics and the most efficient and effective use of scarce resources.

Partners can take part in addressing health-related issues/topics in a variety of ways. Each partner has a different level of influence in finding needs, generating solutions, and planning new initiatives to address a health-related issue/topic. Consider how these partners contribute to taking on the health-related issue/topic and place each in an engagement category that best fits the partner’s current role.

Using this tool will help you have well-rounded partnerships with the skills and knowledge needed to achieve the goals, strategies and tactics necessary to take on the chosen health issue/topic. Completing this Partnership Assessment Tool will help you highlight the levels of engagement within your partnerships and give you ideas for how to assess, evaluate, and enhance them.

Before you start using the tool, create a list of your current partnerships and print pages 3 & 4 of this tool to reference as you complete the tool.

Then, complete the following steps. Detailed instructions for each step are on pages 2-9.

- **Step One** (pages 2-4): Complete the online Iowa HHS Partnership Collection Form. Decide which partnership engagement category (Building Relationships, Common Goal, Supportive Roles, Strategic Implementation) best fits the partner’s **current** role.
- **Step Two** (pages 5-8): Submit the completed Partnership Collection Form to generate your results.
- **Step Three** (page 9): Using the results, reflect on the questions in the “Partnership Evaluation” section. Analyze results and share with others.
- **Step Four** (page 9): After reflecting on current partnerships, consider opportunities for partnership development. Links to useful resources are included in the “How do I Build Partnerships? Resources for Partnership Development” section to get you started.

How to use this tool: Step-by-step

Step 1: Complete the Iowa HHS Partnership Collection Form

<https://bit.ly/iowaHHSPartnershipForm>

IOWA™ Health and Human Services

Partnership Collection Form

Revised September 2025

Name

Enter your name

Organization

Enter the name of your organization

Organizational Subunit

Enter a program/bureau/other subunit (if applicable)

Health-related Issue/Topic:

Type a health-related issue/topic for which you are assessing partnerships

Iowa HHS Program Name

Not applicable

If completing this form is required by an Iowa HHS program, type the program name in this box. Otherwise, leave the box blank.

Date Updated:

Existing Partners

Partner 1

Organization	Partner Sector	Engagement Category	Notes
Enter the name of the	Choose the partner sector that best describes the perspective the partner represents.	Use the Partner Engagement Categories table from the instruction sheet to choose an engagement category that best fits this partner.	Enter additional key information about the partnership.

+ Add Partner

Submit Save

- Enter your name, your organization's name, your program/bureau/other subunit name, the health-related issue/topic for which you are assessing partnerships, and the date. If you are completing the tool as part of your work with a specific Iowa HHS program, type the program name in the "Iowa HHS Program Name" box.
- For each partner, enter the partner's organization, the sector that best describes the type of organization the partner represents, the partner engagement category, and additional key information about the partner such as a name or position title for the primary contact person or the topic or interest served by the organization if not clear from the organization name or sector.

Click on the **+ Add Partner** Add Partner button for each partner you have.

Partner Sectors include

- Iowa HHS program/staff
- State, Tribal, Local or National Government/Agency
- Business or Employer
- Health Care System, Insurer or Clinician
- Early Learning Center, School, College or University
- Community, Non-Profit or Faith-Based Organization
- Community/Group representing communities that experience health disparities
- Individual or Family
- Legislator/ Policymaker
- Media

Choose the one that best describes the perspective the partner is representing.

The following table will help you select the **Engagement Category** that best describes your partner's **current** engagement.

Engagement Category	Interest	Communication	Activities & Outcomes
Category 1: Building Relationships	Partner has been introduced to the identified health-related issue/topic. Interest level in addressing the issue/topic may be unknown at this point in relationship.	Communication has been initiated.	No partnership activities have been scheduled or taken place. Possibilities for future meetings may be discussed. Outcomes include but are not limited to: • introductions • presentations • meetings introducing common goals and/or the partnership's mission.
Category 2: Common Goal	Partner has shown interest in the health-related issue/topic by response or action.	The partner reciprocates communication, agreeing to discuss partnership development. Discussions include opportunities for activities that can be carried out together or ways each partner can help one another, working toward the health-related issue/topic.	An initiative or common goal is being defined between partners. The partnership is learning about each other's mission and working to define an activity that will help both partners. The partner is willing to work on short-term or easily implemented activities. Outcomes include but are not limited to: • agreed on the goal but working on own initiatives that likely are not coordinated • reporting out information and/or updates to interested partners through various methods, (electronically, on the phone, or in person).

Engagement Category	Interest	Communication	Activities & Outcomes
Category 3: Supportive Roles	Partner has shown ongoing support in addressing the identified health-related issue/topic. A common goal has been defined, and the partner provides a supportive role in addressing the health-related issue/topic.	Ongoing communication takes place between partners. Communication may be variable, increasing as projects or activities that support the health-related issue/topic approach and decreasing in periods of inactivity.	This partner provides ongoing input to support the identified health-related issue/topic and partnership initiative. Outcomes include but are not limited to: • providing funding or in-kind support for the health-related issue/topic • recruiting and/or connecting new partners • providing and/or distributing information that supports the health-related issue/topic • advocating for the health-related issue/topic or for funding.
Category 4: Strategic Implementation	Partner has shown ongoing leadership in addressing the identified health-related topic/ issue. This partner views the partnership initiative as beneficial to their organization's vision.	Coordinated, scheduled communication takes place between partners. Routine communication is reciprocated between partners to carry out goals, strategies, tactics or activities that address the health-related issue/topic.	This partnership is fundamental in addressing the health-related issue/topic and the initiative's success. The partner actively takes part in key actions that lead to system or policy change around the health-related issue/topic. Outcomes include but are not limited to: • providing leadership (coalition chair/president, health topic expert, program consultant, advisory board) • conducting strategic planning • implementing the project or program • evaluating the project • engaging the community • facilitating discussions about the health-related issue/topic

HINT: Use the save [Save](#) button to save your progress and get a link to finish filling out the form later.

Step 2: Once you have finished entering all your existing partners into the Partnership Collection Form, click on the Submit  button to generate your results.

Two sets of results will be generated:

1. A list of the partners exactly how you entered them.

Name Firstname Lastname			
Organization Iowa HHS			
Organizational Subunit 5-2-1-0 Program			
Health-related Issue/Topic: Obesity/Nutrition & Physical Activity			
Iowa HHS Program Name			
Date Updated: 9/12/2025			
Existing Partners			
Partner 1			
Organization XYZ County PH	Partner Sector State, Tribal, Local or National Government/Agency	Engagement Category Category 1: Building Relationships	Notes LPHA
Partner 2			
Organization United Way	Partner Sector Community, Non-Profit or Faith-Based Organization	Engagement Category Category 2: Common Goal	Notes John Doe
Partner 3			
Organization WIC	Partner Sector Iowa HHS Program/Staff	Engagement Category Category 2: Common Goal	Notes Jane Doe



2. A link to a Word document

[ObesityNutrition & Physical Activity Partnership Assessment - Iowa HHS 5-2-1-0 Program 9122025 243 PM](#)

with more analyses of your entries. What you'll see in the Word document:

- Page 1 shows the health-related issue/topic and your organization name along with the total number of partners and number in each engagement category and sector.

Obesity/Nutrition & Physical Activity

Partnerships for Iowa HHS, 5-2-1-0 Program

9/12/2025

Partners by the Numbers

TOTAL PARTNERS: 16

ENGAGEMENT CATEGORY

Category 1: Building
Relationships

1

Category 2:
Common Goal

5

Category 3:
Supportive Roles

6

Category 4: Strategic
Implementation

4



SECTOR

NUMBER

Iowa HHS program/staff

3

State, Tribal, Local or National Government/ Agency

5

Business or Employer

1

Health Care System, Insurer or Clinician

2

Early Learning Center, School, College or University

0

Community, Non-Profit or Faith-Based Organization

5

Individual/Group representing communities that experience health disparities

0

Individual or Family

0

Policymaker/Elected Official

0

Media

0

- Page 2 shows your key partners (engagement categories 3 and 4) with sector and other notes.

Key Partners

Engagement Category 3: Supportive Roles (6)

1. 5-2-1-0 State Executive Branch - State, Tribal, Local or National Government/Agency, Jane Smith
2. Iowa Department of Education - State, Tribal, Local or National Government/Agency
3. Wellmark Healthy Hometowns - Health Care System, Insurer or Clinician, Varies
4. Local COGs - State, Tribal, Local or National Government/Agency, Varies
5. Local Boards of Health - State, Tribal, Local or National Government/Agency, John and Jane Doe
6. HyVee - Business or Employer, John Smith

Engagement Category 4: Strategic Implementation (4)

1. Healthiest State Initiative - Community, Non-Profit or Faith-Based Organization
2. Iowa Medical Society - Health Care System, Insurer or Clinician, Director
3. ICOG - Community, Non-Profit or Faith-Based Organization, Director
4. United Way of Central Iowa - Community, Non-Profit or Faith-Based Organization, Program Lead

- The following pages show Partner Details, first by engagement category and then by each sector.

Partner Details

Engagement Category 1: Building Relationships (1)

- XYZ County PH

Engagement Category 2: Common Goal (5)

- United Way
- WIC
- Well Kids of Central Iowa
- Iowa HHS - Strategic Operations
- Iowa HHS, Iowa Nutrition Network

SECTOR

Iowa HHS program/staff (3)

- WIC - Category 2: Common Goal, Jane Doe
- Iowa HHS - Strategic Operations - Category 2: Common Goal, Sam Doe, 555-555-5555
- Iowa HHS, Iowa Nutrition Network - Category 2: Common Goal

State, Tribal, Local or National Government/ Agency (5)

- XYZ County PH - Category 1: Building Relationships, LPHA
- 5-2-1-0 State Executive Branch - Category 3: Supportive Roles, Jane Smith
- Iowa Department of Education - Category 3: Supportive Roles
- Local COGs - Category 3: Supportive Roles, Varies
- Local Boards of Health - Category 3: Supportive Roles, John and Jane Doe

Business or Employer (1)

- HyVee - Category 3: Supportive Roles, John Smith

- The final page in the Word document shows the same content from steps three and four below.

Step 3: Partnership Evaluation

An important part of assessing partnerships is evaluating how your partnerships work together to address health-related topics/issues. Below is a list of example questions that can be used to reflect on benefits and barriers within current and past partnerships. Finding gaps or weaker levels of engagement in current partnerships can help in planning more effective strategies, identifying development opportunities and finding new partners.

1. Does your partnership assessment show balance? Are there sufficient partnerships in each engagement category and sector?
2. Considering strategies for your health-related topic/issue, are there any potential partnerships that could be valuable that are not listed in any engagement category or sector?
3. Have you included partners representing views that might not normally be considered for your health-related topic/issue, e.g., factors like housing, economics, transportation, or other cultural, physical or social infrastructure-related topics?
4. Are there specific partners that would add more value to work on the health-related topic/issue if they were in a higher engagement category?
5. What skill sets that would help address the overall health-related topic/issue would be gained if specific partners were engaged at a higher level (e.g., funding, facilitation, program expertise, public perspective)?
6. Do current partners represent disparate populations and people with lived experience?
7. How does this partnership assessment compare to earlier assessments? Have partnerships changed that reflect a need for new partnerships?
8. What else did you learn from this assessment?

Step 4: How do I Build Partnerships? Resources for Partnership Development:

- [Community Tool Box](#), Center for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas. Practical, step-by-step guidance in community-building skills including creating and supporting partnerships, increasing participation and membership as well as over 40 other topics related to guiding, supporting and evaluating the work of community and system change.
- [Take Action to Improve Health - Work Together](#): County Health Rankings & Roadmaps program resource that includes key activities and a variety of tools to build and sustain partnerships that reflect community diversity to implement strategies that result in meaningful change. Developed as part of a collaboration between the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute.
- [United Nations Partnership Learning Centre](#): Nine learning modules and seven guided tours exploring the partnership lifecycle from building a culture of collaboration to managing partnerships to maximizing the value of both public and private sector partnerships.