

## New Hampshire Division of Public Health Services

### Building Resilience Against Climate Effects in State Health Departments

#### Project Summary

The New Hampshire DPHS applied for and was awarded a Cooperative Agreement starting 9/30/2012 with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Environmental Health. The 4-year project, titled Building Resilience Against Climate Effects in State Health Departments, awards \$249,615 per year for a four-year total of \$998,460. The project is in the start-up stages, including hiring of a Project Manager, as well as completing contract work for activities described in the application. The project will be placed in the DPHS Bureau of Public Health Protection.

This project will build upon planning work that has been completed from a previous grant. New Hampshire is currently one of the few states to also directly address the concept of *Adaptation* in their March 2009 *Climate Change Action Plan*, and we have already made great progress in building capacity to address the public health impacts of climate change. New Hampshire has completed a statewide *Climate Change Adaptation Needs Assessment*, and using the results, completed a *Climate Change and Public Health Strategic Plan* (through a *Climate Change Adaptation Capacity Building* grant from ASTHO in 2009) to systematically prioritize and address the identified State Public Health System needs. The *Needs Assessment* demonstrated that while many environmental and public health disease prevention, monitoring, surveillance, planning and preparedness systems were already in place that could be readily adapted to climate change preparedness, there was little or no recognition among stakeholders that climate change is a driver of public health preparedness, and there was little or no coordinated focus on climate-related adaptive or preparedness interventions in NH.

Based on these results, NH developed a *Strategic Plan* to prioritize and address the identified needs. A workgroup of State Public Health system partners met to review and discuss the *Needs Assessment* results to set improvement priorities. They set 3 strategic priorities, created a *Vision Statement* for where NH intends to be over the next 5 years, and identified goals, objectives, strategies, responsibilities and timeline for addressing each strategic priority. The Vision Statement that was developed states that: *NH and its local communities have organized, coordinated and effective systems in place to identify, prevent, prepare for, and respond to health hazards associated with our changing climate.* The three Strategic Priorities that were identified were:

- 1.) *Mobilize partnerships to identify and solve climate change public health needs*
- 2.) *Inform, educate, and empower people about climate change public health issues, and*
- 3.) *Assure adequate climate change and public health capacity and resources*

These *Strategic Priorities* are very similar to the priorities identified in CDC's *Building Resilience Against Climate Effects* (BRACE) framework. Accordingly, the program goals for this 4-year cooperative agreement will use the BRACE framework to address the *Strategic Priorities* and take the next steps in the climate and health adaptation process.

The major objectives of this program will be to:

- 1) Re-convene the *NH Climate Change and Public Health Taskforce* (the *Taskforce* was created as part of the ASTHO capacity building grant, and consists of representatives from state and local government, non-profit organizations and the business community from across the State that are involved in public health).
- 2) Working with the *Taskforce*, prepare a *Climate and Health Profile* that outlines the anticipated health impacts and key risk factors associated with climate change across New Hampshire.
- 3) Work with climatologists and climate change scientists at the University of New Hampshire, Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space (EOS) as well as the US Geological Survey (USGS) to assist in developing tools to model and geographically map specific climate-related impacts anticipated in the near and long term in NH.
- 4) Develop a *Vulnerability Assessment* that identifies the range of climate impacts, the associated potential health outcomes, the vulnerable population groups, and the communities and systems most at risk across the State.
- 5) Develop an *Evaluation Plan* that includes performance indicators that evaluate both program *Process Measures* as well as *Outcome Measures*.
- 6) Develop a *Climate and Health Risk Assessment* that will assess, project and quantify the health outcome(s) and disease burden(s) attributable to predicted climate impacts and identified specific vulnerabilities.
- 7) Develop a *Climate and Health Intervention Assessment* that lists and prioritizes the most appropriate health interventions to address the identified vulnerabilities and health impacts for each region of the State.
- 8) Using the results of these Assessments, prepare and implement a *Climate Change and Public Health Adaptation Plan* for the State. The *Adaptation Plan* will serve as the principal climate and health preparedness guideline for the State and local public health agencies.
- 9) Assist six local public health regions within the State to develop and implement local plans focused on geographically-specific health threats and vulnerable population groups.
- 10) Monitor performance indicators identified in the Evaluation Plan and use the results to adjust the program action steps as needed and take corrective action to improve outcomes.
- 11) Work with national, state and local public health partners to disseminate information, share lessons learned, and develop skills to detect, track, respond, and develop interventions to reduce the human health effects of climate change.
- 12) Work with other DPHS and State programs including: environmental health, environmental public health tracking, public health preparedness, infectious disease, chronic disease and injury prevention, Environmental Services, Agriculture, Homeland Security and others to coordinate and collaborate on common health issues associated with climate change.

13) Prepare and implement a *Sustainability Plan* to assure that the program is continued beyond the 4-year grant period.

In order to conduct each of the activities described above, we will utilize information from the US Historical Climatology Network (USHCN); statewide chronic disease, infectious disease, health outcome, hospitalization and mortality data; US census data and other data sources as well as data developed by UNH and USGS as part of this grant. The methods used to complete the assessments will include standard statistical analyses developed by organizations including the World Health Organization; the World Meteorological Organization; the Center for Science in the Earth System at the University of Washington; and others. Due to the unique nature of climate and health relationships, we will also make use of newer assessment approaches that are more specific to and appropriate for climate change health impacts such as comparative health risk assessment and health impact assessment techniques.

This funding opportunity will allow NH to take the next important steps in preparing for and responding to the health impacts of climate change using sound science and proven methods. Our experience can be used by other states and cities to develop their own climate and health action plans to predict and monitor health impacts, identify vulnerable populations, and implement prevention and preparedness programs.

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