



# Building a More Cohesive, Strategic, and Innovative Department of Health to Meet the Needs of MCH Populations

Prepared on July 25, 2023

## Indiana Team Members

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## Background

The Indiana team entered the Learning Journey program to develop a more cohesive, strategic, and innovative MCH Division and Department of Health. MCH Division's programs have narrowly focused and separate funding streams yet frequently serve the same MCH populations. The team recognized the tendency for programs to plan their work in relative isolation and, as a result, the same kinds of programs repeat over many years. The team believed programs could more effectively address the needs of MCH populations if they were planned together by cross-program teams. Through the Learning Journey, they hoped "staff [would] begin to identify their work as part of a broader system within the division [to strengthen] team dynamics, ...create a flexible structure, appreciate authentic dialog, and cultivate a learning culture." The team also hoped to engage leaders in cross-divisional work because they recognized the same dynamic existed across the entire Department of Health.

## Contributions from the Learning Journey

Indiana's team utilized Learning Journey resources and the tools that Center coaches shared to promote leadership dialog across programs and divisions. Systems support mapping, crucial conversations, vision boards, mapping your change, causal loop diagrams, four corners, and the 5 whys tools helped the team engage in meaningful conversation and find agreement in unfamiliar and potentially threatening areas of collaboration. Meeting facilitation tools helped staff working in different silos build authentic connections with each other and invest the time and energy needed to build a foundation of trust, which in turn reinforced collaboration and allowed innovation to thrive. The knowledge and skill acquired through the Learning Journey helped team members reinforce the "importance of consistent messaging and communication about change" to make sure that "everyone is on the same page as we tried something new."

***"... the benefit of working with the Center is that I'm not often given the time to step back from the busy day-to-day ... [spend] time thinking about something in a different way, [spend] time with our team in a different way, and having someone with an external point of view... challenge us to do things different[ly] and try something better."***

Another key benefit of the Learning Journey was that it allowed the Indiana team to "[expand] the[ir] network of MCHers across the country... get out of [their] own head... and get other folks' perspective." The leader commented, "I think that in the realm of maternal and child [health] we're very lucky that we have Technical Assistance Centers [like the Workforce Center] specifically designed to make you a better public health professional, make you a better leader, make you a better individual in this community."



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## Fostering Collaboration in the Learning Journey



### BEGINNING THE LEARNING JOURNEY

The team worked with their coaches to create detailed steps on developing a shared leadership model and structure to support internal collaboration. First, they gathered information by:

- Engaging with leaders across programs to identify possible areas of collaboration
- Learning from another state and local health department who had done similar work
- Surveying literature and evaluating evidence about collaborative teaming across programs
- Using systems support mapping to identify program roles in joint planning and action



### DURING THE LEARNING JOURNEY

The team prepared internal communication plans about the “Innovation and Leadership Hubs Pilot” comprised of co-created collaboration teams related to areas impacting multiple MCH populations, such as refugee health and language access. This structure provided teams with resources, tools, and support for:

- Collaborating and innovating across programs
- Strengthening personal connection to the purpose and mission of the department
- Fostering dialogue, shared leadership, and learning across programs

The Indiana team regularly considers the life-span for each collaborative team, and provides guidance and support for the development of new teams, expanding/adapting/combining existing teams, and developing exit plans for teams that are only needed for a short time.



### AFTER THE LEARNING JOURNEY

Six months after completing the Learning Journey, the team had launched three collaboration teams. Each team had identified leaders and members and had met multiple times to focus on boundary spanning and understanding program roles in serving the same population. Next, they will choose an innovation and work together towards a goal. One team leader explained, “We’re... figuring out where we are not serving women, children, families, etc., based on the dialog that we’ve been having in these innovation teams... [in an] iterative process.” They were also preparing to launch a cross-divisional health equity council based on a similar model.

*“... the whole gist of our projects was increasing the capacity and comfort and confidence of the staff in their ability to convene and contribute in areas of the division in which they did not necessarily work on a day-to-day basis. So [our work has been] maybe less about... subject matter expertise, but how to be better public health leaders and critical thinkers and organizers... I think [the Learning Journey] broadened the perspective of folks who had never engaged with some of these tools and got us thinking about things in a different, organized way outside of our normal mental models.”*