



TO: Susan Rice, Director, Domestic Policy Council
Xavier Becerra, Secretary, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
Gene Sperling, American Rescue Plan Coordinator

CC: Rochelle Walensky, Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Diana Espinosa, Acting Administrator, Health Resources & Services Administration
Alison Barkoff, Acting Administrator and Assistant Secretary for Aging,
Administration for Community Living

FROM: The National Alliance to Impact the Social Determinants of Health

RE: Opportunities to Leverage Multi-sector Partnerships to Advance Social Determinants of Health

Dear Ambassador Rice, Secretary Becerra, and Mr. Sperling,

The National Alliance to impact the Social Determinants of Health (NASDOH) encourages the federal government to take proactive steps to ensure that federal funding, such as that appropriated in the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and other new funding initiatives, is prioritized toward long-term investment in public health, social determinants of health (SDOH), and equity.

It is our belief that improving social, economic, and environmental conditions is essential to promoting health for all, including for those who face systemic barriers to optimal health. There are many essential tactics to achieve this goal; one approach is to utilize multi-sector partnerships¹ that facilitate providers of health care, public health, and social services working together to efficiently address SDOH and improve community health. Multi-sector partnerships leverage the collective capacity and assets from across these sectors and involve the community itself to assess what is needed, find ways to deliver services, and seek sustainable financing. We believe that ARPA funding, and other federal appropriations, can be used to ensure that those involved in multi-sector partnerships to advance SDOH are properly trained and incentivized, as one component of an overarching strategy to improve community health.

To promote the strategy of using multi-sector partnerships, the Federal government can take practical steps to ensure that ARPA funds, and other funds that may become available, are allocated in a way commensurate with the priority given to multi-sector partnerships in the Administration's COVID-19 strategy. This priority – a “particular focus on expanding multi-sector partnerships that can align health and social interventions” – is critical not just for addressing COVID-19, but also for tackling the underlying health and social conditions the pandemic has brought to the fore.

Recommendations

We recognize that funding made available in ARPA is beginning to be awarded and disbursed. NASDOH recommends the following to ensure that this funding can be optimally used to improve health and protect against future public health emergencies:

¹ Other essential tactics include the full involvement of community members in planning and implementing; the adoption of community-wide policies that alter the conditions that impede good health; awareness and support of sustainable policies that have been shown to improve health; and, very importantly, the combating of structural racism and other forms of discrimination that lead to poorer health.

- Third-party organizations (e.g., non-governmental community organizations or networks, or coalitions of community organizations) should be clearly identified as eligible for federal grants under ARPA and other funding streams.
- Whenever appropriate, priority should be given to multi-sector partnerships in any competitive grantmaking.
- Guidance to state and local agencies that are receiving funding will underscore the importance of addressing SDOH and capitalize on the effectiveness of engagement with multi-sector partnerships and collaborative initiatives, both as entities to consult in developing plans and programs and also as subcontractors to implement programs.
- Recipients of funding should be provided with appropriate tools and technical support to help them build and maintain partnerships and identify key elements of coalitions and approaches that will help build sustainable initiatives.
- Appropriate accountability mechanisms should be in place that enable tracking of expenditures and measurement of outcomes.

Importance of Multi-sector Partnerships

Existing multi-sector partnerships are often advantageously positioned in communities to make significant contributions and to distribute resources and share savings to SDOH more equitably, given their connection across clinical and social services. Partnerships and contracts between public health, health care, and social service organizations are imperative to effectively address community health, as are complementary strategies, including engagement with community stakeholders.¹ Because multi-sector partnerships often include community organizations from across the health care system, social networks, and community service networks, investment in multi-sector partnerships is a mechanism for long-term investment in public health and a strategic means to advance efforts to address SDOH. Again, this is one tactic among many that should be used to improve health and advance health equity, but we think there is great opportunity to use ARPA, other prospective funding streams, and existing programs to leverage multi-sector partnerships to address SDOH.

Congress and the Administration have made clear that multi-sector partnerships between clinical and social services are a part of the COVID-19 recovery. In the National Strategy for the COVID-19 Response and Pandemic Preparedness report, the administration remarked it would commit to:²

Facilitate linkages between clinical and social services. Given the increased need for social services during this pandemic, HHS will identify opportunities and mechanisms to support screening, referral and linkage to social services during COVID-19 testing and vaccination programs, with particular focus on expanding community-based, multi-sector partnerships that can align health and social interventions.

Collaborative approaches, including multi-sector partnerships, have the potential to advance shared community goals and incentives around SDOH and to drive coordinated SDOH investment. The partnerships are uniquely positioned to link clinical services with social services, and they can make particularly efficient use of federal funding to states and communities.

² The National Strategy for the COVID-19 Response and Pandemic Preparedness: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/National-Strategy-for-the-COVID-19-Response-and-Pandemic-Preparedness.pdf>

NASDOH recommends that the Administration take proactive steps, noted above, to ensure that we take advantage of this important opportunity. Because building or clarifying roles in partnerships often involves efforts above and beyond the typical application funding, we feel it is crucial to highlight their importance to achieving the Administration's goals.

Critical Funding Streams

The Administration has proposed or is already implementing multiple funding streams, including ARPA, programs to tackle complex issues through infrastructure investments, and new initiatives to address underlying social and economic challenges facing American families. These fundamental issues cannot be solved by one isolated organization or intervention at a time, and our experience is that the most effective way to achieve results is through multi-sector partnerships.

American Rescue Plan Act

New funding streams of particular importance include those already enacted in ARPA. These consist of:

Public health workforce. ARPA provided \$7.66 billion in Section 2501 to carry out activities related to establishing, expanding, and sustaining a public health workforce. Recognizing the wide range of professions related to public health, this provision includes considerable flexibility both in specialization (e.g., case investigators, contact tracers, social support specialists, community health workers, laboratory personnel), and in the types of organizations that employ public health workers (e.g., governmental public health agencies as well as nonprofit private or public organizations).

Assistance to state, local, and tribal governments. ARPA provided \$350 billion in emergency funding for state, local, territorial, and Tribal governments, with wide latitude to address public health, equity, infrastructure, and other needs.

American Jobs Plan

The administration's proposed "American Jobs Plan" includes significant health-related elements, including those related to home- or community-based care for aging Americans and those with disabilities, as well as new innovations in Medicaid that support the delivery of long-term care. The individuals served by these initiatives face multiple, interconnected health and social needs that can best be addressed by multi-faceted, multi-sectoral approaches.

American Family Plan

The proposed "American Family Plan" explicitly addresses equity and racial justice, which is highly correlated with NASDOH's work in health equity and social determinants of health. As legislation is crafted to achieve these goals, and funding mechanisms are eventually developed to implement new funding streams, this will present another important opportunity to better integrate programs and approaches, starting with prioritizing the engagement of multiple sectors in the design and implementation of new initiatives.

Existing Funding Streams

While it is critical to take advantage of new funding streams to advance multi-sector partnerships, there are other opportunities to prioritize such approaches in programs already enacted. NASDOH encourages the Administration to evaluate existing programs to identify additional opportunities. These may include grants to state and local governments that already include flexibility in implementation, but may benefit from further guidance, technical assistance, or prioritization of multi-sector approaches.

NASDOH's Multi-Sectoral Alliance Resource Compendium

In light of the important role multi-sector partnerships play in communities, as well as the unique funding opportunity provided through ARPA and other prospective initiatives to advance SDOH in communities across the nation, NASDOH is sharing our [Multi-Sectoral Alliance Resource Compendium](#), which provides resources and tools to support multi-sector partnerships in addition to best practices and case examples that demonstrate the achievements multi-sector partnerships can offer to improve adverse SDOH in communities.³ The compendium aims to clearly articulate why multi-sectoral partnerships are essential parts of strategies to address adverse SDOH, provides a framework to guide establishment of multi-sectoral alliances, and highlights a curated set of resources, with a focus on guidance and best practices for structures and processes to support community capacity to build multi-sector partnerships.

Broadly, this compendium is intended to support multi-sectoral alliances focused on SDOH. We believe that stakeholders at different stages of that journey will find it valuable. We have included resources that will be useful to stakeholders who are:

- Interested in addressing SDOH in their community and want to learn more about why multi-sectoral alliances can be an effective approach,
- Committed to developing a multi-sectoral alliance but need resources to get started, or
- Interested in established alliances and looking for guidance on certain topics.

Similarly, these resources offer value for organizations from the many different sectors that should be involved in this work, and which have different roles in an alliance (e.g., leader, convener, participant). Although many of the resources focus on or call attention to the roles of health care, public health, and community-based organizations, the processes and programs described within are generalizable to varying degrees across sectors.

NASDOH invites you to utilize and share the resource compendium as a tool to understand the case for investment in multi-sector partnerships and the strengths that multi-sector partnerships can offer communities. In addition, NASDOH invites you to meet with our Alliance to further discuss strategies to allocate federal funds (including, but not limited to, ARPA-appropriated funds) to multi-sector alliances in order to address SDOH and advance health in communities across the nation.

³ NASDOH Multi-Sectoral Alliance Resource Compendium: https://leavittpartners.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/LPCA_NASDOH-Compendium_FINAL.pdf

ABOUT NASDOH

The National Alliance to impact the Social Determinants of Health (NASDOH) is a group of stakeholders working to systematically and pragmatically build a common understanding of the importance of addressing social needs as part of an overall approach to health improvement and economic vitality of families and communities. The Alliance brings together health care, public health and social services expertise, local community experience, community-convening competence, business and financial insight, technology innovation, data and analytics competencies, and policy and advocacy acumen to assess and address current regulatory frameworks, funding environments and opportunities, and practical challenges to implementing and sustaining social determinants of health efforts.

We seek to make a material improvement in the health of individuals and communities and, through multi-sector partnerships within the national system of health, to advance holistic, value-based, person-centered health care that can successfully impact the social determinants of health. To learn more, visit us at NASDOH.org.

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