

# Championing national environmental public health policy is complicated, costly and key

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## Background

Environmental public health practitioners are facing enormous responsibilities and challenges for the future. New issues such as preparedness, the connection between health and the way our communities are designed and built, and most recently the climate crisis are emerging where environmental public health practitioners play an essential role. However, despite these expanding roles and responsibilities, there is limited recognition and resources for environmental public health in support of these protective services.

Strong policies are necessary to ensure 1) the environmental public health workforce is robust and ready to serve and 2) that the public is protected from harmful environmental factors. Despite the increased environmental regulations, which have put increased demands on state and local programs, there has not been an increase in funding to bolster public health protection at the state and local level.

*"Strong policies occur when there are strong champions."*

## Behavior Over Time Graph

Environmental public health policy activity and successes ebb and flow overtime depending on several factors such as political climate, capacity of advocacy organizations, media attention and emerging needs.

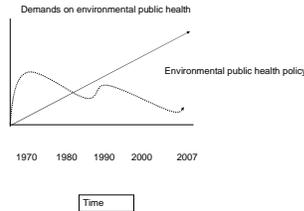


Figure 1. Environmental health policy and demands over time  
Over the past several decades, environmental public health policy has waned, despite increasing demands on environmental public health practitioners.

## Program Goal

Help foster championing of environmental and public health policy at the national level.



Figure 3. 10 Essential Services, Public Health Steering Committee

## Methods

1. Conduct interviews with key personnel starting with APHA leadership and key membership and then with key external organizations about environmental public health policy.
2. Develop map of environmental public health policy within APHA.
3. Identify and develop map of national organizations engaged in environmental public health policy.
4. Develop strategic plan regarding APHA and other national organizations' role in national environmental public health policy.
5. Present plan to influencers.
6. Implement plan.

## Findings

- > Capacity to support environmental public health policy within APHA is limited.
- > Select organizations are committed to environmental public health.
- > There is a distinction between organizations that champion environmental "regulatory" policy compared to organizations that champion environmental health "preventive" type policy.
- > There is a need to make a better connection between environmental public health and public health to gain increased commitment and support.
- > No one organization takes the lead to champion environmental public health issues at the national level.
- > No one organization is currently positioned to champion environmental public health.
- > There is limited opportunity for organizations that advocate for environmental public health issues to communicate with each other.
- > Coordination requires resources and capacity and a leader.

## Conclusions and Intended Outcomes

- > Regardless of the political climate or topical issues of the day, consistent championing of environmental public health policy is important and needs to occur.
- > Championing national environmental public health policy takes time, commitment and resources.
- > Several organizations advocate for environmental public health policy but no one organization takes the lead or coordinates these efforts.
- > Many organizations are limited in their ability due to competing organizational priorities, funding sources or capacity.
- > APHA plays a key role in environmental public health policy – at one time APHA managed an environmental health coalition.
- > There is a need for an environmental public health coalition in the DC area.
- > The management and support of such a coalition requires resources and commitment and an organization that is well positioned to lead the coalition.
- > Through this project, champions of environmental public health will be identified, and a plan for better coordination and collective advocacy will be developed and implemented.

## Problem

We need a clear understanding of the nature of national policy development, and its influences and the roles and efforts of those organizations engaged in national environmental public health advocacy. This will help to foster a more collective and collaborative approach to environmental public health policy development, and to educating national policy makers.

A number of organizations, including the American Public Health Association, engage in environmental public health policy at the national level. Collective action among these national groups can result in positive action.



## Limits to Success Archetype

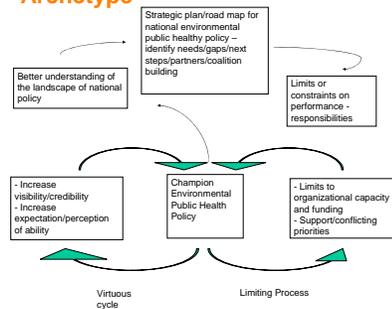


Figure 2. Limits to Success Archetype  
While several national organizations engage in environmental public health policy, no one organization leads collective championing. Within any one organization, there are often limits in their ability to lead or foster collaboration.

## Acknowledgments

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## For further information

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