



SODIUM REDUCTION PARTNER READINESS TOOL

BACKGROUND

When identifying and pursuing partners to effectively put into action sodium reduction strategies, it may be difficult to determine if potential partners are ready, despite their interest and verbal commitments. As a result of years of work with community-based partners and food service, recipients of the Sodium Reduction in Communities Program have identified five key characteristics to consider partner readiness:

- ✓ Leadership.
- ✓ Capacity.
- ✓ Environmental supports.
- ✓ Motivation.
- ✓ Communication.

Within these specific characteristics, there are traits and conditions to help determine whether a partner is ready to effectively 'carry out sodium reduction strategies or not.

Who can use this tool?

This tool can be used by public health organizations partnering with an entity with food service to execute sodium reduction strategies. Likely organizational users will include local and state health departments.

How can this tool be used?

This tool can be used to determine a partner's potential readiness to implement sodium reduction work, and then develop an action plan to address areas in which there is less readiness. Though partners can be scored on a scale for traits and conditions within each characteristic, there is no target score that defines "readiness".

The organization can use this tool to best meet their needs. For example, the tool can be used to:

- Identify which conditions could be improved to increase readiness for a specific partner to do effective work.
- Help identify the strategies that the partner could most effectively achieve.
- Determine and prioritize resources needed to support the partner.
- Compare the readiness scores of partners within a specific venue (e.g. schools).
- Assess the type of partner leadership (e.g., organizational or food service) essential to the putting into action of sodium reduction strategies. The level of leadership needed can be determined by the organization.

The organization can determine which characteristics or traits are more important than others for the specific strategies they would like to implement.

This tool can help organizations and partner entities meet goals to serve lower sodium foods to their customers and clients by using simple assessment and action planning processes.

WHAT ARE THE STEPS OF THE TOOL?

STEP 1:

Assess readiness. Complete this step after the organization has enough interaction with the potential partner to determine where they stand on the scale of agreement and disagreement with the characteristics.

STEP 2:

Complete the action plan after step 1 to help improve partner readiness.

STEP 3:

Determine whether the organization wants to continue to pursue a partnership. The action plan can be used for program planning, and to document which traits or conditions need to be improved. After reviewing the assessment results with key staff, select priority items to begin working on immediately, and items to work on later.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING GUIDING QUESTIONS AS YOU IDENTIFY PRIORITY ACTION ITEMS:

1 FEASIBILITY

- What kind of resources (human and financial) are needed to accomplish sodium reduction strategies?
- Would this practice have a significant negative effect on the bottom line?
- Are the supports or infrastructure in place necessary for the strategies to be fulfilled?
- Are there significant barriers to implementation?

2 POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT:

- How much will this trait contribute to achieving lower sodium content of foods? sentences: "How will this trait help increase availability and access to lower sodium foods? How will this trait reduce sodium consumption?"

3 WILL:

- Is there enthusiasm for working in this arena? Will sodium reduction work be meet with support from the consumer, line staff, managers, administrators, and policy makers? Are there mechanisms in place within the partnering organization to recognize staff for their sodium reduction work? If not, how might staff recognition be acknowledged?