



Academic Health Department Learning Community Report

September 12, 2025

Overview

The [Academic Health Department \(AHD\) Learning Community](#) supports the development of [AHD partnerships](#) between public health practice organizations and academic institutions. As a national community of practitioners, educators, and researchers, the AHD Learning Community stimulates discussion and sharing of knowledge; the development of resources; and collaborative learning around establishing, sustaining, and expanding AHD partnerships.

Sharing AHD Partnership Expertise

Throughout its 14-year history, the AHD Learning Community has seen sustained interest from the public health community, with membership numbers rising from less than 100 to more than 1,400 and engagement continuing to grow. This active participation has led to a wealth of knowledge about AHD partnerships being shared among Learning Community members and with the broader public health community. Highlights of ways this information is shared are described below.

Webinars

Webinars play a significant role in the [Council on Linkages Between Academia and Public Health Practice's](#) (Council's) educational offerings. With funding from the [Association of State and Territorial Health Officials](#) (ASTHO), the Public Health Foundation (PHF) hosted two webinars since the last Council meeting: [Exploring Successful Academic Health Department Partnerships](#), which took place in April 2025, and [Pathways to Academic Health Department Partnerships: Successes and Best Practices](#), which occurred in May 2025. PHF and ASTHO are in the process of planning for two more webinars that are scheduled to take place in October 2025. More information about the upcoming webinar series will be shared via the *Council on Linkages Update*.

The Council's [series of AHD webinars](#) has been running for 10 years, and webinars are also presented in collaboration with other organizations upon request. Archived webinars from the [AHD Webinar Series are now accessible](#) as a training plan on the TRAIN Learning Network.

Technical Assistance

Direct technical assistance (TA) is provided to public health professionals and organizations to support developing and sustaining AHD partnerships. Council staff regularly receive requests for such assistance, responding to 10 requests from state and local health departments in Montana, Texas, Wisconsin, Massachusetts, and Florida since the last Council meeting in February 2025.

AHD partnership expertise is also now being applied in more in-depth TA engagements. Currently, through funding provided by ASTHO, PHF is providing TA to three health departments receiving Public Health Infrastructure Grant funds: the Vermont Department of Health, the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services, and the Connecticut Department of Public Health. Each of these TA projects involves conducting an environmental scan to better understand the current and desired future state for AHD partnerships among the health department and academic institutions in their areas. By engaging with health departments and academic institutions, the process helps uncover mutual goals, align resources, and foster sustainable collaboration. PHF staff conduct interviews or focus groups, and provide a summary

report with findings and actionable recommendations to strengthen joint AHD partnership efforts. Organizations interested in learning more about the [AHD Partnership Environmental Scan](#) service provided by PHF may reach out to Mayela Arana at marana@phf.org.

Resources

Since the start of the AHD Learning Community, various resources and tools have been developed based on ongoing learning and sharing. With funding from ASTHO, PHF has developed vignettes to help share success stories and provide examples for organizations looking to establish, expand, or formalize their AHD partnerships. The success stories include:

- [Academic Health Partnership Prioritizes Workforce Development in Florida](#) (May 2025)
- [Public Health and Academic Leaders Unite Through Texas Consortium](#) (June 2025)
- [San Diego Academic Health Partnership Strengthens Service During COVID-19 and Beyond](#) (June 2025)

Additionally, PHF has published two new blog posts related to AHD partnerships: [Implementing a Certified in Public Health Exam Review for Local Health Department Staff Through an Academic Health Department Partnership](#) (May 2025) from the New River Academic Health Department (VA), a partnership between Virginia Tech Population Health Sciences and the New River Health District located in South Central Appalachia, as well as [Charting New Paths: Alameda County's Academic Health Department Journey](#) (June 2025) from the Alameda County Public Health Department located in California.

Lastly, an [AHD Partnerships Toolkit](#) has been developed to organize existing and new AHD partnership resources and tools. The toolkit includes information on developing and sustaining AHD partnerships; operationalizing partnerships; stories from the field; AHD partnership research; expert TA; and ways to join the AHD Learning Community. The toolkit will be updated periodically to reflect new resources and tools. If you have any examples to share or other resources that you would like to be included in the toolkit, please email Mayela Arana at marana@phf.org.

More information about the AHD Learning Community and its activities is available through the [AHD Learning Community](#) section of the Council website or by contacting Mayela Arana at marana@phf.org.