

PHAB Site Visit Report

The site visit team has identified the following as the greatest strengths of the S.C. Department of Health & Environmental Control (SCDHEC):

- **Organizational Structure:** The centralized nature of public health in SC allows all local health departments access and collaboration with the state health department. A unique, but positive component of this structure is the strong presence of expanded environmental health responsibilities, including food protection, solid waste, air quality, and water protection. Consultation and the provision of technical assistance to local health departments is quite evident through the four regions.
- **Partnerships/Relationships:** With development of the State Health Assessment (SHA) and State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP), SCDHEC engaged a wide range of community-based partners and coalitions to promote participation by all facets of the state. Through this effort, internships and public health practicums were developed and completed, key health data was provided through community-level events, and local health departments were utilized as sites to collect community input. This effort was echoed quite strongly by SCDHEC's regional and local partners as helpful as they developed their community health improvement plan. The community partners that participated in the site visit spoke highly of SCDHEC staff and their working relationship. Comments shared by partners show they genuinely value their partnerships.
- **Communications:** SCDHEC demonstrates a strong commitment to communication with the public with a focus on ensuring consistent and unified messaging across the department. This value placed upon communication can also be seen in interactions with their regional and local staff as well as with the governing entity and community partners. SCDHEC's approaches to communicating and sharing data and other information, such as the Data Walks as well as a comprehensive website that is accessible to a broad audience.

The site visit team has identified the following as the greatest opportunities for improvement for the S.C. Department of Health & Environmental Control (SCDHEC):

- **Performance Management:** It appears that SCDHEC has a good understanding of performance management and the need to establish standards and measures, monitor, report and improve. At the time of submission, SCDHEC had adopted the Public Health Foundation's Performance Management System and was able to provide examples, but there seems to be opportunity to more widely and systematically adopt as well as document their system of performance management.
- **Community Member Engagement:** Public health is strengthened when its practitioners continually add to the body of evidence for promising practices, albeit through partnerships with the research community or by initiating research endeavors that may develop new evidence that supports the provision of health services for the population served. Engaging and including actual community members, i.e. the target audience, in the development of the

research agenda, population-based programs, and health promotion messaging can be an opportunity to further the buy-in and support for health department initiatives.

- Documentation: In some areas, during the site visit, SCDHEC staff, Board member, and community partners were able to verbally describe in greater detail the work of the department more so than the documentation provided. There is an opportunity to document the SCDHEC's story more fully to ensure activities, meetings, and actions are clearly documented in the future.

Overall impressions of DHEC as a functioning health department:

- SCDHEC staff appear to be committed, knowledgeable, and passionate about the work they do. Based on the site visit interviews, the staff demonstrated a commitment to the department's mission, vision, and values.
- The Board members who participated in the site visit demonstrated strong support of SCDHEC and appear to be truly engaged and committed to the work of the department. Communication between the Board and SCDHEC seems to be bi-directional and positive.
- The accreditation process seems to have been beneficial to SCDHEC and has allowed them to self-identify their own areas for improvement and have actively made strides to address the identified areas.
- SCDHEC shows strong commitment to achieving accreditation and are commended for continuing the accreditation efforts during a worldwide pandemic.

Total Number of Standards and Measures: 108

Total Number Scored Fully Demonstrated: 70 (64.8%)

Total Number Scored Largely Demonstrated: 32 (29.6%)

Total Number Scored Slightly Demonstrated: 6 (5.6%)