



Partnerships for Environmental Public Health

PEPH 2020: Past, Present, and Future

Ten years after the inaugural PEPH Meeting, [PEPH2020](#) brought the network together to reflect on the past, discuss the present, and consider future opportunities.

NIEHS leadership congratulated PEPH participants on 10 years of inspiring work promoting and advancing environmental health. They also emphasized the importance of community engagement in environmental health research, describing the network as vibrant and constantly evolving with changing community needs. NIEHS Acting Director Rick Woychick, Ph.D., and Acting Deputy Director Gwen Collman, Ph.D., explained how PEPH activities are integral to the NIEHS strategic plan goals and cover all the goals within Theme 2: Promoting Translation – Data to Knowledge to Action. Opening session presenters focused on revisiting the PEPH vision and goals, reflecting on successes, and considering future opportunities that inform a new 10-year vision for the PEPH program.

Participants emphasized the importance of building on the past successes of PEPH and looking for new opportunities. Emerging and future topics discussed included data science, vaping, microplastics, the exposome, and precision environmental health.

The meeting focused on the following four PEPH themes: research, communication, capacity building, and evaluation. Each session included short presentations and panel discussion followed by breakout sessions on topics within each theme:

- **Research**
 - Environmental health disparities
 - New technologies
 - Exposure science
 - Community-engaged research
- **Communication**
 - Reporting back
 - Culturally appropriate messaging
 - Environmental health literacy
 - Social media and emerging approaches
- **Capacity Building**
 - STEM education
 - Environmental health in the health care curriculum
 - Organizational capacity
 - Individual partner capacity
- **Evaluation.** Panelists addressed a range of evaluation topics, including best practices and challenges. A couple of key take-home messages included:

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- Surveys are just one approach to evaluation. Listening sessions promote community dialog and can be more effective.
- “Bake in” evaluation. It should be a part of the study design; not an afterthought.

Looking to the future, presenters described opportunities to broaden stakeholder and partner networks. They discussed how the results from PEPH can help inform other networks such as healthcare professionals, state legislators, and state health departments.

Common themes discussed during the meeting:

- **Equity in partnerships with communities and other stakeholders.** It is important to consider who is at the table and who receives the funding. Demonstrate commitment to community input by providing community partners with funds and resources to compensate their time and knowledge.
- **Engaging other disciplines.** There is a lot of expertise in the PEPH network but many other disciplines and creative forces could be brought into the PEPH network to build capacity. Identify partners in new fields, such as communications, urban planning, and other social science fields, that can help with both community-engaged research and outreach.
- **Identifying resources.** It is important to think about the mission of NIEHS and where we want the PEPH network to be. Then it is essential to identify the appropriate resources to make it happen.
- **Training needs.** Researchers and community residents benefit from training opportunities. Bringing in different groups and sustaining the knowledge that the network already has helps prevent us from having to reinvent the wheel. Collect, develop, and promote best practices from experiences collected over the last ten years of the PEPH network.
- **Action and impact.** There is a need to link PEPH-related research and activities to action and identify strategies to create and measure impact.
- **Harnessing new technologies.** The PEPH network can benefit from harnessing new technologies and approaches, such as social media, machine learning, and social sciences, to improve environmental public health work.

Next steps:

Feedback and ideas shared by meeting participants will be used by NIEHS staff to formulate an updated PEPH concept, which will be presented to the NAEHS Council later in 2020.