

Executive Summary

Branch: Population Health Branch

Council Period: June 2022

Title: Partnerships for Environmental Public Health (PEPH): The Next 10 Years (2022-2032)

Introduction

The Division of Extramural Research and Training (DERT) developed and launched the Partnerships for Environmental Public Health (PEPH) program in 2008. DERT program staff presented the concept to the National Advisory Environmental Health Science Council (NAEHSC) in September 2008 with input from the extramural community.

Since its implementation, the PEPH program has become a recognized community of practice that brings together scientists, community members, educators, health-care providers, public-health officials, and policy makers with a shared commitment to advancing the impact of environmental public-health research at the local, regional, and national level. Additionally, PEPH is a valued source of information about environmental health issues. For more than 10 years, PEPH has promoted and championed Environmental Public Health as the science of conducting and translating research into action to address environmental exposures and health risks of concern to the public.

Staff members of DERT envisioned the PEPH program as an approach to:

- Coordinate and integrate new and existing initiatives involving communities and scientists collaborating on environmental public-health research;
- Develop and evaluate strategies to communicate environmental public-health messages to diverse audiences;
- Create and distribute materials to increase awareness and literacy about environmental-health risks; and
- Evaluate the program's contributions to advancing environmental public health.

DERT staff developed the PEPH framework with extensive involvement from its extramural community. The Division released a Request for Information in October 2007, compiled and analyzed the 120 responses, and organized a workshop in June 2008 based on the RFI results. DERT staff invited thought leaders from the fields of public health, environmental justice, community-based research, communication, and advocacy. Using information from both the RFI and the workshop, DERT program staff developed the outline of the PEPH 10-year coordinating program of grants to support research, communication, capacity building, and evaluation. It was the first time that DERT had a structure to promote interactions among grantees from different grant programs with a common interest in environmental public health.

It has now been 14 years since PEPH was launched. During that time, PEPH has made several noteworthy contributions to environmental public health, including:

- Creation of a widely used Evaluation Metrics Manual
- A national discussion and awareness of Environmental Health Literacy
- Increased awareness and acceptance of Traditional Ecological Knowledge
- The launch of a recognized podcast series, "Environmental Health Chat"

PEPH Vision (2022-2032)

The PEPH vision for the next 10 years builds upon the unifying environmental public health framework for the Division of Extramural Research and Training (DERT) as well as the institute. PEPH affirms the division's on-going commitment to community-engaged research and strong foundation in environmental public health.

PEPH will enhance its role as an incubator for ideas and an amplifier for key messages. PEPH will strengthen its role as a Community of Practice. In this capacity, PEPH will bring together NIEHS staff, grantees from different programs, and other partners to grapple with complex issues and identify gaps and opportunities around four key areas in environmental public health: (1) capacity building, (2) research, (3) communication, as well as (4) action and sustainability. PEPH, in continued partnership with the NIEHS Communication Office, will also enrich its efforts to produce quality materials to raise awareness of environmental health topics by promoting the work of NIEHS-funded grantees.

PEPH is adding a new focus to its framework – ACTION and SUSTAINABILITY. The updated PEPH framework focuses on the process of community engaged research from partnership building (Capacity Building) to the implementation of public health actions and continued partnerships (Action and Sustainability). Feedback from the extramural community emphasized the importance of research that can be used as well as the need for promoting sustainability of partnerships.

Highlighted below are key efforts that will be central to PEPH moving forward. Each item is connected to recommendations received over the last two years and mapped to the new PEPH Framework.

- **Antiracist agenda**

We want to make sure that PEPH efforts and activities are not contributing to ongoing systems that have disenfranchised certain communities and populations.

- **Collaborative & facilitating role**

PEPH will utilize a variety of approaches and tools to bring people to the table (virtually and face-to-face) on emerging and important topics to environmental public health. PEPH will also expand to include involvement of all NIEHS staff members, other NIH staff, as well as organizations that are a part of the NIEHS Friends and Partners groups. PEPH will continue to maintain its Resource Center as a way for grantees and partners to share their materials.

- **Action-oriented and Sustainable**

PEPH will identify the best approaches for building the capacity of all partners, sustaining relationships, reporting back research results, and encouraging action-oriented project plans.

- **Measuring Success**

PEPH will help to advance qualitative research approaches for evaluation, as well as to build community capacity in evaluation approaches. PEPH will implement strategies to analyze and evaluate its contributions to environmental public health.