MDPH Work Group Guidance Document
Adopted June 28, 2019

This document was created by a group of MDPH work group and Steering Committee members. It recognizes the vital role work groups play in advancing the mission and work of MDPH. It is intended to provide guidance and answer many questions about MDPH work groups and how they interact with the MDPH Steering Committee. Despite our best intentions, we recognize this document will not anticipate all questions as the MDPH work groups evolve and become more dynamic. In the absence of clarity, work group members are encouraged to discuss questions with the MDPH Steering Committee liaison assigned to their work group.

Work group Formation and Structure
I. What are the main differences between affiliated and unaffiliated MDPH work groups?
   a. Affiliated work groups are the primary parties that advance the goals and work plan of MDPH. Their activities directly support this work, although they may engage in other activities not directly associated with MDPH goals or its work plan. Unaffiliated work groups may support MDPH goals and its work plan but have no formal responsibility to this work.
   b. Affiliated work groups will adhere to the guidelines and responsibilities set forth in the MDPH charter and in this guidance document. Unaffiliated work groups are encouraged to do so, but do not have to adhere to the same guidelines.
   c. Unaffiliated work groups may receive limited support from MDPH Steering Committee, upon request.

II. How are affiliated MDPH work groups established?
   a. Affiliated work groups can be formed organically based on an identified need, or can be designated by the MDPH Steering Committee.

III. Work group Membership: Membership will be outlined in the work group charter.
   a. Must each department have representation on a work group?
      i. No, it is not required that every work group have a member from each partner organization. However, efforts should be made to include this representation.
   b. Can a department have more than one representative?
      i. Yes, depending on the work group charter.
   c. Who else outside of the MDPH can attend work group meetings and does that need to be approved?
      i. Work groups may have members affiliated with organizations outside of the partnership. This does not require approval.

IV. When are work groups dissolved?
   a. Both work groups and the MDPH have opportunities to evaluate the existence or the affiliated nature of work groups through the annual planning process. As MDPH priorities change over time, work groups may change to unaffiliated status, change focus, or may choose to dissolve. Any decisions about dissolution or status change should be made collaboratively.
Work group Charters or Partnership Agreement

I. Are they mandatory?
   a. Yes, charters or partnership agreements are mandatory for affiliated work groups. Charters inform the mission, values, norms, governance and other critical aspects of the work groups. Work groups should use the charter/ partnership agreement template for consistency. Charters are not mandatory for unaffiliated groups, but are encouraged as a best practice. Charters should include core values and ground rules or norms.

II. Must the charter be approved? If so, by whom?
   a. Yes, charters or partnership agreements must be approved. Work group chairs should submit their charter or partnership agreement to their liaison for approval.
   b. Existing approved charters or partnership agreements will satisfy this requirement and do not need to modify it to fit in the template nor seek “re-approval”.

III. What is the criteria for evaluating and approving the charter?
   a. The liaison will coordinate with the MDPH Steering Committee to ensure consistency in template use and content before approval.

Work group Annual Plans

I. Are they mandatory?
   a. Yes, work plans describe the activities of work groups including goals, outcomes, metrics, etc. In the absence of a scope of work approved as part of a grant or funding plan, work groups must create an annual work plan. Work groups that exist primarily to fulfill grant deliverables may use the grant scope of work in place of an annual work plan. A template is provided to promote consistency across work groups and should be used in the absence of a grant scope of work.

II. Must the annual plan be approved?
   a. Yes, the annual plan is approved by the Steering Committee.

III. When must annual work plans be completed?
   a. It is highly encouraged that work plans be completed and approved by the end of first quarter annually. Deadlines are flexible, especially in the case of grant-dependent work plans.

IV. Should work groups create over-arching or longer term policy continuums?
   a. The subject matter of some work groups may lend itself to the articulation of over-arching or longer-term policy goals. As appropriate, work groups should incorporate this planning element into their charters and annual plans.

Work Group Liaisons

I. Must each official work group have a liaison?
   a. Yes.

II. What is the purpose of the liaison?
   a. Liaison activities include regular communications with a work group representative(s), attending work group meetings periodically, providing strategic support and guidance, and sharing updates as needed at Steering Committee meetings. The liaison facilitates two-way communication with the work group.

III. Who is the liaison?
a. Liaisons are Steering Committee members and are selected by the Steering Committee.
b. The Steering Committee will endeavor to match Liaisons with work groups based on experience, expertise, and/or interest. Selections are made in consultation with the relevant work group members.

IV. Do Liaisons attend work group meetings?
a. Yes, Liaisons are required to call in or attend in person as requested by work groups. It is not expected that Liaisons attend regularly.

Work Group Chairs
I. Are work groups required to have a chair?
a. Yes, each work group should have a chair. Workgroups may also elect a vice chair.

II. How is the chair determined?
a. The process for selecting a chair and the length of their commitment should be defined in the work group charter.

III. What is the responsibility of the chair?
a. The role of the chair is defined in the work group charter. Generally, chairs are responsible for structuring agendas and meetings, working with the liaison, and acting as the spokesperson and main point of contact for the work group.

Work Group Attendance at the Steering Committee Meetings
I. When do work groups attend Steering Committee meetings?
a. Work groups designate a member to attend the MDPH meetings on a quarterly basis in accordance with the MDPH charter and shared leadership model. One consistent representative from each work group attends Steering Committee meetings on a quarterly basis as a strategic partner and advisor. They are nominated by their fellow group members. Strategic partners and advisors actively engage in discussions and inform decision-making.

II. Can work groups initiate a request to attend executive Steering Committee meetings?
a. Yes, work groups can request to attend Steering Committee meetings to provide updates or ask for resources or support. Requests should be made through the work group’s liaison.

Work Group Funding:
I. How are work groups funded?
a. Work groups may make funding requests of the Steering Committee (see below).
b. Work group may be funded by grants. Pursuing grant funding to support MDPH priorities and other work by work groups is encouraged with specific guidance outlined below.

II. What are the parameters for MDPH funding?
a. Funding for work groups from MDPH directly may or may not be available as availability and sources of funds fluctuate.
b. Past funding has been short term (< 12 months) and on a one-time basis. Funding amounts have been less than $20,000. Funding has supported work group infrastructure/ facilitation and work plan deliverables.
c. MDPH funding will be prioritized for work that advances work in the MDPH work plan. If funding is available, it may be awarded for other work group activities.

III. When can work groups make a request for funding?
a. Work groups should make funding requests in conjunction with annual plans or as grant funding changes.

IV. What is the necessary information before funding can be requested?
   a. Work group charger or partnership agreement should be approved, annual plans must be established and approved, and metrics must be established.

V. Can work groups use MDPH’s name for pursuing grant funding or pursue grant funding in the name of MDPH?
   a. Yes, work groups may pursue grants in the name of the partnership with advance notice to and approval by the Steering Committee. Work group chairs should reach out to the liaison to get on the MDPH Steering Committee agenda for approval. If approved, work groups should use standard MDPH descriptive language in the grant application.
   b. Work groups may pursue other funding opportunities without prior approval if they do so without indicating associated work is done in the name of MDPH.

VI. What mechanisms are in place to ensure multiple work groups don’t pursue the same funding opportunities?
   a. The work group chair is responsible for keeping the liaison updated on intent to apply for or pursue funding opportunities. The liaison is responsible for communicating work group grant funding activity and initiating a conversation about funding priorities.

Other Topics
   I. Communication between work groups
      a. Communication between work groups is encouraged. Communication can be initiated through the liaisons, but it is not necessary for communication to flow through the liaisons. Work groups members may collaborate directly across work groups to meet their needs.

   II. Work group conflict resolution
      a. All MDPH members should attempt to resolve conflict before escalating issues. If issues remain, Executive Directors and/or work group liaisons will support resolution. Work group members may reach out to their liaison or executive director, whichever is most comfortable.