Public Health Council of the Upper Valley
Partner Meeting
August 21, 2026

See list of attendees at the end of the notes. Meeting was fully remote.

Thank you to everyone who participated in our August partner meeting. We appreciated the thoughtful discussion about meeting effectiveness, productivity, and ways organizations can protect time for meaningful work while maintaining the collaboration and relationships that are important to our network.

Topic: Meeting Effectiveness & Productivity
The primary focus of the meeting was a discussion about meeting effectiveness, productivity, and the challenge of balancing collaboration with time for focused work. PHC shared research and tools developed through an MPH student project, followed by discussion about practices participants are using in their own organizations.

Meeting Effectiveness & Productivity: Discussion and Strategies Shared
Participants shared practices they are using in their own organizations and discussed ways to make meetings more intentional and productive.

- **Clarify the purpose and desired outcome of each meeting.** Sean Sinclair described beginning meetings by stating his understanding of why the meeting is being held and asking participants to confirm that they share that understanding.
- **Use agendas and distinguish information from discussion.** Participants discussed used shared platforms to develop agendas in advance, allowing people to identify items that require discussion and "read-only" information that does not require discussion. Andrea Smith noted this approach could be useful as the AllTogether Coalition considers restructuring its meetings.
- **Make meetings shorter or cancel them when appropriate.** Cherry Sullivan described a practice of canceling a recurring meeting when there are not enough substantive agenda items to justify pulling people away from other work, while recognizing that maintaining group connection remains important.
- **Use shared facilitation and participation.** Participants discussed distributing responsibility for agendas and facilitation rather than having one person responsible for managing every aspect of a meeting.
- **Establish group norms for participation.** Katina Cummings described using co-created group norms, such as "step up, step back," to encourage full participation and reviewing the norms at the beginning of meetings.
- **Track how time is actually being spent.** Kendra LaRoche uses Toggle, which can connect with her calendar, to track both scheduled and unscheduled work. She has used this information with her board to demonstrate how her time is allocated and to consider whether organizational expectations need to change.
- **Use time-tracking information to assess organizational priorities.** Kendra's example prompted discussion about how understanding where leaders and staff spend their time can help organizations determine whether actual work aligns with organizational priorities and whether competing demands need to be adjusted.

- **Protect time for focused work.** Participants noted the ease of scheduling virtual meetings has contributed to calendars filled with back-to-back meetings, leaving less time to complete the work generated by those meetings. Erica Hiller also noted back-to-back virtual meetings can eliminate some of the processing time that naturally occurred between in-person meetings.
- **Manage email and other interruptions intentionally.** Erica Hiller shared the idea of establishing specific blocks of time for checking and responding to email rather than allowing email to create continual interruptions. She also noted that some issues can be resolved more efficiently with a brief phone call than through multiple email exchanges.
- **Use AI as a tool for reflection and improvement.** Participants discussed using AI to analyze meeting transcripts for participation, time allocation, action items, and overall productivity. The discussion emphasized using these analyses as a way to identify patterns and prompt reflection rather than as a definitive measure of whether a meeting was productive.

The group agreed that meeting practices should be revisited periodically. The goal is not simply to have fewer meetings, but to make sure meetings are purposeful, participants' time is used effectively, and people have sufficient time to complete the work that results from collaboration.

CHIP and Strategic Priority Updates
PHC provided brief updates on several areas of current work:

- **Expanding Community Education and Engagement:** PHC has been refining this strategy based on a summer survey of partners, discussions with the advisory council, and conversations with the Center for Advancing Rural Health Equity. One emerging idea is a recurring orientation to the Upper Valley public health landscape that could help new staff, leaders, board members, and others understand how the regional system works.
- **Advancing Health Equity:** Charles Peoples III continues to develop programming through UVEAR. The Affinity Day Camp pilot was postponed until next summer because funding was secured too late to recruit appropriate staff. The project framework has been developed and will be further refined. UVEAR has also been doing extensive community outreach and tabling, is planning the next BIPOC Congress in November, and is developing a BIPOC panel focused on pathways to leadership.
- **Flu Clinics:** Seven free flu vaccine clinics are planned for this year, including a new location in Washington, Vermont. PHC will distribute promotional materials in September and can provide posters to partners and towns for their local areas.
- **Local Governance and Municipal Capacity:** PHC has begun meeting with local select boards (3 to date). The first municipal forum is scheduled for September 22 and will focus on sheltering plans, with the goal of helping communities think through the partners and resources needed to make sheltering plans realistic.
- **Unite Us:** PHC continues to support the rollout of the Unite Us platform. Another demonstration is scheduled for September 23, and PHC will work with Unite Us to obtain access to a dashboard showing participation and referral activity, with the intention of sharing that information with network partners.

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Network Announcements
Stephanie Bergeron reported that West Central Behavioral Health will begin offering adult walk-in open access hours in Lebanon beginning August 24, with additional access planned in Newport and existing open access in Claremont. West Central is also working toward expanding walk-in access for children's services.

PHC reminded partners that announcements or other information they would like shared with the network can be sent to Alice for inclusion in follow-up communications.

Attendee List

Lname	Fname	Organization
Bergeron	Stephanie	West Central Behavioral Health
Bradley	Jane	Dartmouth Health, AllTogether
Butts	Meghan	Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission
Cummings	Katina	Dartmouth Health / NH Perinatal Quality Collaborative
Ely	Alice	Public Health Council of the Upper Valley
Esdon	Jim	Injury Prevention Center, DH Office of Community Health
Griffin	Heather	LISTEN Community Services
Hayes	Tracey	Public Health Council of the Upper Valley
Herndon	Deb	West Central Behavioral Health
Hiller	Erica	Vital Communities
Hopkins	Allison	MARC
LaRoche	Kendra	SNSC
Newbern	Jeana	Lake Sunapee Region VNA & Hospice
Peoples III	Charles	Public Health Council of the Upper Valley
Russell	Carrie	Vermont Department of Health
Schleef	Sara	Upper Valley Regional Public Health Network
Seidler	Susan	Stepping Stones & Next Step Peer Support Centers
Sinclair	Sean	Reproductive Freedom Fund of NH
Sullivan	Cherry	Willing Hands
Walters	Angela	Bayada
Wnuk	Susan	Community Action Partnership
Zhang	Angela	DH CARHE/UV Haven/UVEAR
Henderson	Lexi	Dartmouth Health