



Driving the Health of Communities

LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENTS are truly local institutions, tailored to the people and the needs of every community.

States and local communities have constructed their own unique governance and funding sources to support local public health. The approach to public health varies depending on the community's needs, state laws, and existence of partners.

Health ICT chose four cities considered "comparable" to Sedgwick County or otherwise interesting in terms of economic development, quality of life, general size, and geographic location. Once we had our list of cities – Tulsa, Des Moines, Omaha, and Columbus, Ohio – we began looking at a series of organizational qualities of those local public health agencies. We focused on their department budget, how they are funded, who provides oversight, and their general approach to public health in their communities.

The information presented in this document came from a variety of sources, including Internet research and phone interviews with officials from these cities and counties. We especially thank Rick Kozin, director of the Polk County Health Department in Des Moines; Dr. Adi Pour, director of the Douglas County Health Department in Omaha; Dana Warner, public health practice coordinator for Columbus Public Health; Dr. Bruce Dart, executive director of the Tulsa Health Department; and Adrienne Byrne-Lutz, director of the Sedgwick County Health Department.

PUBLIC HEALTH MEETS LOCAL NEEDS

There are almost as many approaches to public health by local governments as there are agencies that provide the services.

"Local public health is a convener, because we are seen as a neutral table. We bring partners together, so it's not a competition. The health department has lots of trust from the community, and it has lots of equity in community."

Dr. Adi Pour, Douglas County Health Department

Columbus Public Health provides many direct services, which is reflected in their annual budget of about \$53.5 million. The department runs five of the city's major health clinics, administers programs such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), and conducts environmental health inspections for restaurants, swimming pools, and body art businesses such as tattoo parlors.

"The local public health system is amazingly collaborative. As city administrations have changed, whether they are Republican or Democrat, public health has been carefully non-partisan. It's not 'not partisan,' but it has been relatively divorced from politics. Public health has been positively supported by Democratic mayors and Republican mayors. There has always been some tension over funding, which is the same in any situation, and has more to do with the size of our pie and our percentage than their lack of commitment to public health services."

Dana Warner, Columbus Public Health

On the other end of the spectrum, the Polk County Health Department in Des Moines is almost exclusively focused on the systems that shape the community. With an annual budget of around \$5 million, the department provides very few direct services. Instead, they participate in projects generated by other departments and organizations, and convene disparate partners around health issues to ensure that all the conditions exist for the county's residents to be healthy and productive.



“When you’re trying to impact a half-million people, and you have 41 staff people, and your approach is to take the work to a one-on-one basis, you’re not going to go very far. As my colleague who works for the San Francisco Health Department, which has something like 2,500 employees, says, the options are very different as to how many people you can reach directly. We don’t have that option. Through our programs, using our best estimates, we can directly reach 16,000 to 17,000 people each year. That’s a long way from a half-million. The only way to make progress is to deal with the conditions that impact everyone.”

Rick Kozin, Polk County Health Department

Generally, these institutions are funded by both local sources – property taxes and/or dedicated mill levies – and grants, including federal, state and local funds. The departments also charge fees for inspections they conduct and services they provide. They are governed and advised by elected policymakers and/or appointed citizens.

“I think we have to show the value we bring to the table. This is our community, this is our value, and this is our impact. We sell it. We sell it by being great, every day.”

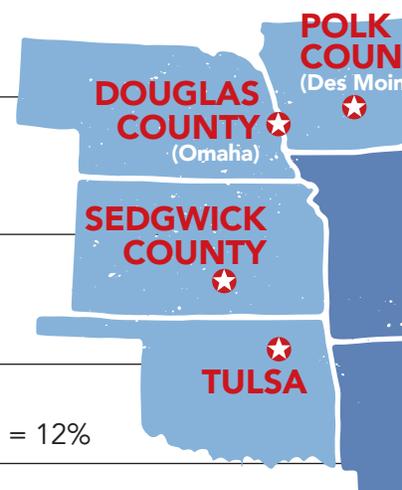
Dr. Bruce Dart, Tulsa Health Department

In all cases, the local health departments work closely with representatives of business, community groups, elected bodies such as city councils and county commissions, health care providers, and individual residents to identify priorities and take responsibility for the wellbeing of the community, and the health and productivity of all the residents who live in their hometowns. One example of a multisector group focused on public health in Sedgwick County is the Health Alliance, which began as a project of the Wichita Metro Chamber of Commerce.

“The Health Alliance is a really important community group, because it has representation from so many groups and factions. It really focuses on the Community Health Assessment, and the members work together to look at the work needed in the community that is based on the Community Health Assessment, and how to improve health. The group has so many partners at the table who can make changes.”

Adrienne Byrne-Lutz, Sedgwick County Health Department

LOCATION/POPULATION	BUDGET (approximate)	FUNDING
Tulsa, OK (City/County Health Department) 639,242 (county) 391,906 (city)	\$26,053,084	Local funding from 2.5 mill ad valorem tax = 48% Grants = 39% Fees/revenue = 7%
Douglas County, NE (Omaha) 517,110 (county) 427,872 (city)	\$12,841,517 ²	Local funding = 23% Grants = 60.7% Fees/revenue = 0.2%
Polk County, IA (Des Moines) 430,640 (county) 207,510 (city)	\$5,500,000 ⁴	Local funding = 41% Grants = 46% Fees/reimbursements = 13%
Columbus, OH 850,106	\$53,540,368 ⁷	Local funding = 40% Grants = 41% Fees/revenue = 12%
Sedgwick County, KS (Wichita) 511,574 (county) 389,965 (city)	\$9,704,009 ⁸	Local funding = 33% Federal/state grants = 55% Fees/revenue = 10%



NOTE: Funding breakdowns explain sources across the health department. Please visit the cited sources for more.

NOTES

¹ http://www.tulsa-health.org/sites/default/files/page_attachments/THD%20Annual%20Report%202014-2015.pdf
⁴ <http://www.polkcountyiowa.gov/media/281209/1-15-16.pdf>
⁶ <https://www.polkcountyiowa.gov/health/about-us/who-we-are-our-mission-what-is-public-health/>

² <http://www.douglascountyhealth.org/>
⁵ <https://www.polkcountyiowa.gov/>
⁷ <https://www.columbus.gov/2014/01/08/columbus-health-department/>

Here’s an in-depth look at how these five places have organized local public health, and what it means for the people who live and work in their communities.

ORGANIZATION

In Kansas, a Board of Health governs public health at the local level, an authority delegated by state statute. In Sedgwick County, as in most of the rest of the state, the Board of County Commissioners acts as the county Board of Health.

Polk County, Iowa, also relies on their Board of Supervisors to govern the public health department. In addition, they rely on an advisory committee for strategic planning and consultation. The advisory committee currently includes people with backgrounds or interests in community health programs, nursing, statewide public health, health insurance, and medicine.

The Douglas County, Nebraska, department has an appointed governing board. The board includes a member of the County Board; a physician recommended by the Metro Omaha Medical Society; and a dentist. It also includes a member of one of the community’s minority populations, which in Omaha generally means an African-American or Hispanic community member. The department conducts restaurant inspections, so the Omaha Restaurant Association recommends a restaurant owner to serve on the board. An Omaha City Council member has also joined the county-appointed board.

In Columbus, Ohio, the City Council appoints a Board of Health, which is responsible for setting public health policies. The Board of Health recommends to the City Council a health commissioner, who serves on the mayor’s cabinet.

The Tulsa City-County Board of Health acts in an advisory capacity to the Tulsa Health Department director of health. The board sets public health policies and helps establish the department’s annual budget. The City Council appoints five board members and the County Commission appoints four board members.



	OVERSIGHT	APPROACH
	City-County Board of Health serves in advisory capacity. 5 members appointed by city, 4 by county	Public health is critical to quality of life
	1 member of County Board, 1 dentist, 1 physician, 6 public-spirited men/women interested in the health of the community ³	Health/safety is a focus, particular attention paid to those who can’t afford services
	County Board of Supervisors is the Board of Health. There’s also an advisory committee. ⁵	Create conditions for all people to live healthy lives. ⁶
	5-person board appointed by mayor, approved by City Council	Assuring conditions in which people can be healthy
	Board of County Commissioners = Board of Health	Providing for the present and future well-being of our citizens

some of the largest consistent funding
ts. Percentages may not add up to 100%.
e information.

alth.com/images/stories/stats/Annual-Report-2015.pdf
gov/health/about-us/who-we-are-our-mission-what-is-public-health/board-of-health/
015AnnualReport/

³ <http://commissioners.douglascounty-ne.gov/commissioners/appointed-boards-and-committees>

⁸ <http://www.sedgwickcounty.org/finance/2016budget.asp>

FUNDING

The funding structures of the local public health system in each of these communities share similarities, in that all are funded through a mix of grants and local taxpayer funds.



Grants and local funds are usually the largest components of a local health department budget. Grants tend to come from the federal government for social and human service programs. State governments also contribute funding. Many local health departments apply for and receive funding from private foundations, although it is by far the smallest percentage in grant funding.

In the five communities compared in this project, the percentage of grant funding for a health department's overall budget varied greatly, from as little as 39 percent in Tulsa to almost 61 percent in Douglas County, Nebraska.

Health departments generally accept Medicare, Medicaid (in Kansas, the program is called KanCare), and private insurance. Fees for people who do not have health insurance are typically assessed on a sliding-scale basis, based on their ability to pay.

HEALTH DEPARTMENTS DRIVE THE COMMUNITY'S HEALTH

The work that local public health departments do on a daily basis has a direct relationship to the needs of a community and the local and state public health systems. Health departments make sure that services to protect the public's health are available to all – whether they provide the services, or make sure that another organization in the community delivers the service. They also participate in broader community discussions about the health and wellbeing of their residents.

Infant mortality is one such example in Sedgwick County and Columbus, Ohio. It is a topic of serious interest for faith-based organizations, minority groups that are disproportionately affected, business leaders, and elected officials. The health departments connect those groups together, along with other resources such as data and funding, and provide the coordination needed to stay focused on the issue.



University partnerships can strengthen the local public health system. The Douglas County Health Department in Omaha has a strong division of epidemiology, which studies the causes and effects of diseases and patterns of outbreaks. The University of Nebraska-Omaha has a bio-containment unit that is often in the news for its high-profile patients, such as those flown to Omaha who were exposed to the Ebola virus during the 2014 outbreak in West Africa. The local health department is a strong partner with the university because of its proximity and focus on stopping the spread of diseases.



Environmental health is another area where local public health departments drive responses to public health concerns. Several years ago, members of the Polk County Board of Supervisors elevated the issue of lead poisoning in homes when they learned that children were becoming ill. A mix of county-appropriated funds and federal grant dollars helped the health department – in partnership with hospitals, housing organizations and others – organize a lead remediation program in homes to tackle the root cause of the health problems.

It's becoming more common for health departments to consider themselves as the "chief health strategist" in their communities. In Tulsa, the health department has convened partners from every part of the health, business, government and community development sectors to discuss how social risk factors such as poverty are impacting the overall health of the community. This work includes an effort to increase life expectancy in Tulsa, particularly in areas where it is much lower than both the region and the nation.



"Driving the Health of Communities" was prepared by Health ICT, an initiative intended to reduce obesity, diabetes, heart attack and stroke in Sedgwick County.