



ACTION
COLLABORATIVE
*on Business Engagement in
Building Healthy Communities*

CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE CASE STORIES

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ACTION COLLABORATIVE ON BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT IN BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES & FTI CONSULTING

Local and regional chambers of commerce play varied roles in the building of healthy communities. This is one of a series of case stories about chambers that are active participants or leaders in promoting community health and well-being.

Each story shares insights about what motivates engagement and explains successes, and lessons learned that can inspire and instruct others.

If you would like to share your Chamber's story you can do so [here](#).

This piece was developed by the Action Collaborative on Business Engagement in Building Healthy Communities, an ad hoc activity associated with the Roundtable on Population Health Improvement at the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (the National Academies). The piece does not necessarily represent the views of any one organization, the Roundtable on Population Health Improvement, or the National Academies and has not been subjected to the review procedures of, nor is it a report or product of, the National Academies.

Nashville, Tennessee Chamber of Commerce

Health Competitive Initiative

Submitted by: Ralph Schulz, President & CEO, Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce.



What is the role of the Chamber of Commerce in improving community health in Nashville?

With a current tight labor market and an unprecedented number of workers expected to retire in the coming decade, health, mobility, and educational attainment play a critical role in addressing workforce availability and resilience. The Chamber of Commerce serves as a convener between the community and employers in the Nashville area. Health is among our most important assets.

Why did the Chamber decide to engage in community health?

Health represents a common theme underlying workforce vitality and competitiveness for Nashville. By partnering with employers, the public sector, providers, payers, and area nonprofits, together we can address important aspects of a vital asset -- population health. Doing so addressed the sustainability and productivity of our workforce.

What was the Chamber seeking to address by engaging in both worker and community health and well-being?

At the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce, workforce health and productivity have become significant areas of focus as we consider factors that affect our economic competitiveness. To better understand this issue our Research Center along with our research partner, FTI's Consulting's Center for Healthcare Economics and Policy, analyzed various facets of health competitiveness. The health of our region is critical for our future economic growth and as the Chamber we seek to find ways to support our businesses.

Businesses can be proactive in ways that are not costly but deliver important gains in employee health. For example, employers may partner to help their employees manage existing health conditions, and they can also promote healthy choices that prevent the onset of poor health. Supporting employee health and wellness can be a powerful competitive advantage for businesses in a tight labor market. As older workers retire, businesses across the country are finding it difficult to fill needed positions. A strong culture of health can help attract and retain the most sought-after talent in the region.

How and why did the Chamber develop its programs?

Nashville stakeholders discovered that health scorecards and rankings provided strong signals of issues in their local community, both generally and compared with other communities, including peer communities. Most identified chronic conditions and health behaviors as potential areas of concern for Nashville. At the same time, commonly used metrics and scorecards provided inconsistent messages about the presence or severity of a specific issue for Nashville, and these metrics often were available only for a subset of the population (e.g., Medicare enrollees) or were not locally relevant. We sought to obtain the most locally relevant and actionable data to understand what we knew and did not know.

Who are the stakeholders the Chamber in this work?

In 2013, the Chamber, in partnership with the Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, launched "Vital Signs" for our region, a regional indicators project to identify challenges across Middle Tennessee and highlight solutions. Our stakeholders started with regional business and community leaders. This process started a broader community conversation about what is important to move our region forward. The quality of our workforce and linkages to the health status of the population emerged as an issue in need of additional attention.

Following the U.S. Chamber's 2013 Health Care Summit, the Nashville Area Chamber began conversations with FTI about commissioning an innovative pilot study to assess cost, quality, and access to healthcare in the Nashville region. As participants in the larger business community and region, our organizations committed to combining our resources to undertake this important pilot study.

Our stakeholder group has grown to include BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee, Community Health Systems, Greater Nashville Regional Council, The HCA Foundation, The Healing Trust, Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, Nashville Health Care Council, Saint Thomas Health, Vanderbilt University Medical Center, and includes top business and civic leaders.

How does the Chamber work with stakeholders to drive the vision and its programs?

The Chamber works as a convener to drive the vision and our program. We have established a unique collaborative of cross-sector participants focused on building a baseline of actionable data on the health status of the Nashville area. The baseline data from the Nashville Region's Vital Signs 2014, FTI's Assessment of Nashville Region Health, Cost, Access and Quality (pilot report) and Nashville Region Health Competitiveness Initiative have been foundational to highlighting the economic implications and opportunities for workforce health.

Nashville's collaborative efforts have been cited as best practice in identifying core metrics that allow regions to advance in their understanding and action toward more robust health outcomes. The Nashville Health Competitiveness Initiative was also named a

national finalist for the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives' 2016 Regional Innovation Award.

How do you approach the decision-making process?

The Chamber's purpose is to create economic prosperity by facilitating community leadership. We are a process organization. For this reason, we approach decision-making by first understanding the issue we are dealing with, gathering research and data to inform our decisions and convening community leadership to determine the purpose, goals and outcomes we are trying to achieve. From there, we can identify values, measurable objectives and strategies necessary to advance the issue. As implementers, we keep our stakeholders and leadership informed of progress over time and reconvene as needed to evaluate the effectiveness of our strategies.

How is the program financed and how has it evolved over time?

The efforts of the Chamber since 2015 have focused on ways to engage, inform and inspire the business community to take a leading role in workforce health issues. Priority has gone to low-cost, but potentially high-impact, ways that business can recognize and act on understanding the Return on Investment associated with health and wellness promotion, driving C-suite leadership commitment, and remaining consistent with health programming that responds to employee needs and interests. Resources from the Chamber's collaboration have been used to develop research, collateral materials and convenings to convey these messages through the business community.

Do you have an evaluation strategy?

A key part of the Chamber's work includes gaining understanding of early successes. Baseline data on the area's workforce health has allowed comparison with peer regions, along with survey research modelled on national design that identifies where gaps and opportunities exist in businesses' role with health behaviors and outcomes.

What lessons would you say are most important for others seeking to engage with community health efforts?

Take the time to learn about the issue with data and research before jumping into action or creating new programming. This will help you avoid action steps that are ineffective and will lead to a more focused approach. Bring community stakeholders into the conversation by educating and informing them of the data. Clarity of roles is critical since community health is such a broad topic and there are so many organizations working in this space. The Chamber identified our role as facilitators of research and information, along with a unique ability to connect with business leaders and employers as one part of the larger solution of improving community health.

What has been particularly challenging and how have you overcome that challenge?

Recognizing that healthcare providers are not the sole essential agents for maintaining a region's health has required a different mindset in evolving the Nashville efforts. Just as many forces shape health over a long period, solutions must be realistic, holistic, meaningful, and achievable within a scope that can be articulated. As the efforts evolve, challenges of maintaining a committed group of stakeholders and leaders for a long time horizon gain clarity.

What has been a surprise?

Addressing the workforce health needs of the area is both a challenge and an opportunity. The genuine support and encouragement for advancing a business role continues to validate the need. At the same time, the extensive learning process has been a valuable experience for the Chamber and other in the Nashville region, recognizing that a collaboration of this type remains new and innovative.

• *This case story was submitted by Ralph Schulz; the perspectives and opinions presented here are solely those of the author.*

ABOUT THE COLLABORATIVE

The [Business Collaborative's](#) purpose is to catalyze and facilitate private sector partnerships and actions of business, health, community, and public sectors to work together to enhance the lives of workers and communities by improving the nation's health and wealth. Read more in the collaborative framing document.

