CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMS

Due to the complex challenges brought on by urbanization and globalization, the knowledge base, critical thinking skills and competencies of staff need to be expanded to understand the interrelationship between the environment, health and social equity and be able to adequately address health and inequities. As we seek for the institutionalization of the Healthy Cities approach, there will be a greater demand for staff with broad-based strategic thinking capabilities who are able to analyze policy options and interventions with potential impact on health and well-being, are able to balance interests of diverse stakeholders, and design policies, programs, services and products that are health- and human-centered. These staff would need to be present in all sectors (e.g. Secretariat, sub-committees, government agencies, private sector, community organizations).

In order to build the institutional capacity and staff competencies needed to scale and sustain Healthy Cities efforts, the Steering Committee/Secretariat will have to consider the following strategies – (i) enhancing curriculum in the schools of public health, architecture, urban planning, law, business, public policy, social science, among others; (ii) collaborations with professional associations and schools; and (iii) on the job learning, professional development opportunities, and continuing education.

Enhancing school curriculum

Schools can offer dual or concurrent degrees combining public health with urban planning, business administration, public policy, social welfare and law, where students gain broader perspectives about the interrelationship between urbanization, the physical environment, policies, planning systems, legislations, design and our well-being; and acquire skills to research, advocate and create healthy environments and policies.

Within individual degree programs in the aforementioned areas, schools can also require taking relevant courses in public health, urban development and management, sustainable development, physical planning and urban design, social determinants of health, Healthy Cities, health impact assessment, etc. to broaden the students’ perspectives on the environment, health and equity.

The goal is to train professionals in the application of the knowledge and principles of the intersecting fields of design, health and policy to create healthy (physical and policy) environments and address health inequities.

Some examples of such academic programs are:

- University of New South Wales’ Graduate Certificates, Graduate Diploma, Master and Doctorate programs in Built Environment, Urban Development & Design or Urban Policy & Strategy (http://www.be.unsw.edu.au/agsu)
- University of California, Berkeley’s Master of City Planning / Master of Public Health (http://ced.berkeley.edu/academics/city-regional-planning/programs/concurrent-programs/public-health/)
- University of Southern California’s Master of Planning / Master of Public Health (http://priceschoolusc.edu/programs/masters/dual/ml-plmph/)
Collaborations with professional associations and schools

Collaborations between different sectors can help meet gaps in knowledge and competencies for Healthy Cities. With greater recognition of the intersection between environmental design and urban health, collaborations between academics, practitioners and professional associations in the fields of public health, city planning and architecture have also increased. The goal of these collaborations is to conduct research, promote urban design that addresses public health interests and enables sustainable use of resources, and implement innovative solutions for urban health challenges.

Some examples of these collaborations are:

- Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s School of Architecture and Planning’s Center for Advanced Urbanism and the American Institute of Architects
- New York City Departments of Design and Construction, Health and Mental Hygiene, Transportation, City Planning, and Office of Management and Budget, and architectural and planning academics as well as the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects

On-the-job training, continuing education and professional development programs:

Once the Healthy Cities program is initiated, it is important to build internal capacity through strengthening competencies of the staff. This can be done through on-the-job training, continuing education and professional development programs in key areas as listed below. Such programs will be most effective when it is purposefully designed and structured for staff development.

Some of the key areas are as follows:

- Leadership
- Advocacy
- Negotiation
- Communication
- Project management (planning, problem solving and resource mobilization)
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Continuous quality improvement (CQI)
- Health in All Policies (HiAP)
- Social determinants of health
- Urban health equity and Urban Health Equity Assessment and Response Tool (Urban HEART)
- Health Impact Assessment (HIA)

Resource list:

- To develop general competencies, the organization can search for private companies or in-house trainers to conduct these training programs.
- For additional reading on Healthy Cities-related knowledge, please refer to the Annexes H and I.
- Some examples of training programs available to strengthen governance: