

# GUIDELINES FOR FORMING AND SUSTAINING STAKEHOLDER LEADERSHIP GROUPS

## BACKGROUND

National human resources for health (HRH) stakeholder leadership groups (SLGs) consist of representatives from all of the key entities involved in planning, producing, managing, and supporting a country's health workforce. Why are SLGs important? It is now well established that health workforce dynamics and challenges are far too complex and cut across too many organizational and sectoral lines to be handled by a single entity. As stated in the World Health Report 2006, taking action to strengthen the health workforce "necessitates that stakeholders work together through inclusive alliances and networks—local, national, and global—across health problems, professions, disciplines, ministries, sectors, and countries."

## A SOLUTION: STAKEHOLDER LEADERSHIP GROUP GUIDELINES

CapacityPlus's SLG guidelines provide a practical and clear set of actions that HRH champions at the country level can take to successfully launch and sustain SLGs. A champion is someone in a leadership position who sees the pressing need for an SLG to address a key HRH problem or set of problems. Depending on the context, such a person could be a Ministry of Health leader, an executive director from a nongovernmental or faith-based organization, or a bilateral or multilateral HRH leader or supporter.

Recommended actions covering the following seven categories are outlined in detail in the tool:

### 1. Get Started

- Identify and engage strategic partners in the process of SLG formation
- Develop initial SLG goals, membership, and possible funding support
- Generate an inclusive list of members
- Take actions that will help develop a partnership mentality

### 2. Plan and Conduct the Initial Stakeholder Leadership Group Meeting

- Send out the agenda and meeting materials well in advance
- During the meeting, review and refine the SLG goals and membership
- During the meeting, discuss and obtain agreement on key operating procedures
- After the meeting, promote transparency through good communication

### **3. Provide Effective Leadership**

- Build shared ownership of the HRH challenges and desired outcomes from the very beginning; demonstrate commitment to participatory and shared leadership
- Identify potential of the SLG and communicate this vision in inspiring ways
- Understand and address the differing interests of each stakeholder entity and work to facilitate communication and interaction among these groups

### **4. Develop and Agree on Key Operating Procedures**

- These include: group membership/composition, SLG mandate (or terms of reference), and linkages to appropriate governing bodies, structure, decision-making, etc.

### **5. Provide Necessary Support to Ensure SLG Work Continues and Is Sustainable**

### **6. Use Effective Communication Practices**

- Build trust through developing and using good communication practices to ensure clarity around agreements reached and sustained transparency

### **7. Persist in Sustaining Clear Goals, Planning, and Monitoring Progress**

- Develop a simple workplan and monitoring process
- Periodically use benchmarks or indicators to monitor progress.

## **BENEFITS**

Depending on the national context, SLGs can take on a range of key HRH issues, including human resources information systems, issues of regulation, continuing professional development, health worker production, and much more. Benefits of effective SLGs include the following:

- Increases the likelihood of successfully implementing new HRH initiatives that individual stakeholders might not be able to undertake on their own
- Facilitates information and knowledge-sharing, which promotes overall HRH strengthening as well as contributing to individual and organizational goals
- Expands capabilities and possibilities to “do more with less,” thereby enhancing what a single stakeholder’s resource base usually permits
- Provides access to complementary areas of expertise, knowledge, skills, technology, and resources; promotes new knowledge and potential through innovation
- Leverages resources and avoids duplication of investments and activities
- Advocates for HRH across lines and raises the public profile of the challenge being addressed
- Redefines and strengthens the relationships among government HRH stakeholders and among government and a broad range of nonstate actors.