



September 8, 2020

Happy Anniversary, NNPHI

Dear Partner in Health:

When I commenced a career journey in public health 30 years ago, never did I imagine living through a global pandemic in my lifetime. COVID-19 is a pivotal moment for all who work in public health, and especially for our network. Not only does the virus shed light on the critical importance of public-private sector muscles working in harmony to protect and improve health, perhaps never before have we had the nation's attention on and support for ending the longstanding inequities in health outcomes that are fueled by the destructive force of pervasive racism. It has been said there is no vaccine for racism. Structural racism has been and continues to be actively supported in policy, action, and perspective, for the past four hundred years. Now is our time to alter this path. This is truly the silver lining in the pandemic.

Amidst this challenging context, I am honored to announce an important milestone for the National Network of Public Health Institutes (NNPHI). This year marks our 20th anniversary of serving as the official organization that represents a growing network of more than 40 member public health institutes, affiliate members, and emerging institutes in over 30 states spanning all ten Department of Health and Human Services regions. Public health institutes are non-profit organizations that work with a diverse range of multi-sector and multi-disciplinary partners that have a shared interest in creating conditions that lead to improved health. This network is part of a humanitarian sector that complements and expands public sector action. Twenty years ago, NNPHI began with 16 organizations. Today, we stand strong with 44 institutes, including Puerto Rico, and Seven Directions, the first public health institute dedicated to health and wellness in Indigenous communities. And our growth continues; as of this writing we have several new institutes in formation in our pipeline.

I know firsthand the value of a supportive network. When I embarked on the journey to establish the first public health institute in the DC area (the Institute for Public Health Innovation), NNPHI was an enormous support and catalyst for our development. More than ever, the contributions of our network are critically important to support local capacity to protect health. Notwithstanding this current pandemic, as life-expectancy in the US continues to lag behind other nations, we must work harder to build local capacity in our communities, which will require us to support our public agencies at every level (state, tribal, local, and federal), along with numerous partners in other sectors that impact health outcomes. Our network's

DNA has always demonstrated a solid track record in advancing multisector, local work. Today, NNPHI's mission remains the same: To support national public health system initiatives and strengthen public health institutes to promote multi-sector activities resulting in measurable improvements of public health structures, systems, and outcomes. I am proud of the collaborative work underway with our many network partners. Our focus on systems, structures and outcomes just in the last five fiscal years is illustrated by NNPHI making more than \$33.4 million dollars in competitive awards to build public health capacity in states, tribes and communities across the nation. These funds help strengthen our multi-sector public health system.

As we continue our capacity building efforts, I strongly believe that our health and racial equity work must remain front and center to our work. This cannot be a fad that fades into the background once we turn the corner on this pandemic.

What I am Doing Personally:

Each of us has influence in the direction of civil society. I am continually reassessing my own biases, which includes giving careful attention to what I am reading, what news I am digesting, and how I communicate to family and friends about race and health equity issues. With less travel and commuting, I find I have more time for deeper reflection and thinking more everyday about how my own actions can contribute to a society free of racism.

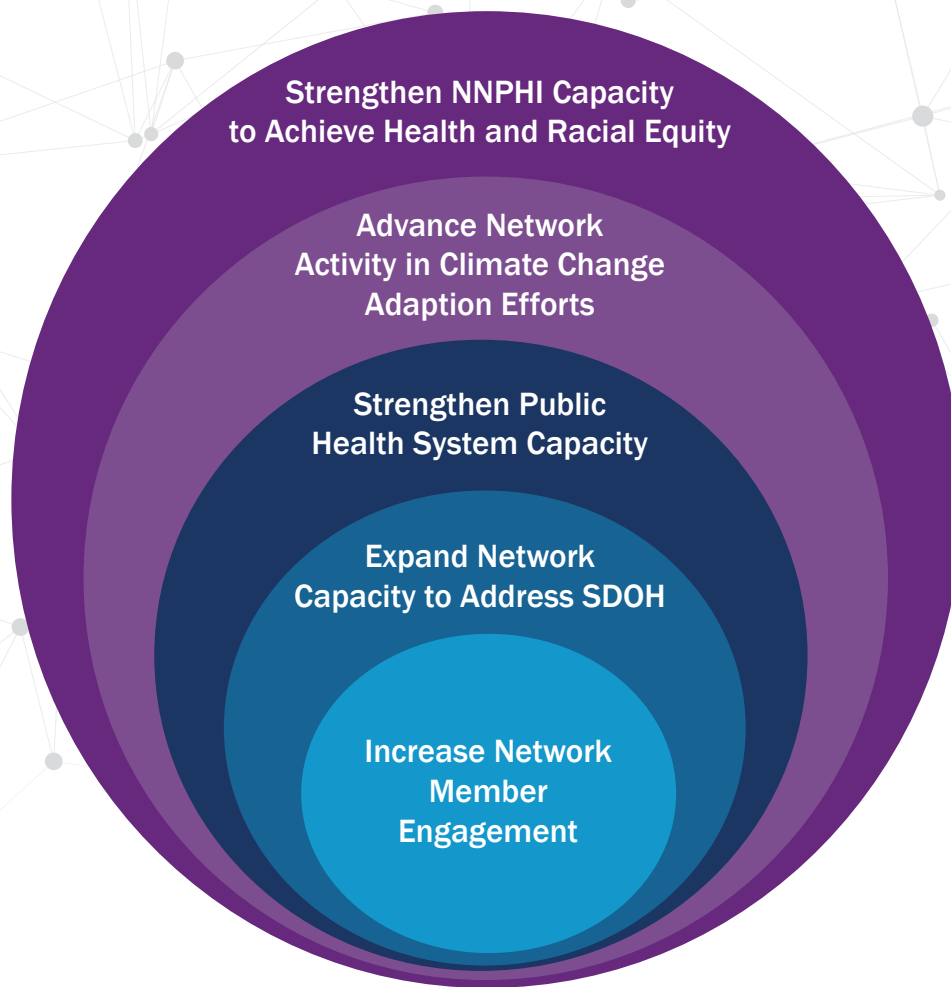
What NNPHI is Doing as an Organization:

We are working toward becoming an antiracist, multicultural organization. We are investing in team learning experiences that include facilitated racial healing dialogues. We are designing our equity footprint and implementing an equity audit to establish indicators that will further diversify our team and organizational capacity to eliminate inequities in health outcomes. We have recently formed new partnerships with Howard University and national organizations working to advance equity in communities of color.

What We Are Doing as a Network:

As a nonpartisan, national public health organization and network representing 44 public health institutes employing over 8,000 subject matter experts in myriad sub disciplines, NNPHI joins APHA and the growing list of states that declare racism as a public health crisis; we are taking action by developing policy and program interventions that strive to eliminate racism, promote healing, and achieve health equity as a means to protect and improve the health of all peoples. We have established two national communities of practice focused on health and racial equity: one is focused on internal policies and best practices our members can implement to pursue increased equity within their own organizations; the second is compiling strategies to address external drivers of racial inequities in the response to and long-term recovery from COVID-19, with the goal of not simply returning to the inequity of our pre-pandemic world but instead reimagining a more equitable, more just society.

Looking ahead at the next several years, our NNPHI 4.0 strategic plan includes five primary areas.



Engage with us! We invite you join to us as we envision the next twenty years of improving systems, structures and outcomes.

- [Register now](#) for a virtual NNPHI network event, ***Emerging Lessons from COVID-19 Response Rooted in Health and Racial Equity with Branches across Sectors*** on October 7th, 2:00-5:00pm ET
- [Join us](#) on the COVID-19 community of practice
- [Search for training](#) or ask the Learning Navigator Librarian for excellent training
- [Request technical assistance](#) from NNPHI and its network of over 8,000 subject matter experts

I thank you for your continued partnership, for your dedication and service to the public's health and wellbeing, and I look forward to our next chapter together in this important journey.

Sincerely yours in health,

Vincent Lafronza, President and Chief Executive Officer

NNPHI