

## ► DirecTalk



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**Y**ou rarely have a second chance to make a first impression. This chance may be ours.

Over the last couple years, we have endeavored to recast our brand and usher in a new era for our association, our profession, and to secure our place in the U.S. public health enterprise. An essential element of this rebirth was a deep and profound reflection on our mission, vision, and values. The existing ones have been with us for the better part of 40 years or longer, and a burnishing of our core operational assumptions was overdue.

The first step in our journey was to retain Amy Murphy, MPH, to assist us in conducting an association environmental scan and situational analysis. Staff and board members, over the course of many months, struggled to identify and agree on our past accomplishments and setbacks, our current strengths and weaknesses, and our future opportunities and threats. We took months to digest our assumptions and asked ourselves what were the implications of our findings and conclusions?

The amalgamation of our thinking led to the creation of new vision, mission, and values statements, replacing those that have served us well over recent history. While the conversations were not always easy, the crucible of our common commitment gave rise to what I feel are solid outcomes. Drum roll, please. I am delighted to share:

**Vision:** Healthy environments. Protected communities. Empowered professionals.

**Mission:** To build, sustain, and empower an effective environmental health workforce.

## Organization of Consequence

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**Philosophy:** The values that we hold in fulfilling our vision and carrying out our mission are:

- **Compassionate Leadership:** Establish NEHA as the leading authority in the field of environmental health. Serve as a beacon and voice for the field and champion the professionals who serve and protect our communities.
- **Integrity and Accountability:** Create an environment infused with trust, honesty, transparency, and ethical behavior in all endeavors. Hold ourselves accountable to each other, those that we serve, and all of our stakeholders, partners, and funders, as well as produce meaningful outcomes.
- **Technical Expertise:** Employ a science-based approach and leading-edge knowledge to guide our decisions and programs. Provide environmental health professionals access to science-based information, resources, education, and support.
- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** Proactively foster and sustain a just, equitable, diverse,

and inclusive environment that advances the field of environmental health, our professionals, and all community members.

As we agreed on these statements, we recognized and accepted that we were only at the beginning of our contemporary journey. We needed a logic model and a strategic plan to blow life into these aspirational statements. This point is where the works gets tedious. How would we know if we were succeeding or failing to meet our aims? The next step was the development of a strategic plan. We embrace the notion that corporate culture is far more important than plans, which often lack relevancy by the time they are printed and posted. Nonetheless, planning is important, more important the plans themselves. Furthermore, we are accountable to you and desire to demonstrate that accountability through appropriate performance metrics made possible by planning.

I draw your attention to our supporting organizational logic model (Figure 1, page 61). We felt that our implementation plan needed to be simple to understand, reasonably simple to implement, and simple as a foundation to report progress. Our members would be at the center of everything we do, and given the evidence base that grounds our profession, we felt data should provide the muscle to demonstrate the value we deliver to our constituency.

Our three major lanes of work were identified. First, we should be experts on your professional needs—that translates to constituent insight. As you know, we conducted a member needs assessment in 2022 and have been using

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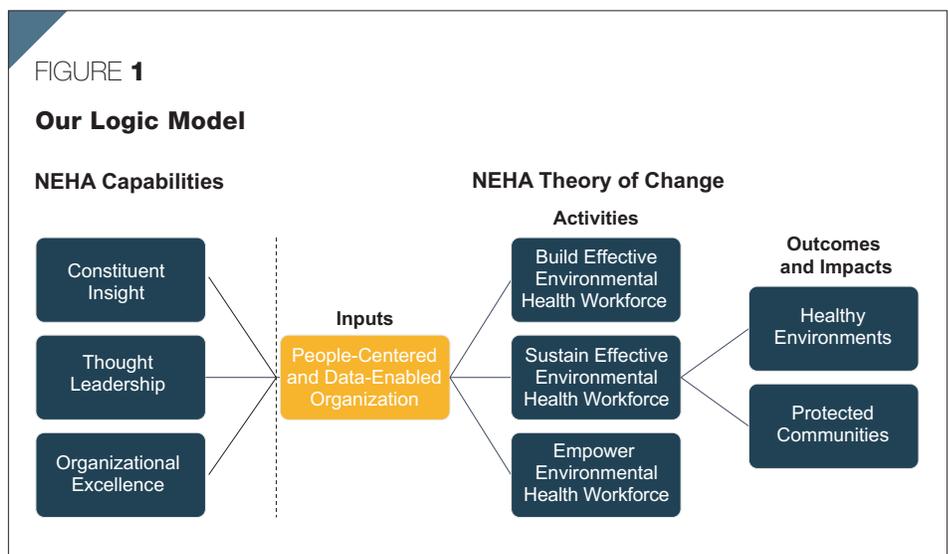
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the data reported and summarized in that assessment to guide our individual employee performance goals and decision making. What you told us was that you desire access to continuing professional education and convenient online communities to share best practices and remain connected with colleagues. We heard you. We have muscled improvements into our online credentialing transcripts and learning management system to ensure we are simple and effective to work with. A new online community platform is to be released this fall.

Our second major lane of work is thought leadership. We desire to be the primary and principal source of information about the environmental health workforce. We have invested in a dramatically improved Government Affairs operation, have worked to describe the needs of the profession to representative levels of government, and have published several scientific articles on what works in contemporary environmental health. We have major renovations planned for the *Journal of Environmental Health* and will release a marketing campaign on your behalf in the next few months.

Finally, we aim to be efficient in all that we do so that our limited resources can be used to invest in services and products you find valuable. Operational excellence reflects that sensibility. We desire our website to be easy to use and to provide useful information in a member-friendly interface. We want inter-



actions with us involving transactions to be wickedly simple to execute as we know you have better things to do than to figure out how to log in. For those of you that receive federal investments through us, we desire to provide simple, paperless methods for payment requests and reporting.

These lanes of work are intended to embrace an ideology that acknowledge we support busy professionals. People with lives, partners, siblings, children, and challenges of your own. We aim to be people centered. We also aim to make decisions based on fact whenever we can. That is why we are conducting the retail food training needs assessment. We want you to tell us what you need so we can advocate for you with the Food and

Drug Administration, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and among other federal, state, and local agencies.

While I could go and describe our new logo, space and time do not allow for that at this time. I am pleased with the new logo and hope you take pride in it.

Heralded Savannah, Georgia, poet Conrad Aiken referred to himself as a “cosmos mariner.” Like Aiken, we are travelling in uncharted territory and our destination is unknown. I am glad we are sharing this journey together. ✨

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## Did You Know?

The NEHA Government Affairs program advocates for support of environmental health programs and professionals at federal, state, and local levels of government. We function as a liaison between environmental health professionals and government officials to inform decisions that support and fund our workforce. We track state and federal legislation, respond to federal and state inquiries on environmental health, and provide a voice for the environmental health workforce in policy making. You can stay up-to-date on our work at [www.neha.org/government-affairs](http://www.neha.org/government-affairs). Check out the Your Insider in Government Affairs Blog, view one of the Government Affairs webinars, read a recent policy or position statement, or learn about recent state and federal legislative actions.