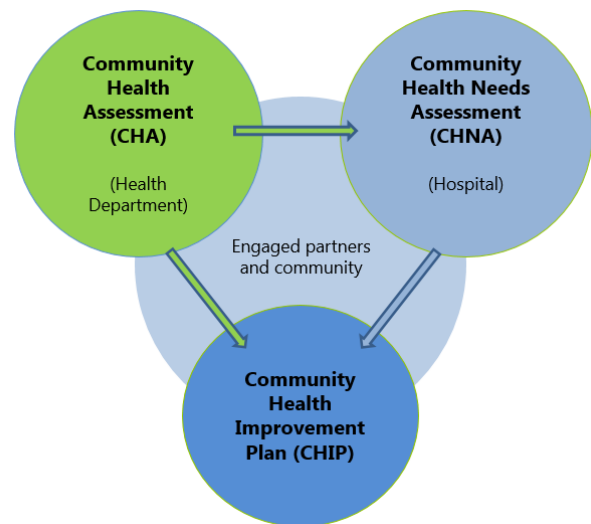


## FAQ: The Community Health Improvement Process

### What are Community Health (Needs) Assessments?

To receive state accreditation, local public health departments are required to carry out a **community health assessment (CHA)** and to develop an action plan or community health improvement plan. In 2010 the IRS began requiring 501(c)(3) nonprofit hospitals to conduct **community health needs assessments (CHNAs)** every 3 years and to adopt an implementation strategy describing how the hospital will meet the community needs that are identified. Hospitals are increasingly collaborating with health departments on health improvement, and western North Carolina is a leader in this form of partnership.

WNC Healthy Impact supports a collaborative community health (needs) assessment process in which hospitals and public health agencies partner to create shared processes and products. WNC Healthy Impact created a [CHNA Summary Template](#) that can be completed and used as “wrapping paper” around one or more community health assessments (CHAs) to help communicate hospital connectivity and clarify requirement elements. Most of the data and findings will be reflected in county-level CHAs.



### What is a community health improvement plan (CHIP)?

A **Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)** serves as a strategic health improvement plan that is designed to reflect the big picture of what is taking place across the whole community (including the public health CHA and hospital CHNA) related to priority health needs. This plan results from a collaborative action planning process in each county/community and helps encourage cross-sector collaboration.

### What is the Community Health Improvement Process?

The **Community Health Improvement Process** refers to the entire, ongoing, iterative process that includes creating community health improvement plan (CHIP), community health assessment (CHA) and community health needs assessment (CHNA) reports. It also includes all of the action and evaluation that is needed to implement and monitor the strategies outlined in the CHIP – created by hospitals, health departments, engaged community members, and partners. To align timing requirements, collaborating agencies in western NC have chosen to repeat this cycle **every three years**.

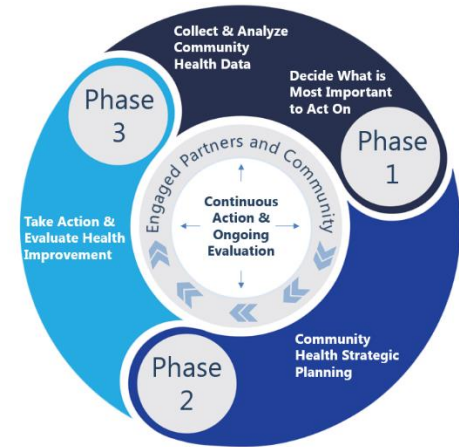
## What are the key phases of the Community Health Improvement Process?

In the **first phase** of the cycle, CH(N)A leads collect and analyze community data – deciding what data they need and making sense of it. They then decide what is most important to act on by clarifying the desired conditions of wellbeing for their population and by then determining local health priorities. The first phase results in the **Community Health Assessment Report** from public health, and the **Community Health Needs Assessment Summary** from hospitals.

The **second phase** of the cycle is community health strategic planning. In this phase, leads make a plan with partners about what works to do better, form workgroups around each strategic area, clarify customers, and determine customer results and measures. The second phase results in a

**Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)** and **Action Plan forms** from public health, and in a **Hospital Implementation Strategy** from hospitals.

In the **third phase** of the cycle, CH(N)A leads take action and evaluate health improvement. They do this by planning how to achieve customer results and putting the plan into action. Workgroups continue to meet, and monitor customer results and make changes to the plan as needed. The third phase results in a **State of the County Health (SOTCH) Report** from public health, and in an **IRS Form 990 – Schedule H** from hospitals.



## What is WNC Healthy Impact's regional role in all of this?

**WNC Healthy Impact** is a partnership and coordinated process between public health, hospitals, and key regional partners in western North Carolina. This regional effort is supported financially by all the hospitals in the region, and is housed and coordinated by **WNC Health Network**.

Through in-kind partner time and leadership, consultants, and WNC Health Network staff, this effort creates and provides multiple datasets, trainings, tools and templates, and provides technical assistance to public health agencies and hospitals. This regional support is designed to enhance the local efforts that work with partners to assess health needs, develop collaborative plans, take action, and evaluate progress and results.

## Further Reading:

- [WNC Healthy Impact Fact Sheet](#)
- [Hospital FAQ](#)
- [Health Department FAQ](#)
- [A Regional Model of Community Health Improvement in Western North Carolina: WNC Healthy Impact Heather Gates, Gibbie Harris](#)