

Community Action Planning Toolkit

8 Resources

Revised 2/8/24

A plethora of resources on action planning and social determinants of health exist. This compendium offers curated lists of resources and tools to support Healthy Start grantees design and implement action plans aimed at shifting social determinants of health to improve infant equity. This compendium is designed to be a living document, where Healthy Start grantees and the Technical Assistance and Support Center (TASC) add resources and tools throughout the action planning process.

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1 Community Engagement Resources

We know authentically engaging people most affected by the issue is central to developing and implementing action plans aimed at dismantling conditions that hold health inequities in place. We struggle sometimes on how to effectively set the table for those most affected to authentically participate. This curated list offers user-friendly toolkits to successfully engage the community members and those most impacted by the issue when designing and implementing community-based strategies.

Community Engagement Toolkit. Developed by Leading Inside Out and hosted by the Collective Impact Forum.

<https://collectiveimpactforum.org/resource/community-engagement-toolkit/>

This Toolkit contains 12 user-friendly tools on ways to engage community to design an action plan and implement strategies.

- Tool 1: Clarify why community engagement is important and goals for engagement.
- Tool 2: Identify where on the community engagement spectrum to include community on decision-making and implementation.
- Tool 3: Identify what assets community brings to the table
- Tool 4: Apply an equity lens to assess who current sits at the “table” and who is missing
- Tool 5: Test assumptions and biases
- Tool 6: Assess types of people most affected by the issue
- Tool 7: Prioritize types of community members to invite
- Tool 8: Identify tactics for orienting and supporting successful community engagement
- Tool 9: Identify organizations to partner with around inviting and supporting community engagement
- Tool 10: Assess current culture and what may need to shift as community members are invited to be an active role
- Tools 11 & 12: Identify ways to shift organizational culture to better accommodate community engagement

Community Planning Toolkit: Community Engagement. Developed by Community Places.

<https://www.communitycommons.org/entities/c99aece3-4159-4fd1-a504-2155d69f3605>

This document describes 15 tools for engaging community when designing an action plan.

- Arts & creativity
- Community mapping
- Planning for REAL
- Public meetings
- Focus groups/workshops
- Working group or forum
- Web-based consultation
- Future search
- Open space technology
- Citizens’ juries
- Roundtable consensus building
- Citizens’ panels

- Street staff
- Questionnaire
- Local community meetings

The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership. Developed by Facilitating Power.
<https://movementstrategy.org/resources/the-spectrum-of-community-engagement-to-ownership/>

This document offers a developmental spectrum of community engagement to ownership and three tools for using the spectrum.

- Tool 1: Planning and goal setting
- Tool 2: Policy development
- Tool 3: Community development campaign
- Tool 4: Assessment of projects, programs & campaigns

Community Engagement Guide. Developed by Washington State Department of Health.
<https://doh.wa.gov/sites/default/files/legacy/Documents/1000/CommEngageGuide.pdf>

This document is a comprehensive guide to community engagement on the following topics.

- Ethics
- Continuum of participation
- Engagement checklist
- Key principles
- Methods of engagement
- Common barriers
- Evaluating community engagement
- Appendices on methods for the continuum of participation - informing, consulting, involving, collaborating, and empower

Let's Talk People: A No-Nonsense, Human-Centered Checklist for Community Engagement. Developed by Public Matters. Note: Not publicly available. Would need to contact Public Matters.
<https://publicmattersgroup.com/>

This brief checklist offers actions to consider:

- BEFORE engaging the community: 24 questions/actions about doing your homework, mapping the terrain, and understanding the context of people and places – Past, present, and planned.
- WHEN engaging with community: 25 questions/actions around the basics of practicing humility and showing proper respect.
- SUSTAINING community engagement: 11 questions/actions around developing and cultivating a healthy, resilient community engagement ecosystem.

2 Group Decision-Making Tool¹

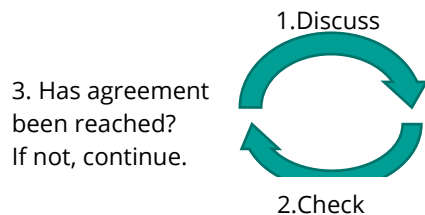
At its core, action planning is about making hard choices about what to focus on and what not to. Making hard choices requires a group to agree upon how decisions will be made. This tool lays out four typical decision-making processes – what they are, when to consider using them, and how to use them. Review this table and decide which decision-making process works best for which decisions during the action planning process.

	When to use	How to use
1 Consensus <i>Everyone understands the decision, can explain why it's best, and can live with the decision.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decisions are important. Groups are small (10 or fewer). When time allows for rich exchange of ideas. Group members are equally informed and invested. If consensus can't be achieved, have a backup method. 	Consensus requires: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time Active participation of all group members Skills in communication, conflict resolution, and facilitation See Page 2 for guidance.
2 Voting <i>Majority wins</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When consensus is highly unlikely given the time allowed. Group members are equally informed on the issue and understand one another's view. Have plan on how to handle the reactions of the minority - who didn't vote the option selected by the majority. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dot Democracy: Write list of options (via flip chart or Google Jamboard). Give everyone a few "dots" for which they place by the option(s) they want. Polls: For virtual meetings, use Zoom or Mentimeter or other electronic polling features. For in-person, consider hand raising or secret ballot, where people write option on piece of paper.
3 Subgroup <i>The larger group delegates decision making to a smaller group.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A subgroup has the necessary information or expertise to make the decision. A subgroup of people are most affected by the decision and can implement it without the active involvement of the full group The whole group is comfortable delegating the authority to representatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree upon conditions when a subgroup is most appropriate to make decision. Identify people to form sub-group. Sub-group determines how they will make decision.
4 One person <i>The larger group gives authority to one person.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's an emergency. One person has needed information and is trusted by the group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree upon conditions when one person may need to decision. Appoint person with authority to make decision.

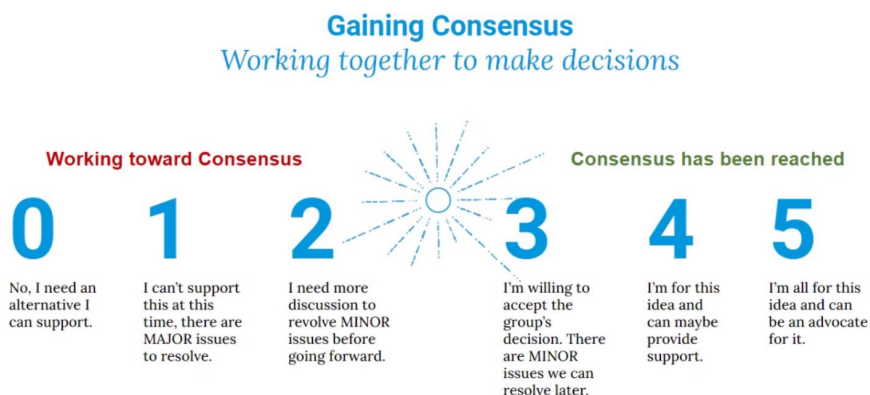
¹From Scholtes PS, Joiner BL, Streibel BJ (2003) *The Team Handbook, Third Edition*. Waunakee, WI: Suttle Straus.

Tips for Successful Consensus Decision-Making¹

1. **Use Discuss and Check Cycle.** First, **discuss** the issue by taking all sides into consideration. Try to find ways to address concerns. Second, **check** for agreement by using a negative poll (i.e., Is there anyone opposed?) or a fist poll (see below.) Third, if agreement has not been reached, go back to #1 Discuss.



2. **Use the Fist Poll to check for agreement and make decisions.** The fist poll can be used during in-person or virtual meetings, where group members are asked to weigh in on an option by showing their fists with 0 (show closed fist) to five numbers of fingers with corresponding opinions as laid out below.



3. **Listen carefully.** Ask for reasons and seek out assumptions behind statement. Be open to reactions to ideas and consider them carefully.
4. **Encourage all members to participate fully.** Don't assume that silence means agreement. Periodically circle the group and have each member state their view.
5. **Seek out differences of opinion.** Probe for alternative viewpoints. Disagreements are natural and helpful because they increase the range of information and opinions that the group can use in its decision-making process.
6. **Search for alternatives that meet the goals for all members.** Don't assume someone must win and someone must lose. When there's a stalemate, look for the next most acceptable alternative for all members.
7. **Avoid changing you mind only to avoid conflict.**
8. **Don't just argue for your point of view.** Seek ways of combining your ideas with others' views. Try to incorporate criticism of your ideas into your proposals.

9. **Balance power.** If one or two team members have more power or authority than the others, the members with more authority should not state their views until all other views have been heard.
10. **Make sure there is enough time.** The “reaching consensus” part of consensus take a lot of time. Meetings should be long enough to allow for full discussion, and there should be ample time for a decision to emerge.
11. **Check understanding.** Make sure everyone understands the decision and can explain why it was best.

¹From Scholtes PS, Joiner BL, Streibel BJ (2003) *The Team Handbook, Third Edition*. Waunakee, WI: Suttle Straus.

3 Learning Card Tool

When teams engage in action planning, the focus is on moving forward -- on to the next step. Yet, taking a moment to reflect upon what the team has learned can help clarify the next step. [Frog Design](#) created a quick check in process during a planning process called Learning Cards.

After your action planning team has completed a step in the action planning process, take a 15-minute reflection break before moving onto the next step. Invite team members to sketch out responses to these three learning cards, discuss as a group, and then refine next steps.

What we did: List names of activities in the order we completed them

What we learned: Key ahas! From the activities we did

What we are doing to do next: What are we doing next – to revisit our approach

4 Upstream Strategies Resources

Sometimes it's unclear what strategies can shift conditions that are holding social determinants (SDoH) in place. This curated list provides a mix of innovative and evidence strategies for shifting social determinants of health (SDoH) at the community level, which may support brainstorming of potential strategies in Step 6 (Set Strategic Direction) in the action planning process.

All-In Cities. Prepared by PolicyLink

<https://allincities.org/toolkit>

This interactive website provides a curated list of solutions to advance racial equity at the community level around:

- good jobs
- economic security
- homegrown talent
- healthy neighborhoods
- housing/anti-displacement
- democracy & justice
- apprenticeships
- paid sick & family leave

Communities in Action: Pathways to Health Equity. Prepared by National Academy of Medicine.

<https://www.nap.edu/catalog/24624/communities-in-action-pathways-to-health-equity>

Chapter 6 provides numerous evidenced-based policies to support community solutions around:

- taxation and income inequality
- housing and urban planning policies
- education policies
- civil rights law and policy
- criminal justice policy

County Health Rankings and Roadmaps. Prepared by University of Wisconsin

<https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/take-action-to-improve-health/what-works-for-health>

This interactive website provides a curated list of evidence-based strategies around:

- air and water quality
- community safety
- education
- family and social support
- income
- housing and transit

Countering the Production of Health Inequities: Ensuring the Opportunity for Health for All
Prevention Institute

<https://www.preventioninstitute.org/node/2354>

This document lays out the case for determinants of health and 10 multi-sector systems to achieve health equity: 1) Community-driven solutions for health equity in thriving communities; 2) Health

equity by design: Healthy Land Use and Planning; 3) Active transportation for health and safety; 4) Housing choice to build opportunity; 5) Sustainable food system; 6) Safe communities through preventing violence; 7) Cradle to community; 8) Developing a workforce for the 21st century; 9) Creating economic engines in service to community; and 10) Community-centered health system.

Culture of Health Action Framework. Prepared by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

<https://www.rwjf.org/en/cultureofhealth/taking-action.html>

This website describes the RWJF 4 action areas of its Culture of Health Framework. Action Area #3 - Creating Healthier, More Equitable Communities lists numerous evidence-based strategies around:

- The Built Environment
- Social and Economic Environment
- Policy and Governance

Getting Equity Advocacy Results (GEAR). Prepared by PolicyLink

<https://gear.policylink.org/gear>

This website lays out a framework and tactics for designing and executing an equity-focused policy advocacy campaign around the following:

- Build the base
- Name and frame the equity solution
- Move the equity proposal
- Build, advance, and defend the equity proposal

Promoting Health Equity. Prepared by US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dch/programs/healthycommunitiesprogram/tools/pdf/sdoh-workbook.pdf>

Chapter 3, Section 4 provides descriptions and examples of five strategies:

- Conscious raising
- Community development
- Social action
- Media advocacy
- Policy advocacy

5 Understanding Social Determinants of Health & Health Equity Resources

Although many of us have heard about “*social determinants of health*,” “*health equity*,” or “*upstream solutions*,” we struggle sometimes– as groups – to gain a collective understanding of what they mean and how these approaches differ from more traditional program and service delivery models. This curated list offers easy-to-understand resources that can be shared with your action planning team to increase understanding and develop a shared vocabulary about these concepts. Scan through list of resources and identify whether any are a good fit to share with your action planning team.

Short Videos Available on YouTube

Upstream Public Health - Produced by Equiate

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xYeAmafTGCA>

2-minute animated video on upstream vs downstream solutions

Social Determinants of Health – Produced by CDC

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u_loBt7Nicw

3-minute animated video on five major categories – economic stability, education, healthcare, neighborhood & built environment, and social and community context

Social Determinants of Health - Produced by Psych Hub

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17jeXGbKITQ&t=15s>

Under 4-minute video explaining the social determinants of health

Dr. Camara Jones Explains the Cliff of Good Health - Produced by Urban Institute

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=to7YrI50iHI&t=82s>

5-minute video that explains upstream vs downstream interventions, social determinants of health, health inequities, and structural racism

Frameworks for Social Determinants of Health and Health Inequities

Framework for Reducing Health Inequities – Created by Bay Area Regional Health Inequities Initiative (BARHII).

<https://barhii.org/framework>

BARHII developed this conceptual framework to illustrate the connection between social inequalities and health. This framework has been used widely to guide health departments undertaking work to address health inequities and has been formally adopted by the California Department of Public Health as part of their decision-making framework.

Promoting Health Equity: A Resource to Help Communities Address Social Determinants of Health – Created by US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dch/programs/healthycommunitiesprogram/tools/pdf/sdoh-workbook.pdf>

This document explains and gives examples of health equity and social determinants of health. Pages 10 and 11 offer conceptual models of social determinants of health.

Healthy People 2030 Social Determinants of Health – Created by the US Department of Health and Human Services.

<https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health>

This website defines five categories of SDoH with examples, research snapshot, and indicators – 1) economic stability, 2) education access and quality, 3) health care access and quality, 4) neighborhood and built environment, and 5) social and community context.

Easy-to-read documents

Advancing Health Equity: A Guide to Language, Narrative and Concepts – Created by the American Medical Association and AAMC Center for Health Justice.

<https://www.ama-assn.org/about/ama-center-health-equity/advancing-health-equity-guide-language-narrative-and-concepts-0>

Part I recommends language for promoting health equity – what to avoid and equity focused alternatives. Part 3 provides a glossary of terms and concepts frequently used in health equity discussions.

A System of Prevention: Achieving Health, Safety, and Wellbeing for All – Created by the Prevention Institute

<https://www.preventconnect.org/2019/03/a-system-of-prevention-achieving-health-safety-and-wellbeing-for-all/>

This graphically designed, short e-book explains why systems matter to health and equity and how apply an upstream, systems approach to shifting social determinants of health.

The Ground Water Approach: Building a Practical Understanding of Structural Racism – Created by the Racial Equity Institute

<https://racialequityinstitute.org/groundwater-approach/>

This document uses a metaphor about the fish, the lake, and the groundwater to explain the concept of structural racism and how it relates to health inequities.

6 Vision Statement Tool¹

A vision statement is a short description of what a group of people want to achieve in the future. It communicates:

- **who** will be better off (e.g., mothers how have been historically marginalized);
- **what** will be changed/improved for those individuals if the effort is successful (e.g., improved infant health equity); and
- **where** the change/improvement will occur (e.g., New Haven, Connecticut).

A vision statement is:

- **aspirational** – it will take a long time to achieve);
- **positive** - what is desired, rather what is avoided); and
- **concise** – no longer than one sentence.

Here are examples of collective impact vision statements initiatives around the country:

- *“Staten Island Youth Make Healthy Choices and Decrease Their Use of Alcohol and Prescription Drugs”*
- *“Across New York State, the juvenile justice system promotes youth success and ensures public safety”*
- *“All Rio Grande Valley students will achieve a degree or credential that leads to a meaningful career”*

Guidance Tips to Develop a Vision Statement

1 Identify who will be involved in drafting or refining a vision statement, and what role people will play. For example, a few people may draft a vision statement and then share with a larger group for feedback, while a one group may draft and refine it.

Who	Role or responsibility

2 For those charged with drafting or refining a vision statement, invite each person to draft a vision statement – either as a homework assignment or during a meeting. Ask them to consider incorporating criteria listed on page 3 - Step **5**.

Our vision is that

③ Invite each person to share their draft vision statement – either by reading it a loud or writing on flip chart paper. First, invite group members to identify what words or phrases need more clarity by circling words, if written on flip charts, and encourage the author to provide more details. Second, identify what is the same and different about these vision statements.

Same	Different

④ Invite people to make proposals for selecting or combining different elements of the vision statements. Draft out a couple of versions, if needed. If experience challenges coming to agreement, ask individuals, “What would it take to make this statement work for you?”

Agreed upon vision statement:

⑤ After reaching consensus on a vision statement, check it for:

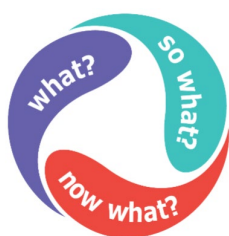
Content		Format	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is the “who” clear?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Is it aspirational?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is the “what” clear?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Is it positive?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is the “where” clear?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Is it concise?

¹=The vision statement definition and examples are excerpted from the Steering Committee Vision Statement Tool that was developed by FSG and available on the Collective Impact Forum at: <http://collectiveimpactforum.org/resources/steering-committee-members-visioning-exercise>

7 Adaptive Action Cycle¹ Tool

As your team begins to implement the infant health equity action plan, undoubtedly unforeseen challenges will emerge: A key stakeholder will depart, a city council election will elect candidates who do not support your team's vision, or a tragic event happens (i.e., devastating weather condition, a mass shooting). The only way to navigate through these emergent and uncertain conditions is to strategically adapt the action plan.

An adaptive action cycle is an iterative, deceptively simple, dialogue process that enables a group to identify the next wise action in uncertain and complex situations by engaging in three lines of inquiry. The frequency and duration of these dialogues are dependent upon a group and situational needs.



- 1 **What?** Understand the current situation (i.e., status quo)
- 2 **So What?** Make interpretations about the situation
- 3 **Now What?** Identify next wise action

Guidance Tips:

When to hold adaptive action session: As your team begins to implement the action plan, set aside regular time to engage in adaptive action cycles throughout the implementation timeline. Good times to engage in an adaptive action cycle may be after data have been collected to assess impact (i.e., survey), after a significant event (i.e., local city council elections), or after your team executed a strategy or tactics (i.e., get out the vote).

Who should participate: Invite people who have direct experience on the issue and who have exerted effort to implement the strategy.

How to facilitate the adaptive action session:

- Schedule at least one and ½ hour for the adaptive action discussion.
- Identify a facilitator and a note taker. (Refer to note taking template below).
- Synthesize key information to share with the group and distribute either before or during the meeting (i.e., results from a survey, election results by precinct).
- Bring the most updated action plan and milestone journal (See Milestone Journal Tool) to the meeting.
- Consider inviting team members to “Stand in Inquiry” as they engage in the adaptive action.
 - ✓ Turn Judgment into curiosity
 - ✓ Turn conflict into shared exploration
 - ✓ Turn defensiveness into self-reflection
 - ✓ Turn assumptions into questions

¹ Adapted from Human Systems Dynamics Institute <http://www.hsdinstitute.org/>

What questions should be asked: Organize the meeting on the three lines of inquiry: What, So What, Now What. Choose a set of questions within each of those lines of inquiry that are relevant to your group and issue. The following table offers some example questions to consider.

Potential questions to a guide adaptive action cycle	
What? <i>Understand reality</i>	What ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ are the data telling us? ▪ patterns are we observing? ▪ is taking shape? ▪ is surprising? ▪ concerns/worries us? ▪ stories are we hearing? ▪ is known and unknown at this point in time?
So What? <i>Make interpretations</i>	So what ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ impact does this condition have on our action plan? ▪ assumptions need to be tested? ▪ matters the most and why? ▪ are the gaps in our understanding? ▪ is another way to look at this situation? ▪ is the gap between where we are now and where we want to be? ▪ is gaining traction – with whom and where? ▪ would progress look like? ▪ options may move us forward? ▪ people or groups do we need to engage? ▪ may derail/constrain/hold us back? ▪ challenges may come our way as we move forward?
Now What? <i>Identify next wise action</i>	Now what... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ strategies or tactics do we need to stop or modify in our current action plan? ▪ are the most worthwhile actions to take now? ▪ timing is required for which actions? ▪ resources are required for us to move forward? ▪ who will commit to do what?

After the adaptive action session: Update the action plan to reflect adaptations agreed upon during the session.

Adaptive Action Cycle Note Template

Date	
Invited participants	
Facilitator	
Recorder	
Impetus or context for adaptive action dialogue	

① What is the state of our current reality – the situation or system?

② So what are the implications of this situation to our efforts/project?

③ So what will we do now?

8 Milestone Tracking Journal¹

To assess how well the action plan is working, your team needs credible evidence to discern whether the strategies and tactics are gaining traction – shifting conditions of the priority social determinant of health (SDoH) in the desired direction – or not. The Milestone Tracking Journal is a simple way to track what conditions are changing (or not) and how your team's strategy may (or not) be contributing to those changing conditions.

- **Milestones** are signs that denote movement along a change process; they capture what changes are occurring in conditions related to the priority SDoH and who is responsible for those changes.
- **Contribution** is how the Healthy Start program or CAN influenced the milestone (or not).
- **Credible evidence** is verifiable information that allows a reasonable person to make a judgment.

Data generated from the Milestone Tracking Tool can be used in three ways.

- **Adaptive Action:** Use data to reflect upon the change process and make informed decisions about adaptations to the action plan. Refer to Adaptive Action Cycle Tool.
- **Communication:** Transform data into timelines and other visuals to communicate with funders, board members, or partners progress made towards shifting the priority SDoH.
- **Historical record:** Use data to orient new staff members or partners about what has been accomplished.

Guidance Tips:

- Modify the following template (or download Excel spreadsheet from Google Drive).
- Appoint someone who will be responsible for updating and saving the journal.
- Use one journal per targeted SDoH.
- Agree upon a schedule (i.e., every one to three months) when journal will be updated.
- Schedule or set time aside in regularly scheduled meetings to collectively update journal so that team members can contribute to the documentation.
- Consider updating the journal when engaging in adaptive action cycles. Refer to the Adaptive Action Cycle Tool.

¹The Milestone Tracking Journal was adapted from the Outcome Journal as described in [Outcome Mapping](#).

Milestone Tracking Journal Template

Priority SDoH	[Insert name of SDoH]
Person responsible for updating journal	[Insert name]
Electronic location of journal	[Insert location]
Dates when journal updated	[Insert dates each time updated]

1 Date Insert actual or approximate date (Month/ Year) that milestone occurred. <i>Ex: May 2022</i>	2 Milestone: The Change Write one sentence about something that has changed in a condition related to the priority SDoH and who was responsible for it. Tip: Do not include an activity taken by the Healthy Start program or the CAN. <i>Ex: City Council increased budget for affordable housing by \$10 million.</i>	3 Contribution: Role Played Write one sentence about how the Healthy Start program or CAN contributed to that milestone (i.e., strategy or tactics used) or N/A if not involved in the change. <i>Ex: We led an advocacy campaign - met with city councils one-on-one & prepped people to testify.</i>	4 Questions & observations What questions does this milestone raise for us?	5 Adaptation needed? Does this milestone warrant us to reconsider changes to our action plan? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure; wait and see