



The key term in community-based health information outreach is community. While government agencies or academic institutions may be involved in, or even lead, an outreach project, community-based organizations are the key partners in making the project a success.

In community-based health information outreach, organizations work together to improve people's abilities to find and use health information. These efforts can be described as capacity building. Capacity building can be defined as development of resources to improve quality of life. The phrase is usually applied to communities or organizations and refers to building infrastructure, resources, and skills of community members. For instance, a project may involve training community clinic staff to access consumer health resources for patients. The project builds the capacity of the clinic community to efficiently acquire up-to-date, reliable health information as needed. In addition, the term capacity building may be applied

to individuals who develop their skills and knowledge so that they can increase their capacity for self-determination. In the community clinic example, the project would also build the information-seeking skills of individual staff members who, in turn, would improve their effectiveness in meeting the needs of patients (as well as their own and their family members' needs).

Effective community-based outreach involves a partnership or collaboration among several groups or organizations with complementary assets and resources to contribute toward the project. For instance, if a health science library partnered with a community-based organization on an outreach project, the library's experienced staff could bring subject knowledge and teaching expertise to health information services or classes that the organization provides to its members. Therefore, the first step in conducting health information outreach is finding potential partners.