Step One	**Find Partners for Health Information Outreach**

Once you have an idea for a health information outreach project, the first step is to find other organizations, groups, or libraries with missions that would support and be supported by the project. There are two types of events that can provide excellent networking opportunities to organizations or individuals interested in health information. First, many communities have health coalitions or networks of health care agencies. Many meet regularly and include different types of health professionals who might be interested in your project. Second, community health fairs also bring potential partners together in one location. You may meet a partner in a booth near your own. A third strategy is to look for public health campaigns or initiatives in your area that could benefit from a health information component.

Potential for collaboration is highest among organizations that agree upon a common community need, so seek out organizations and people who share your belief that access to high-quality health information is needed in your target community. Appendix 1 provides more examples of networking opportunities.

As you speak to organizations' members, make sure you understand their definition of the word "partnership." "Partnership" can connote different levels of involvement and you are looking for organizations that are in a position to commit the required resources — such as staff, volunteers, money, time — to the project. If the organization is not ready, nothing will happen.

Keep your antennae up for an organization's ability to articulate its members' needs and its willingness to strategize about ways to

meet those needs. Look for organizations that will participate in planning a project and its evaluation. If in the future you move forward with an outreach project, develop a mutual agreement with your partners about roles and responsibilities and write it down.

All partners should revisit their expectations periodically. If things are not working well, find out why and make adjustments. This is one part of project evaluation. We provide more details about project evaluation in booklet 2 of this series, "Including Evaluation in Outreach Project Planning." [3]

As you are networking with potential partner organizations, become familiar with their communities. Demographic information such as ethnicity and race, gender, language, occupation, level of education and income, population density, age, and disability will help you with your early project planning and decision making. This information will also be particularly important if you plan to apply for funding. Funding agencies will be more likely to support your project if you can show that your outreach will benefit vulnerable or medically underserved populations.

Your partner organizations or libraries may have statistics about the populations they serve. You also can learn about a location's demographics using the US Census Bureau's American FactFinder website at http://factfinder.census.gov. Here, you can research features of regions at many geographic levels (such as state, county, or zip code). You may also find a lot of useful health information at your state or county health agency such as rates of certain health conditions in various geographic areas.