

**6 STEPS TO**  
**ACTIONABLE**  
**CHANGE**  
**FOR RURAL HEALTH**

**For rural healthcare organizations and rural communities**, change may feel like the only constant right now. And *deciding to make a change is one thing, but ensuring that change and strategic decisions produce results is another thing altogether.*

This workbook is a companion to our webinar and will walk you through the **6 Steps to Actionable Change for Rural Health**. This framework is designed to help you and your board or leadership talk through the tough conversations and foundational questions and information you need to ensure your plan can be implemented in a way that is **aligned internally** and **can be clearly communicated and implemented externally**.

We hope this workbook is a help in these stressful times of conversation and change. If we can support you or answer any questions, please reach out.

Cheering for you in these chaotic times,

Lonnie, Michael and Sally  
Rural Health Strategies



# 6 STEPS TO ACTIONABLE CHANGE



# STEP 1: SETTING YOUR CHANGE VISION

**Ask yourself (and your board or leadership) these questions:**

- What is our purpose and vision? It's vital you start change conversations with this foundation - every.single.time.
- What do we know about the situation and our existing services, advantages, challenges, etc.?
- What do we want to look like, be, offer, provide on the other side of this change?
- What does our successful transition look like? Be specific and write out what success you need to achieve to have "done well".
- What goals are essential to meet? What specifically must we protect?
- What are our "owned service attributes" that we must continue?
- How do we want to be known after this storm?

# STEP 2: EVALUATING THE IMPACT

**Ask yourself (and your board or leadership) these questions about the change you are facing. This section is really important to identify the full local, geopolitical, competitive and internal challenges and opportunities. It will help you “find” ways to move.**

- What is our current reality? Cashflow? Budget? Volume?
- What do we know for sure is changing?
- What will be directly impacted? Indirectly? List them all.
- What is a “maybe” or “possibility”? What scenarios do we need to plan for in the event of “versions” of impact (partial cut vs. full, etc.).
- What is profitable now? Not profitable?
- What is moving or growing too slow?
- What areas are too full?
- Where are there gaps?
- What services or customers are we losing to competitors?
- What is the timeline for changes?
- How much time do we have?
- What are our risks? Challenges? Concerns?

# STEP 3: ENGAGING YOUR STAKEHOLDERS

**Ask yourself (and your board or leadership) these questions about all of the audiences you need to address when implementing these changes. Don't skip this part, it will be vital to your adoption, buy-in and successful implementation of the change you are considering. It will also help you prioritize your communications.**

- What do your staff, board, volunteers, supporters, patients think? How are they feeling? What are they concerned about? If you don't know, get out and visit them, read comments on news threads, ask your front line staff, listen in your neighborhood, watch on social media.
- Who else needs to know or might have a vested interest in your approach? Think broadly - from elected officials to organizations that will be impacted downstream to changes you make.
- Listen to their concerns, questions, thoughts, and ideas carefully. Again, if you don't know, go find out. Don't skip this question!
- Get their early support for thoughts, timelines, and changes as you move forward...or at least buy in to connect again (by zoom, in person, in a community meeting, etc.).
- This is not a one and done - you must commit to ongoing connections with your stakeholders with regular checkpoints. YOU control the story. This is especially relevant with employees and staff, but also applies to the broader community.

# STEP 4: CREATING THE CHANGE PLAN

**Ask yourself (and your board or leadership) these questions about the changes you are considering. Carefully write out all of the details you can about what you need, the timeline, etc.**

- Identify the market or service changes, resource adjustments, or shifts you need to make.
- Outline a timeline based on each scenario - who will implement it? who will it impact? When will you implement it? Where will these changes take place? Why are you making these changes?
- Identify the individuals that will be impacted from closest to furthest out for each scenario.
- Identify the near term, mid-term, and long term impacts these changes will have and the timeline for addressing each.
- Identify the training and support that will be needed to implement any of these changes for your internal teams, staff, board and supporters.
- What needs to stop? Stay the same? Change when we roll out these changes?
- What else should you consider?

# STEP 5: BUILDING THE COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

**Ask yourself (and your board or leadership) these questions about all of the audiences you need to address when implementing these changes and driving sustainable change.**

- What will each scenario mean in terms of communication for each stakeholder group? Use the worksheet on page 10 for each scenario and map out your stakeholder communications for each possible change plan.
- What timeline and in what priority order will you communicate?
- How are you leading the story and conversation? Don't allow a vacuum.
- What channels, frequency, format, what spokespersons, toolkits, talking points, etc.? In person, written, email, mail, media/PR, etc?
- What vendors do you need to have at the ready to disseminate your message quickly?
- What internal alignment or structure do you need to communicate to weather this plan?



# STEP 6: MONITORING & EVALUATING RESULTS

**Ask yourself (and your board or leadership) these questions about how your roll out or change implementations are going. If you have hired a vendor to assist you, insist they provide you regular reporting on how the project is going.**

- How are changes working? Is it doing what you thought it would? Get specific data related to your “how do you know it worked” section in Step 1. If you are looking for more referrals, are you getting more referrals?
- What is better than you were expecting?
- What is worse than you were expecting?
- How are your KPIs or OCRs doing? Are they on track and moving in the right direction?
- Do you see any trends or alignments that might help accelerate the growth?
- Do you need to scale back or change your approach? What are you hearing or noticing among key stakeholders or staff?
- Report and track....start again at step 2 if you need to.
- Update staff & stakeholders regularly. They want and need to know how it is going. Don't hide the results - good or bad, it's your story to own and drive the message in a way that you need and want it to go.

# SCENARIO PLANNING

SCENARIO NAME

Stakeholder Group	Talking Point	Talking Point	Talking Point

# SCENARIO PLANNING

SCENARIO NAME

Addition of Extended Care Rehab Unit

Stakeholder Group	Talking Point	Talking Point	Talking Point
Acute Patients Ready for discharge, but not ready for home	Not ready for home? There are options close to home.	You have a choice. Expert care by your home town doctors.	Better care, better staffing ratios. Get home quicker
Referring providers at ASC, Inpatient Units nearby, LTC, Family Physicians/ Gerontology			
Caregivers, adult children of older adults			
Case managers at Inpatient Units, nearby hospitals			
Case managers at payors, MCOs			
Staff and Internal team			



Sally Mildren, CEO and Chief Strategist of ClarityPX and Boss Lady Consulting, has more than 20 years experience in healthcare marketing, communications, PR, and customer experience, from small hospitals to systems to a Medicaid MCO. Her agencies serve nonprofits, rural health, and community healthcare organizations.



Lonnie Hirsch, Founder and CEO of Forefront Healthcare Consulting, is one of the premier healthcare business growth strategists in the U.S. Lonnie's expertise and experience includes healthcare marketing, business development and sales. He helps businesses from startups to long-established companies develop and implement strategies to achieve their growth and success goals.



Michael Marchand, Principal at Health Literacy Ventures helps public and private sector organizations address social, community, and organizational needs with an eye toward creating and redesigning business engagement. Current clients seek business solutions to today's healthcare challenges at the local, state, and federal levels.

Formerly of the OIC and Health Benefit Exchange in Washington, Michael is well attuned and engaged at the intersection of policy and strategy.

## NEED MORE INSIGHT & SUPPORT?

Ask us about our Assessment Package designed to objectively evaluate your current market position, goals, mission, revenue and needs and then develop a customized strategy that helps you achieve your goals.

We can then teach your team how to implement it or support implementation elements as well.

**Connect for a free consultation to discuss your next steps.**