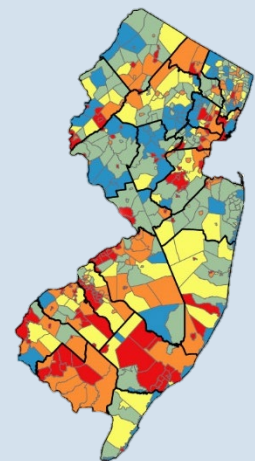# Healthy Community Planning Awareness Campaign Promotes Use of Municipal-Level Data

What was the problem/situation?

Over several years, multiple NJ local and county health departments had told New Jersey Environmental Public Health Tracking (NJ Tracking) project staff and partners that they wanted access to health and environmental data at the municipal level. In addition, health departments stated they did not want to learn a complex new tool, but instead wanted easy-to-use reports that provide data that would help make their communities healthier.

How was NJ Tracking involved?

NJ Tracking worked with partners across the Departments of Health (NJDOH) and Environmental Protection (NJDEP) to create a joint NJDOH/NJDEP Healthy Community Planning – NJ website (HCP-NJ), which initially launched in June 2022. The website provides New Jersey communities with municipal-level environmental health indicators in 564 individual summaries, reports, and map books, and provides actionable improvement activities for each of the 30+ indicators.

What actions were taken to create awareness and promote utilization of this new online resource?

After the launch of the HCP-NJ website, NJDOH and NJDEP undertook many outreach activities, including: a press release; posting information about HCP-NJ on the main NJDOH and NJDEP landing pages; posting about HCP-NJ on NJDOH and NJDEP social media; e-mailing announcements to multiple NJDOH listservs; providing short articles about HCP-NJ in multiple NJDOH and NJDEP newsletters; providing a one-hour, online training that offered Continuing Education Units for local and county health

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department staff; and demonstrating HCP-NJ at two statewide conferences for NJ environmental health staff and municipal officials. An informal survey of environmental health staff attending the NJ Environmental Health Association annual conference during March 2023, however, found that only four out of 90 attendees reported they had familiarity with the HCP-NJ website.

In response to this low rate of awareness, beginning in April 2023, NJ Tracking staff began an expanded outreach campaign with the goal of increasing awareness and utilization of HCP-NJ data and resources by NJ's county, regional, and local health departments. NJ Tracking staff briefly demonstrated HCP during a monthly NJDOH call with 170 local and county health departments and requested jurisdictions to volunteer for individual HCP demonstrations.

The expanded outreach resulted in more than 15 local, regional, and county health departments signing up for one-hour HCP-NJ demonstrations. As of July 2023, NJ Tracking staff have conducted individual HCP-NJ demonstrations with nine counties, one municipality, three regional health organizations, and one county-wide health coalition.

Following the expanded outreach presentations, multiple jurisdictions have posted links to their community's HCP-NJ reports on their websites. One municipality posted their complete report, and multiple jurisdictions reported they are using HCP-NJ data in grant applications. Essex County Health Department requested an additional HCP-NJ presentation for their countywide Health Coalition. More than 30 people attended, including representatives of two hospitals; multiple diverse health advocacy organizations; local health officers; and local/county health department staff and consultants currently creating Community Health Assessments, Community Health Needs Assessments, and Community Health Improvement Plans. NJ Tracking has been informed that HCP-NJ data and resources are being used for these plans. Additional HCP-NJ presentations continue to be requested and scheduled.