WHEN PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAMS END

BACKGROUND
Mis-implementation in public health practice refers to ending effective programs and interventions that should continue, or continuing ineffective programs that should end. Public health resources are limited; therefore better understanding the reasons for mis-implementation can help practitioners use resources wisely.

A better understanding of mis-implementation in public health may provide important information for decision makers.

METHODS & RESULTS
Data came from a cross-sectional study. The total sample size included 944 professionals from the public health workforce, including state and local health department staff and other partnering agencies. Three items were used to assess mis-implementation:

1. When you think about public health programs that have ended, what are the most common reasons for programs ending?
2. In your opinion, how often do programs end that should not have ended?
3. In your opinion, how often do programs continue that should have ended?

Figure 1. Top reasons for program endings (N=944)

Grant funding ended for program (85%)
Funding was diverted to other program (61%)
Support from policymakers changed (39%)

Top reasons (above) were the same across agencies. Additional reasons included program champions leaving, programs being adopted by other agencies, and programs not being evaluated.

Figure 2. Perceptions of mis-implementation (N=944)

Programs end that should have continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>State Health Department Staff</th>
<th>Local Health Department Staff</th>
<th>Staff from Partnering Agencies</th>
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<tbody>
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Figure 2. Perceptions of mis-implementation (N=944)

Programs continue that should have ended

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<tbody>
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<td>Grant funding ended for program</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>29%</td>
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KEY FINDINGS
- A higher percentage of programs end that should be continued than of those continue that should end.
- Many of the reasons for mis-implementation relate to funding.
- Program evaluation and communication of program effectiveness to policymakers are important.

RECOMMENDATIONS
1. Utilize and adapt sustainability tools to address the various scenarios related to mis-implementation. Sustainability tool: https://sustaintool.org/assess
2. Utilize evaluation tools and methods to better understand what programs are effective versus programs that are not achieving intended results.
3. Communicate with local and state policymakers on program effectiveness and partner with politicians, media and organizations for program implementation.

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