

Costs and Benefits

The *Exploring Accreditation Project* research, including a survey of 10 local health units undergoing accreditation found the following **costs** associated with accreditation:

- Staff time spent preparing for accreditation, completing the agency self-assessment instrument, preparing for the site visit, coordinating the site visit, and on tasks after the site visit
- Fees to the accreditation body

The *Exploring Accreditation Project* research, and subsequent studies, has found the following **benefits** from accreditation in public health:

- Improves service delivery and quality, including:
 - Improved environmental health services
 - Improved emergency preparedness
 - Improved ability to address health inequities
- Improves administrative policies and processes
- Establishes benchmark for consistent, evidence-based “excellence” in service delivery across communities
- Creates a platform for further quality improvement (QI) projects and for implementing innovations
- Helps agencies understand their own capacity
- Documents accountability to the public and policy makers; helps justify investments in public health
- Supports culture of ongoing agency self-study and improvement
- Improves staff morale, team building, awareness of other team’s activities
- Promotes staff understanding of how their job contributes to the agency’s mission
- Is an effective mechanism for sharing information and resources within the sector
- Promotes regionalization across the public health jurisdictions
- Increases visibility, reduces ambiguity, improves community understanding and support of public health
- Highlights health department strengths and areas for improvement (i.e., motivates and values staff, engages Boards of Health)
- Facilitates organizational goal-setting
- Peer surveyors can apply learnings in home agency
- Improves clarity and relationship between local public health and provincial public health personnel

A notable study was that of 48 accredited health units in North Carolina, which reported the following benefits as a result of accreditation: Updated policies (indicated by 94%), acted on suggestions for QI (50%), conducted a QI project (67%). They also reported improved relationships as a result of accreditation with community partners (32%), local hospitals (23%) and their Board of Health (56%).

Reference Material

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