

# Recommendations Toward Equitable Long-term Recovery and Resilience for Social, Behavioral, and Community Health

## FEDERAL PLAN DEVELOPMENT—MID-COURSE UPDATE

04/16/21

### Executive Summary

#### Context

In spring 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic rapidly revealed the effects of unchecked health disparities and fragile systems. Immediately compounding the infectious disease crisis, the overlapping economic, educational, behavioral health, and substance use crises shifted communities and individuals into deeper struggling and suffering – defining the syndemic. The resulting inequitable impact and steep declines in mental health and well-being made clear that returning to pre-pandemic “normal” would be unacceptable.

In response, an objective was added to the COVID-19 Federal Incident Response Plan to “Develop a federal plan for the long-term recovery and resilience (LTRR) of social, behavioral, and community health.” Currently, more than 100 people from 25 agencies actively participate in the Interagency Workgroup developing the plan.

The mid-course update presents progress and initial recommendations. The emerging plan aligns with at least a dozen recent Executive Orders,<sup>1</sup> and the momentum of this effort can be leveraged in service of bold collective action to pursue the elimination of disparities and increase equitable resilience.

#### Approach

##### Guiding Framework

The [vital conditions for health and well-being](#) serve as the framework for the federal plan. They identify the properties we all depend on to reach our full potential, organized into seven categories. The vital condition framework presents an *actionable approach to improving the social determinants of health and addressing inequities.*

Importantly, this framework is oriented around *community-driven action* - rather than being organized by federal government structures - and it aligns with the focus on well-being found in Healthy People 2030 and other federal and non-governmental initiatives. It highlights belonging and civic muscle as critical to building capacity for communities to design self-driven, tailored solutions to local needs and to foster an equitable, thriving future.

##### Joint Effort

Recognizing the need for synchronous action from actors of outside federal government and to amplify impact, a complementary effort was initiated to create a companion Non-Governmental Organization plan. The [NGO](#)

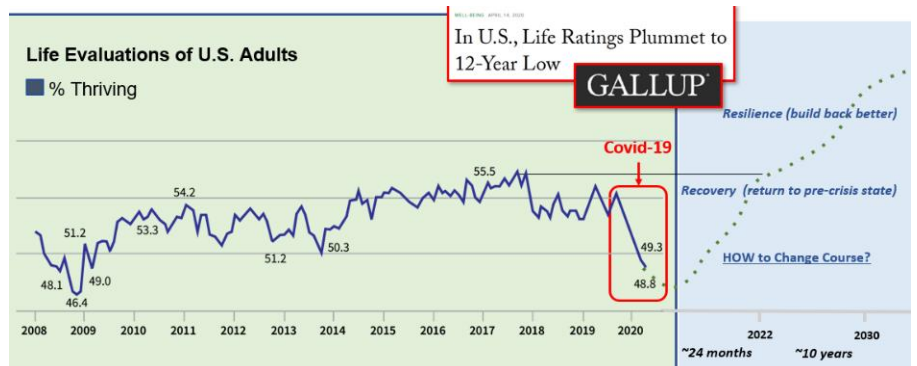


Figure 1 Source: Gallup <http://news.gallup.com/poll/308276/life-ratings-plummet-year-low.aspx>

<sup>1</sup>At least 12 Executive Orders and Memorandums, including: [Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#), EO 13985, January 20, 2021; [Ensuring an Equitable Pandemic Response and Recovery](#), EO 13995, January 21, 2021; [Redressing Our Nation's and the Federal Government's History of Discriminatory Housing Practices and Policies](#), Memorandum, January 26, 2021; [Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad](#), EO 14008, January 27, 2021

[Springboard](#) was devised with contributions from hundreds of diverse community organizations, leaders, and voices<sup>2</sup>. Released in July 2020, the Springboard serves as an informal landscape analysis and companion vision for the federal plan; its reach as a guiding vision continues to grow as communities adopt it as their coalition planning framework.

## Federal Plan

Currently, more than 25 federal agencies actively participate in the Interagency Workgroup developing the LTRR plan. The plan purpose is to **align federal actions**, outline **strategies to improve vital conditions**, support **community and individual recovery** from the impacts of COVID-19, and **positively impact health and well-being** over the next ten years and beyond. The strategies aim to identify interdependencies, increase coordination, and remove barriers to foster long-term contributions toward community resilience. The initial recommendations identify specific federal actions that can inform the strategies.



Figure 2: The Interagency Workgroup model for achieving thriving and well-being for all people in all places.

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## Recommendations

To date, planning efforts have identified 90 pre-decisional recommendations. Forty-five Interagency Workgroup members from 23 agencies reviewed and contributed. Recommendations will be further refined based on leadership feedback.

The recommendations align with three emerging themes related to reducing obstacles to community-driven efforts:

1. **Empower** communities to engage in equitable, self-driven discussions of needs and solutions;
2. **Support** communities in assessing their federal support portfolio and accessing additional opportunities; and
3. **Refine** existing and develop new activities to remove barriers and address gaps in federal support to promote thriving for all.

Nine cross-cutting recommendations reflect actions that transcend the vital conditions and have the potential to transform alignment of federal assets to equitably foster well-being. Some of these actions can begin immediately within current agency authority and flexibility<sup>3</sup>.

Eighty-one recommendations identify specific actions to strengthen each vital condition. A small group of recommendations—referred to as “multi-solvers”—has the potential to positively impact more than one vital condition. We have identified six “multi-solver” themes that appear in multiple recommendations. These may represent areas to prioritize coordinated implementation.

## Building Momentum

By completing and implementing the plan, *we grasp this opportunity to fundamentally change how the federal government responds to the needs of communities and individuals—especially those historically left behind*. It will require decisive leadership to compel coordination across agencies in service of policies and programs that strengthen what works well and re-engineer what no longer serves. The infrastructure and momentum of this planning effort are poised to support the aim of an equitable future.

With leadership support, we can align federal investments to foster community resilience, remove systemic barriers to well-being, and provide *a vision of hope for a future with all people and places thriving, no exceptions*.

<sup>2</sup> Funded by CDC Foundation; facilitated by Well Being Trust, Community Initiatives Network, and ReThink Health.

<sup>3</sup> It is acknowledged that current authority and flexibility may vary by agency.