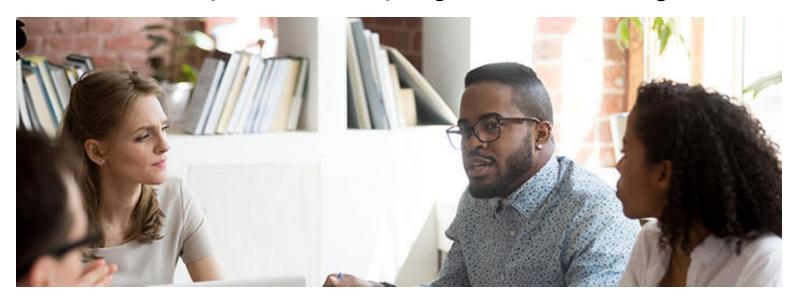# State Health Care Department Gains Key Insights to Enhance Offerings

The department sought to ensure that its future strategies and internal capabilities sufficiently matched and supported its key stakeholders, including hospitals, health plans and other public and private entities. Rather than making any assumptions about its stakeholder relationships, the department's leaders instead sought to directly ask key stakeholders for their input.

Problem to Solve

A decades-old state health care department whose work impacts all state residents had kept a markedly low profile. That's because much of this department's primary work, including ensuring that state hospital facilities are safe, providing financial assistance to health care institutions and collecting and publishing health care data, isn't typically directly used by the general public. Yet this department's input is vital to health care systems statewide as they plan their business goals and serve patient needs.

Going forward, the department sought to ensure that its future strategies and internal capabilities sufficiently matched and supported its key stakeholders, including hospitals, health plans and other public and private entities. Rather than making any assumptions about its stakeholder relationships, the department's leaders instead sought to directly ask key stakeholders for their input. However, the department lacked the bandwidth to successfully fulfill such an effort within a reasonable time frame.

To ensure that the department could most efficiently and effectively gather, analyze and follow up on stakeholder

input, the organization engaged Freed Associates (Freed) to coordinate and support this effort. Freed was chosen in part for the firm's long-time work and familiarity with many of this department's key stakeholders, as well as Freed's recognized data analytics experience.

Strategy and Tactics

Based on this stakeholder input-gathering initiative, the department sought Freed's assistance to fulfill five principal objectives:

1. Understand the department's value to stakeholders
2. Understand stakeholders' future needs for the department's health care data, information and products
3. Work with the department's leadership to identify the top trends to initiate implementation planning
4. Partner with department leadership and subject matter experts to respond to feedback
5. Develop a roadmap and detailed implementation plan to incorporate stakeholders' future needs

Before Freed could fulfill any of these objectives, however, it first needed to begin gathering input from the department's key stakeholders. Working with department personnel, Freed compiled a list of more than 40 organizations representing a wide and diverse swath of state health care, including hospitals, health plans and multiple public and private organizations. Freed leveraged its relationships with many of these clients to support connecting with their key leaders. After connecting with each of these organizations, Freed conducted interviews with more than 170 individual stakeholders.

Tellingly, many of the stakeholders whom Freed interviewed had little to no knowledge of the breadth and depth of the department's offerings. Thus, Freed also created outreach presentations and materials tailored to each stakeholder, containing information on department data, information and products.

From the interviews, Freed compiled and analyzed key themes and trends across the stakeholders. Initially, this information was vital for the construction of an outreach and engagement playbook about the department, to support additional stakeholder interviews in the near-term. Longer-term, this analysis was useful for creating an initial customer relationship management tool, which department personnel could use to support their future outreach and engagement. Correspondingly, Freed coached relevant department staff on the most appropriate future outreach and engagement strategies and tactics.

To address stakeholder input and questions, Freed hosted and conducted Kaizen workshops with department staff to identify and prioritize process improvements the organization needed to make to properly address stakeholders' data quality and management needs. This work corresponded with a detailed implementation plan, which Freed developed, enabling the department to pilot and operationalize data quality and process improvements. A high-level roadmap, addressing stakeholders' overall needs, as well as coaching of department

staff around ongoing process improvements, complemented these efforts.

Results and Conclusion

From this initiative, the department's leaders and staff members gained a much clearer and more accurate view of their stakeholders' needs and interests across the entire state. For example, relevant to the department's program on health care payments data, this effort provided invaluable feedback from health plans across the state on ways to improve this program and make it more relevant.