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# Collaborative on Health and the Environment Strategic Plan 2017-2022

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## Executive Summary

*“If countries do not take actions to make environments where people live and work healthy, millions will continue to become ill and die too young.”*

*Dr. Margaret Chan,  
WHO Director-  
General*

Established as a program of Commonweal in 2002, the Collaborative on Health and the Environment (CHE) is dedicated to educating people on the ways in which the environment impacts human health and well-being. To foster health in our families, communities, and society, we have made evidence-based science, environmental health education, and primary prevention the foundation of CHE’s work.

Where and how we live, eat, work, play, and socialize profoundly influence our health. Beginning in the womb and continuing throughout life, environmental factors are strong determinants of health and well-being. A century of changes in our air, water, soil, built environments, agricultural methods, and climate is fueling dramatic increases in diseases and conditions such as cancer, developmental disabilities, and autoimmune disorders. Combined with a near doubling of the over-65 population in the next few decades, this trajectory threatens to overwhelm our healthcare system and social resources, and bring widespread economic and social instability.

There is a large gap between the current level of public knowledge and understanding of environmental health and the level that is needed to catalyze widespread social change. Quality educational forums and resources are particularly critical at this time because current political forces are threatening to undermine decades of public health and environmental protections.

CHE seeks to fill the gaps in the existing outreach efforts by the environmental health community. If more people understand the links between environmental risks and their health, then the groundswell of demand for cleaner air and water, healthier foods, safer products, and healthier homes, schools and workplaces would be immeasurably strengthened.

CHE's role in this context is to continue to serve as a trusted evidence-based resource and forum for sharing emerging environmental health science in easily accessible and engaging formats. We will leverage our network to reach a broader audience with the environmental health message. We will build upon the existing resources and forums we provide to connect CHE with key public stakeholders so that our vibrant learning community continues to grow.

We believe that through our programs and the bringing together of diverse partners, we can strengthen the environmental health community's overall capacity for science communication and social change.

### Where we have been

CHE was catalyzed at a meeting at the San Francisco Medical Society in 2002, co-sponsored by Commonwealth. From the outset, CHE has fostered a network of health-affected groups and others interested in environmental contributors to health conditions. We believe that the most effective actions to improve individual and public health are often integrative and require collaborating with different sectors and those with diverse expertise. We therefore built a network of people who traditionally did not work together, but were concerned about environmental health, particularly toxics, and committed to improving human health across the lifespan. Currently, 5,000 individuals and organizations are CHE members, including scientists, health professionals, government agencies, health and environmental justice advocates, and other concerned citizens from over 90 countries and in all 50 US states.

Over the past 15 years, CHE has built a variety of educational forums to bring together this cross-section of stakeholders, including teleconferences with cutting-edge researchers, 20 topical ScienceServes for sharing and discussing the latest research, conferences and workshops, and a content-rich website. We have developed publications and products, such as our award-winning multimedia

eBook, [A Story of Health](#), as well as invested in providing practicums and internships for college and graduate level students.

### Where we are going

Under new leadership, CHE will build on the network we've established in environmental health and continue to cultivate a learning based community through our webinar series (formally teleconferences), ScienceServes, and ongoing communication to the CHE community. We will also embark on new programs that expand our community by educating a broader audience about the connections between the environment and human health.

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*Our hope is that by the end of five years, CHE will be known as a thought leader and convening body in the environmental health field, people will turn to us to navigate environmental health resources and find opportunities for individual and collective action, and we will actively collaborate with a network of organizations within environmental health and beyond to improve human health.*

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CHE plans on launching a series of new programs and campaigns over the next five years that solidify CHE's position as a respected authority, bridging the expansive field, and engaging new audiences in the environmental health conversation. These programs include:

- Building a global portal of environmental health organizations and resources that provides a comprehensive gateway for consumers, policy makers, media, and people working in the field to access knowledge and inspire action.
- Creating a new consumer campaign to reach new parents and millennials about environmental health that gives them tools to reduce harmful exposures in their personal lives, and demand and create change on a local, state, and national level.
- Creating an ongoing event series that provides a venue for environmental health leaders to convene, share ideas, and commit to actions that address the critical environmental health issues facing our world.

By expanding our work, we will jumpstart and change the public dialogue on environmental health.

The new programs that CHE develops will include an overhaul of our marketing and social media strategy to reach new audiences, most notably millennials. We are focusing on millennials because many of them are having children or are preparing to enter this phase of their lives where they are rethinking their environment, their consumption, and the impact of their purchasing. Millennials are culturally distinct and many belong to values-led, non-traditional networks that are highly concerned about individual and societal transformation. Tapping into this culture and educating this audience could propel environmental health to the next level.

Reaching new audiences also creates the potential for broader impacts. Millennials have upwards of \$200 billion in annual buying power and are trendsetters across all industries from fashion to food. Bringing millennials into the environmental health conversation is crucial to driving demand for cleaner products and policy changes at the local, state, and national levels. Additionally, millennials are at the forefront of innovation in many sectors and by reaching them, we hope to inspire individuals to incorporate environmental health principles and prevention not only into their personal lives but also into their careers.

Engaging new audiences also provides opportunities to connect with new funders who value the role that CHE is playing to improve public health. Millennials and new parents who are value-led and want to see their charitable gifts have impact could be a critical new pool of individual donors. These new programs and audience engagement strategies could also open the organization up to more secure, ongoing funding from larger donors.

As CHE celebrates its 16<sup>th</sup> year, we are excited to build on our fundamental commitment to promote human and ecological health based on the best available science. We will do this by sharing knowledge about environmental risks beyond the current CHE network to engage new audiences who have powerful influence among their peers. Broad public engagement has tremendous power to influence the media, policy, and industry.

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## Mission, Vision, and Values

The Collaborative on Health and the Environment (CHE) cultivates a learning community based on the latest, evidence-based science to share knowledge and resources, and improve individual and collective health.

CHE is focused on how environmental risks can impact human health. By informing and connecting affected and interested groups, CHE hopes to build a groundswell of demand for prevention-focused behaviors and policies, as well as economic and legal structures that protect public health.

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*CHE envisions a world where all people live free from environmental risks that harm human health.*

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At CHE, we strongly believe in the following values:

- Evidence-based science
- Prevention-oriented behaviors and policies
- The power of education
- Civility in discourse
- Diversity of engagement
- The power of community
- Excellence in execution
- Hope for what's possible
- Cutting edge innovation
- Transparent information and governance

# Strategic Goals





**Cultivate a vibrant, engaged learning community of scientists, health workers, policy makers, and concerned individuals.**

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- Continue to host the ongoing webinar series featuring prominent thought leaders that highlights the impact of the current scientific and political climate on environmental health.
- Grow the webinar series to engage new speakers and presenters (i.e. the Pioneers Under 40 series).
- Grow the webinar audience and develop more ways for people to engage with the webinar series, including expanding presentation formats (YouTube, podcast, etc.)
- Continue to support topic-based ScienceServes, though streamline communication channels by consolidating the ScienceServes to allow for broader participation in the informed conversations about environmental links to a range of diseases and disabilities.
- Provide environmental health information, news, and announcements, through regular topic-related newsfeeds that are emailed to members as well as posted to the CHE website. Explore partnerships with other organizations to reduce staff time on generating content.
- Host ongoing events in the Bay Area and beyond that bring together thought leaders in environmental science with policy makers, the media, advocates, and concerned citizens to discuss pertinent topics.

**Restructure CHE communication platforms to increase reach, improve engagement, and inspire individual and collective action.**

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- Streamline CHE's technologies and tools, including internal communication, project management services, CRM, and social media management platforms to increase efficiency and reduce staff time managing manual administrative tasks.
- Establish a system for communicating with key audiences across multiple platforms including social media, email marketing, website, and more, identifying rules for what content is served where, and when.
- Create an ongoing editorial schedule for each communication platform (i.e. weekly newsfeed emails and a monthly message from the program director) to establish regular engagement with members and followers.

### 3

- Continue to build out CHE’s website and refine the site and content to optimize for increased web traffic, time on site, and user experience.
- Engage in user testing to make sure the website is easy to navigate and use, and address any issues that may arise.
- Increase the number of ways individuals can engage with CHE on an ongoing basis (i.e. subscribe to email updates, social media, webinars, ScienceServes, events, utilize the global portal, share information easily with friends/followers by email and social media, action alerts, etc.)
- Redefine what being a “member” of the CHE community means (follower, member, partner, etc.) and create levels of engagement for each role.
- Increase followers on Facebook and Twitter and launch new social media platforms to reach younger constituencies (LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, etc).

#### **Renew CHE’s position as a thought leader and authority on environmental health, science, and policy.**

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- Increase visibility of the organization in the communities we reach through webinars, ScienceServes, email marketing, social media, and events.
- Amplify the organization's brand and messaging when communicating across these platforms.
- Continue to network within the environmental health community to build and grow relationships.
- Establish a Science Advisory Committee to review and vet scientific and educational content.
- Establish a new Advisory Board that brings together a mix of thought leaders in the environmental health field with those in business/tech, social entrepreneurship, and marketing/media to establish cross-sector partnerships and inspire creative solutions to critical environmental health problems, and create a new vision for what is possible.

### 4

#### **Launch strategic development process to identify new investors and establish a secure, multi-year funding plan.**

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- Nurture ongoing relationships with existing environmental health donors.

# 5

- Research and connect with potential funders to understand their priorities, and find long-term funding relationships with satisfy mutual goals and support our long-term growth.
- Research and secure opportunities for funding partnerships with other institutions and organizations.
- Explore new and creative ways to cultivate individual donors.

## Continue A Story of Health partnership.

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- Publish the next installment of A Story of Health on reproductive health due out in fall 2017.
- Explore opportunities to extend the reach of A Story of Health to a less technical audience, which could include a stand-alone website with abridged versions and other accompanying materials that translate the content of the eBooks in a more accessible manner.

## 2018

# 6

## Build a global portal of environmental health organizations and resources to serve as a comprehensive gateway for consumers, policy makers, media, and people working in the field to access knowledge and inspire action.

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- Research and collaborate with organizations across the environmental health field to create a comprehensive list of resources from organizations in a variety of fields to be included in the portal.
- Work with a web design and development team to build the global portal in segmented phases that is searchable by consumer behavior, disease state, environmental risk, and geography.
- Develop a comprehensive promotion plan to market the portal across platforms (web, social media, events, etc.) and leverage networks of “partnered” organizations included in the portal.
- Establish the origin of communication with CHE’s core community within the portal and create new channels to share topic-related content with interested/affected groups.

- Explore opportunities to build a mobile app-version of the portal that enables users to customize their portal dashboard and pin preferred resources/tools for easy access and reference.

## 2019/2020

### 7

**Become a go-to resource for individuals affected by/interested in preventing and improving the health of individuals with specific disease states and disabilities.**

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- Including asthma, autoimmune disorders, cancer, cardiovascular disease, children's health, diabetes/obesity, neurodegenerative diseases, neurodevelopmental diseases, reproductive health, and personal health and wellness.
- Leverage the global portal of environmental health organizations and ensure it is searchable by specific disease states/disabilities.
- Increase outreach to groups researching and supporting these disease states/disabilities to strengthen relationships and build awareness and use of the global portal.
- Educate affected and interested individuals impacted by these disease states/disabilities about the connections between their health and the environment and how prevention-focused behaviors and policies can improve their health.
- Connect these groups to the global portal for more information and proposed action.

### 8

**Create a new consumer campaign to reach new parents and millennials about environmental health that gives them tools to reduce harmful exposures in their personal lives and demand and create change on a local, state, and national level.**

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- Develop a new consumer brand and website that hosts interactive content, videos, and tools that educate consumers and provide opportunities for action.
- Repackage existing CHE content about toxins, pollutants, diseases, etc., and present it in modern, consumer-oriented formats.
- Direct consumers to the global portal to find more information on a specific topic (i.e. building materials, pesticides in food, or toxins in plastic toys).

- Create an ongoing video series for social media that personalizes environmental health for this target audience and directs people to the global portal for more information and action.

2021

9

Create an ongoing event series that provides a venue for leaders in environmental health, science, and policy to convene, share ideas, and commit to actions that address the critical issues facing our globe.

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- Underscore CHE's role as a convening body that brings together a cross-sector of environmental health leaders.
  - Host an annual meeting, as well as smaller topic-related meetings (by environmental risk or health concern) throughout the year, that address the timely issues within the community.
  - Leverage the organizations and partners included in the global portal and growing CHE community to engage together and move collective action forward.

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# Appendix A

## Definitions

CHE has adapted the World Health Organization (WHO) definition of environmental risks to health as “all the physical, chemical, and biological factors external to a person, and all related behaviors, but excluding those natural environments that cannot be reasonably modified.”<sup>1</sup>

Table 1. Summary of included environmental risks

Environmental Risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Pollution of air (including from second-hand tobacco smoke), water or soil with chemical or biological agents</li><li>● Noise, electromagnetic fields</li><li>● Occupational risks, including physical, chemical, biological and psychosocial risks, and working conditions</li><li>● Built environments, including housing, workplaces, land-use patterns, roads</li><li>● Agricultural methods</li><li>● Man-made climate and ecosystem change</li><li>● Behavior related to environmental factors, e.g. the availability of safe water for washing hands, physical activity fostered through improved urban design</li><li>● Exposure to toxic chemicals through consumer products</li></ul>

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<sup>1</sup> Prüss-Üstün, A. et al. (2016). *Preventing Disease through Healthy Environments: a global assessment of the burden of disease from environmental risks*. Geneva: World Health Organization.

Table 2. Summary of included health concerns that CHE will focus on

Individual and Collective Health Concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Asthma</li><li>● Autoimmune disorders</li><li>● Cancer</li><li>● Cardiovascular disease</li><li>● Children’s health</li><li>● Diabetes &amp; obesity</li><li>● Neurodegenerative diseases</li><li>● Neurodevelopmental diseases</li><li>● Reproductive health</li><li>● Personal health and wellness</li></ul>