Promoting the Power of Public Health

The Challenge
Achieving health goals requires leadership by public health officials, the support of the public, and the active engagement of partners representing a broad array of sectors. The work of education, housing, transportation, law enforcement, and other sectors is inextricably related to health. However, many public health professionals are not well trained, experienced or skilled at explaining the role of public health, why it matters, and how public health can be an effective partner with other sectors in achieving mutual goals. Without a language that can be understood by others, it is difficult for public health officials to guide conversations that might lead to stronger cross-sector partnerships, attract a strong and diverse workforce, or build more enduring support for public health goals.

The Project
To help the field of public health effectively communicate its value to potential partners, decision-makers and the public, the de Beaumont Foundation and the Aspen Institute’s Health, Medicine and Society Program are launching a new initiative, Promoting the Power of Public Health. This 3-year project is designed to:

• Improve the ability of public health officials to communicate the impact and value of their field to other sectors.
• Foster cross-sector partnerships and alliances; generate sustainable support for public health problem-solving approaches; and make public health an attractive career choice.

The Strategy
Cross-sector partnerships require: 1) effective messages, rooted in rigorous evidence, about how public health contributes to a shared agenda; 2) public health professionals trained in the communications skills necessary to deliver those messages; and 3) thought leaders from a multitude of sectors educated about the potential of public health to advance their own missions. Therefore, the project will:

• Create a “go-to” easily accessible web resource that compiles and synthesizes high-quality published research that documents the ways in which public health provides value to other sectors, teeing them up to become our champions.
• Partner with a high quality communications/media firm to Identify messages about public health that resonate within and across sectors.
• Develop a toolkit for public health officials that ties the evidence for public health’s contributions across sectors to what is learned from the project’s message research and testing.
• Conduct outreach and training to the public health community to ensure the vigorous and effective use of the project’s web resource and toolkit.