Draft HEZ Eligibility Criteria

Background

The following are proposed criteria for which geographic areas are eligible for designation as a Health Enterprise Zone. Selection and funding will then be based on the review of an application from an organization or organizations seeking to establish an HEZ in an eligible area.

The proposed criteria for HEZ eligibility below cast a wide net and allow many communities to apply to become an HEZ. It is expected that communities experiencing significant disparities, including significant racial and ethnic disparities in health will be well represented in the set of communities that meet these proposed eligibility criteria.

Casting a wide net will allow the State to receive a large number of innovative proposals from which the HEZs will be selected. The selection process will be the point at which more stringent criteria are used and communities have the opportunity to further demonstrate the existence of health disparities and poor health outcomes in their communities.

Under the proposed criteria submitted for public comment, it is envisioned that HEZs could be one or more zip codes that meet each of the four proposed criteria below. Based on these proposed criteria, the state is making available statewide maps that show the zip codes that would be eligible to apply.

Proposed Criteria

In choosing the proposed eligibility criteria, several indicators were rejected because there were too few events to produce meaningful, reliable data at a sub-jurisdictional level (ex. diabetes mortality, heart disease mortality, teen birth rates). Considering both availability of data and indicators that could best identify areas of need, the data team developed the following proposed HEZ eligibility criteria:

Proposed HEZ Eligibility Criteria	Rationale	Data Source
1. An HEZ must be a community, or a contiguous cluster of communities, defined by zip code boundaries (one or multiple zip codes)	The law requires that an HEZ be a contiguous geographic area. In addition, there needs to be a cohesive sense of place held by residents and community leaders, who will actively participate in the governance of the HEZ project. Zip codes were selected because of the data available to measure need and outcomes (ex. utilization rates).	MD Department of Planning zip code maps
2. An HEZ must have a resident population of at least 5,000 people	The HEZ population should be large enough to model community change for application statewide. An upper limit was not placed on the HEZ population size to allow applicants flexibility to determine what population size is appropriate for their selected interventions.	2010 Census, population by zip code tabulation areas

3. An HEZ must demonstrate economic disadvantage by having either:
    a) a Medicaid enrollment rate above the median value for all Maryland zip codes, or
    b) a WIC participation rate above the median value for all Maryland zip codes
An HEZ made up of multiple zip codes must meet this criterion in each zip code if the values are known.
	Medicaid enrollment data provide information on the number of low-income individuals in a community.
	
	WIC participation can be used to identify communities with a large number of low-income families and can capture high need populations that are ineligible for Medicaid.
		Medicaid enrollment data, Number of people enrolled per population, 2006-2010
		
		Maryland WIC Program, Number of people enrolled per population, 2006-2010

4. An HEZ must demonstrate poor health outcomes by having either:
    a) a life expectancy below the median value for all Maryland zip codes, or
    b) a percentage of low birth weight infants above the median value for all Maryland zip codes
An HEZ made up of multiple zip codes must meet this criterion in each zip code if the values are known.
	Life expectancy is a meaningful measure of how health and wellbeing in a community compare to other areas of the state. This metric is easy for the public to interpret and data are available by zip code.
	
	Low birth weight is associated with infant mortality, which is an excellent indicator of the overall health of a population.
		Maryland Vital Statistics, Life expectancy by zip code, 2006-2010
		
		Maryland Vital Statistics, Low birth weight infants, age-adjusted, 2006-2010

Plan to Make Data Available to Potential HEZ Applicants

- Using the data sources outlined above, indicate which zip codes fall within the eligibility criteria for resident population, Medicaid enrollment, WIC participation, life expectancy, low birth weight, and provide accompanying maps.

- Zip codes that have fewer than 5,000 residents are ineligible to apply alone and will be encouraged to partner with neighboring areas. These small zip codes have somewhat unstable life expectancy and low birth weight numbers and will therefore not be included in the data released. Data for grouped zip codes will be provided upon request. Although some zip codes may not have adequate data, they are still allowed to apply and eligible to be considered as part of an HEZ.

- Make the zip code map and the eligibility criteria tables available to the public by posting on the HEZ website.

- Provide technical assistance to potential applicants.

Questions for Public Input

Public comment will be accepted on the following questions from June 15 to July 20. All public comments and responses to these questions should be sent to hez@dhmh.state.md.us.

1. Should there be additional requirements for data at the zip code level?

2. Should any of the above criteria be removed from the list?

3. Should any additional criteria be added?

4. Should the economic and health outcome measurements be lowered from the median value as currently proposed?