ASTDD
ASSOCIATION OF STATE & TERRITORIAL DENTAL DIRECTORS
WHERE ORAL HEALTH LIVES

EMORY ROLLINS SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Program Evaluation and Quality Improvement Center
Emory Centers for Public Health Training and Technical Assistance

Investment Builds the Infrastructure for Better Oral Health

Findings from the 2026 *Shaping the Future of Oral Health Funding* Survey

In June 2026 ASTDD surveyed current and former governmental oral health staff and oral health partners about the impact of federal funding and priorities for future investment. Responses from 66 individuals representing 28 State and Territorial Oral Health Programs (S/TOHPs) point to a clear theme: **sustained federal investment is critical to building the infrastructure, workforce, data systems, partnerships, and programs needed to advance oral health.***

90% anticipate disruption or changes without future CDC funding.

87% preferred funding cycles of five years or longer.

84% rated ASTDD technical assistance support as very helpful.

48% identified oral health surveillance as a top-three future funding priority.

43% identified growing program capacity and infrastructure as a top-three priority.

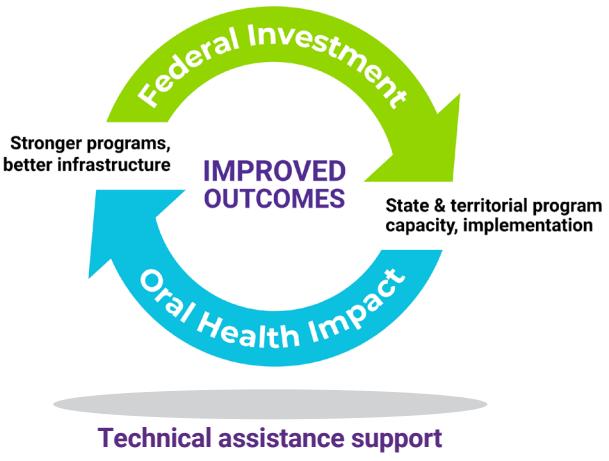
What the findings show

Federal funding strengthened capacity and expanded oral health efforts

- Federal funding supports essential capacity. Across CDC funding cycles, respondents described stronger surveillance,
- Infrastructure, prevention services, and oral health program capacity; fewer than two-thirds agreed funding levels were adequate.
- Funding gaps have consequences. Among respondents without CDC funding in the previous decade, 84% cited limited resources and 79% decreased ability to support local partners (n=19).

[Download the full report here.]

From investment to impact



*Findings are descriptive and are not representative of all State and Territorial Oral Health Programs.

When funding is absent, capacity is lost

Among respondents who had **not received** CDC funding in the previous 10 years, reported:

84% limited resources

79% decreased ability to support local partners

74% fewer statewide oral health initiatives

63% difficulty contributing to national datasets

What respondents want from future funding

69% toolkits/resources developed by CDC or national partners

66% virtual kick-off events

55% communities of practice

The report also found strong support for office hours, in-person/on-site technical assistance and other virtual support.

Priorities for Future Oral Health Investment

1. **Sustain federal investment for core state and territorial oral health infrastructure.** Support leadership, epidemiology, surveillance, evaluation, data systems, partnerships and program administration.
2. **Expand access to funding across all states and territories.** Provide a base level of support for ready and willing programs while allowing flexibility to address local needs.
3. **Pair direct funding with sustained national technical assistance and capacity building.** Support peer learning, workforce development, communities of practice, implementation tools, and dissemination of lessons learned.
4. **Use longer funding periods and a learning-oriented implementation model.** Longer-term funding, combined with ongoing technical assistance and peer learning, can strengthen planning, retention, implementation, and sustainability.
5. **Strengthen dedicated oral health leadership and program infrastructure.** Invest in dedicated leadership positions and organizational capacity to ensure oral health remains a visible, sustained priority.
6. **Accelerate oral health advancements and prevent backsliding.** Invest in innovation, evidence-based strategies, and continuous improvement to sustain progress and address emerging oral health needs.

Key Takeaway

Diversified oral health funding is a cornerstone of state and territorial public health capacity. Stable investment paired with national infrastructure for technical assistance, workforce support, peer learning and evidence dissemination, can extend the reach and impact of all investments across the governmental oral health system.

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ASTDD is a national professional home and capacity-building partner for governmental oral health. Its network helps both funded and unfunded jurisdictions access expertise, apply evidence, build workforce skills, connect with peers, and share lessons across funding cycles.