

Recent public health events have emphasized the need to strengthen and develop the public health workforce. In their report –*Building the Public Health Workforce for the 21st Century*– the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Joint Task Group on Public Health Human Resources proposed a pan-Canadian framework to strengthen public health capacity. Identifying core competencies was one of the foundational building blocks in that framework.

Core competencies are the essential skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for the broad practice of public health. Their aim is to strengthen the public health workforce by building individual and organizational capacity and supporting learning strategies to equip the field for excellence. Led by the Public Health Agency of Canada, and in consultation with the Joint Task Group on Public Health Human Resources and the public health community from across Canada, a set of Core Competencies for Public Health in Canada has been developed. The core competencies are a foundational piece to fulfilling the public health system core functions. These include: population health assessment; health surveillance; disease and injury prevention; health promotion and health protection.

This card was developed as an easy reference tool as you apply the Core Competencies for Public Health in your practice and organization. For more information, visit our website at: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/core_competencies or contact us at: corecompetencies@phac-aspc.gc.ca.

CORE COMPETENCY STATEMENTS

The core competency statements are not designed to stand alone, but rather to form a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes practiced within the larger context of the values of public health.

ATTITUDES AND VALUES

All public health professionals share a core set of attitudes and values. These attitudes and values have not been listed as specific core competencies for public health because they are difficult to teach and even harder to assess. However, they form the context within which the competencies are practiced. This makes them equally important.

Important values in public health include a commitment to equity, social justice and sustainable development, recognition of the importance of the health of the community as well as the individual, and respect for diversity, self-determination, empowerment and community participation. These values are rooted in an understanding of the broad determinants of health and the historical principles, values and strategies of public health and health promotion.

STATEMENTS IN SEVEN CATEGORIES

The 36 core competencies are based on the core functions of public health: population health assessment; health surveillance; disease and injury prevention; health promotion and health protection. They are organized under seven categories: public health sciences; assessment and analysis; policy and program planning, implementation and evaluation; partnerships, collaboration and advocacy; diversity and inclusiveness; communication; and leadership.

ONE... PUBLIC HEALTH SCIENCES

This category includes key knowledge and critical thinking skills related to the public health sciences: behavioural and social sciences, biostatistics, epidemiology, environmental public health, demography, workplace health, and the prevention of chronic diseases, infectious diseases, psychosocial problems and injuries. Competency in this category requires the ability to apply knowledge in practice.

A public health practitioner is able to ...

- 1.1 Demonstrate knowledge about the following concepts: the health status of populations, inequities in health, the determinants of health and illness, strategies for health promotion, disease and injury prevention and health protection, as well as the factors that influence the delivery and use of health services.
- 1.2 Demonstrate knowledge about the history, structure and interaction of public health and health care services at local, provincial/territorial, national, and international levels.
- 1.3 Apply the public health sciences to practice.
- 1.4 Use evidence and research to inform health policies and programs.
- 1.5 Demonstrate the ability to pursue lifelong learning opportunities in the field of public health.



TWO... ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS

This category describes the core competencies needed to collect, assess, analyze and apply information, including data, facts, concepts and theories. These competencies are required to make evidence-based decisions, prepare budgets and reports, conduct investigations and make recommendations for policy and program development.

A public health practitioner is able to ...

- 2.1 Recognize that a health concern or issue exists.
- 2.2 Identify relevant and appropriate sources of information, including community assets and resources.
- 2.3 Collect, store, retrieve and use accurate and appropriate information on public health issues.
- 2.4 Analyze information to determine appropriate implications, uses, gaps and limitations.
- 2.5 Determine the meaning of information, considering the current ethical, political, scientific, socio-cultural and economic contexts.
- 2.6 Recommend specific actions based on the analysis of information.



THREE... POLICY AND PROGRAM PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

This category describes the core competencies needed to effectively choose options and to plan, implement and evaluate policies and/or programs in public health. This includes the management of incidents such as outbreaks and emergencies.

A public health practitioner is able to ...

- 3.1 Describe selected policy and program options to address a specific public health issue.
- 3.2 Describe the implications of each option, especially as they apply to the determinants of health and recommend or decide on a course of action.
- 3.3 Develop a plan to implement a course of action taking into account relevant evidence, legislation, emergency planning procedures, regulations and policies.
- 3.4 Implement a policy or program and/or take appropriate action to address a specific public health issue.
- 3.5 Demonstrate the ability to implement effective practice guidelines.
- 3.6 Evaluate the action, policy or program.
- 3.7 Demonstrate an ability to set and follow priorities, and to maximize outcomes based on available resources.
- 3.8 Demonstrate the ability to fulfill functional roles in response to a public health emergency.



FOUR... PARTNERSHIPS, COLLABORATION AND ADVOCACY

This category captures the competencies required to influence and work with others to improve the health and well-being of the public through the pursuit of a common goal. Partnership and collaboration optimizes performance through shared resources and responsibilities. Advocacy—speaking, writing or acting in favour of a particular cause, policy or group of people—often aims to reduce inequities in health status or access to health services.

A public health practitioner is able to ...

- 4.1 Identify and collaborate with partners in addressing public health issues.
- 4.2 Use skills such as team building, negotiation, conflict management and group facilitation to build partnerships.
- 4.3 Mediate between differing interests in the pursuit of health and well-being, and facilitate the allocation of resources.
- 4.4 Advocate for healthy public policies and services that promote and protect the health and well-being of individuals and communities.



FIVE... DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVENESS

This category identifies the socio-cultural competencies required to interact effectively with diverse individuals, groups and communities. It is the embodiment of attitudes and practices that result in inclusive behaviours, practices, programs and policies.

A public health practitioner is able to ...

- 5.1 Recognize how the determinants of health (biological, social, cultural, economic and physical) influence the health and well-being of specific population groups.
- 5.2 Address population diversity when planning, implementing, adapting and evaluating public health programs and policies.
- 5.3 Apply culturally-relevant and appropriate approaches with people from diverse cultural, socioeconomic and educational backgrounds, and persons of all ages, genders, health status, sexual orientations and abilities.



SIX... COMMUNICATION

Communication involves an interchange of ideas, opinions and information. This category addresses numerous dimensions of communication including: internal and external exchanges; written; verbal; non-verbal and listening skills; computer literacy; providing appropriate information to different audiences; working with the media and social marketing techniques.

A public health practitioner is able to ...

- 6.1 Communicate effectively with individuals, families, groups, communities and colleagues.
- 6.2 Interpret information for professional, non-professional and community audiences.
- 6.3 Mobilize individuals and communities by using appropriate media, community resources and social marketing techniques.
- 6.4 Use current technology to communicate effectively.



SEVEN... LEADERSHIP

This category focuses on leadership competencies that build capacity, improve performance and enhance the quality of the working environment. They also enable organizations and communities to create, communicate and apply shared visions, missions and values.

A public health practitioner is able to ...

- 7.1 Describe the mission and priorities of the public health organization where one works, and apply them in practice.
- 7.2 Contribute to developing key values and a shared vision in planning and implementing public health programs and policies in the community.
- 7.3 Utilize public health ethics to manage self, others, information and resources.
- 7.4 Contribute to team and organizational learning in order to advance public health goals.
- 7.5 Contribute to maintaining organizational performance standards.
- 7.6 Demonstrate an ability to build community capacity by sharing knowledge, tools, expertise and experience.