The Council on Linkages Between Academia and Public Health Practice

Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals Report

October 12, 2021

Overview

The [Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals](#) (Core Competencies) reflect foundational or crosscutting knowledge and skills for professionals engaged in the practice, education, and research of public health. The Core Competencies have been undergoing an extensive and inclusive [revision process](#) for the past year. [Council on Linkages Between Academia and Public Health Practice](#) (Council) members have received the proposed revisions to the Core Competencies and been requested to vote via email on adoption. There will be an opportunity during this Council meeting to discuss and ask questions about the revisions.

Core Competencies Background and Use

The [current version of the Core Competencies](#) was released by the Council in June 2014, with a simplified [Modified Version of the Core Competencies](#) released in June 2017. The Core Competencies continue to be widely used within public health workforce development across the country. Data from the [Association of State and Territorial Health Officials](#), [National Indian Health Board](#), and [National Association of County and City Health Officials](#) show that [approximately 80% of state health departments](#), [60% of Tribal health organizations](#), [45% of local health departments](#), and [25% of territorial health departments](#) use the Core Competencies. To date in 2021, the Core Competencies and resources and tools designed to support implementation have been accessed online more than 55,000 times. Council staff have responded to 30 requests for assistance with the Core Competencies, serving 27 organizations in 17 states, DC, Guam, Japan, and Saudi Arabia.

Core Competencies Workgroup

Council efforts related to the Core Competencies are guided by the [Core Competencies Workgroup](#), which includes more than 110 members representing a variety of practice and academic organizations and interests within the public health field. Since November 2021, the Workgroup has been supporting revision of the Core Competencies.

Core Competencies Revision

The Core Competencies are regularly reviewed and revised to keep pace with changes in the field of public health and ensure they continue to meet the needs of the public health workforce. The [current revision](#) of the Core Competencies was begun in October 2020 and is anticipated to be completed in October 2021.

Revision of the Core Competencies is heavily informed by the public health community, with the initial stages of the revision process involving an open comment period to hear feedback on the Core Competencies. This open comment period occurred from October 2020-March 2021. Feedback received was used to develop a preliminary draft of revisions to the Core Competencies, which was released publicly in June 2021. This preliminary draft consisted of two components: proposed changes to the concepts included in the Core Competencies and proposed changes to the structure of the Core Competencies. A second open comment period was held from June-August 2021 to hear feedback on the preliminary draft revisions to inform further refinement of the revisions.

During both open comment periods, feedback was welcomed by email, online through website comments and an anonymous comment box, through social media, and during virtual meetings. Council staff and Core Competencies Workgroup leadership participated in 22 virtual town hall and other meetings to request and hear feedback. These efforts led to more than 1,500 engagements with the revision process, significant feedback that was instrumental in revising the Core Competencies, and the collection of more than 120 resources to inform the revision.

In particular, feedback highlighted a need to create better harmonization between efforts that impact the workforce and workforce development, add content in a variety of topic areas, and make it easier to use the Core Competencies.

To address the first area, numerous resources used in public health workforce development, including other competency and skill sets, the 10 Essential Public Health Services, the Public Health Accreditation Board and Council on Education for Public Health accreditation standards, and the Certified in Public Health exam, were consulted and efforts made to align concepts and wording. In addition, the Core Competencies Workgroup has been identifying resources related to the concepts within the Core Competencies. Once the Core Competencies are finalized, the intention is to create links to resources to supplement the content in the Core Competencies.

Feedback received about content that was missing or not well addressed in the Core Competencies led to the addition of new content, as well as the adjustment of existing content to better address those needs. Perhaps the most significant changes in this area were the explicit addition of content focused on health equity and the revamping of the competencies focused on management and finance. Other major areas that received considerable attention included environmental health, emergency preparedness and response, policy and advocacy, and communication. Subgroups of the Core Competencies Workgroup reviewed feedback and provided recommendations related to many of these areas that were critical in crafting revisions.

The request to make the Core Competencies easier to use was addressed in several ways. First, the Core Competencies were reorganized into a new structure and simplified. The revised Core Competencies include competency statements that apply to all public health professionals and have been simplified by reducing jargon and eliminating unnecessary or overly complicated wording. In addition, the number of competency statements has been reduced from 92 to 56. The new structure retains the eight domains and three tiers. Second, to assist with use of the Core Competencies, subcompetency statements have been added that provide guidance to help build competencies for each of the three tiers. Having fewer competency statements and adding subcompetencies will support both users who prefer a more general view of the knowledge and skills in the Core Competencies and those who desire a more detailed view. Third, as mentioned above, resources will be linked to the Core Competencies to supplement the content, and examples, which appear in the Core Competencies as e.g.s, have been updated to provide additional context where that was deemed useful. These resources and examples will also be updated over time to transform the Core Competencies into more of a living document. Additionally, opportunities are being explored for putting the Core Competencies online in a format that will provide users with options in terms of how they view the Core Competencies.

The proposed revisions to the Core Competencies are included in the meeting materials for Council discussion. More information about the Core Competencies revision process is available on the revision webpage. Additional information about activities related to the Core Competencies can be found through the Core Competencies section of the Council website or by contacting Kathleen Amos at kamos@phf.org.