

# The Relationship Between the Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals, 10 Essential Public Health Services, and Foundational Public Health Services

## Introduction

The Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals (Core Competencies) describe crosscutting knowledge and skills for people in the field of public health. The Core Competencies underlie an organization's ability to deliver the 10 Essential Public Health Services (EPHS) and the Foundational Public Health Services (FPHS).

## Definitions of Public Health As They Relate to the Frameworks

"Public health" is used in various ways. Clarity on who and what is meant in each specific use of "public health" is important. Below are a few ways this term is used:

1. The public's health, as in describing the health of populations or groups of people.
2. Public health as a field of study or professional discipline.
3. Public health as a diverse network of entities that all contribute to the health and well-being of the public through various means and initiatives. Entities may include, for example: governmental public health agencies, non-profit organizations, community groups, universities, research institutions, healthcare providers, schools, and others.
4. Public health as the governmental public health system comprised of federal, state, tribal, local, and territorial public health agencies, and their legal authorities.

## Frameworks and Core Competencies

Using multiple frameworks simultaneously is the norm in any field of study or practice. Public health is no exception. Concurrent frameworks often focus on different concepts or apply concepts in different settings. The frameworks may function independently or in concert. It is important to understand who and what is addressed by each framework and how each framework is meant to be used.

### Essential Public Health Services

The [10 Essential Public Health Services](#) (EPHS) framework applies broadly to the field of public health and to the diverse network of organizations that contribute to the public's health and well-being. It articulates activities that should be undertaken in all communities, but does not specify who should do what. It may also be used as an organizing framework for planning and collaboration to address the overall health of a community.

### Foundational Public Health Services

In contrast, the [Foundational Public Health Services](#) (FPHS) framework, stewarded by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#) (PHAB), focuses exclusively on the governmental public health system of federal, state, tribal, local, and territorial public health agencies. The FPHS are a subset of the services provided by a governmental public health agency or system. This framework and accompanying operational definitions define a limited set of core services that are uniquely provided by governmental public health. The FPHS operational definitions provide common definitions for these services that can be used to measure availability of the FPHS, estimate cost and funding gaps, and monitor changes in funding for these services, across

agencies and systems and over time. The FPHS are a foundation to build on and are the services upon which all other services, partners, and the public depend.

### **Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals**

The [Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals](#) (Core Competencies), developed by the [Council on Linkages Between Academia and Public Health Practice](#), focus on the individual level. These competencies describe crosscutting knowledge and skills for people in the field of public health. Whether working, volunteering, or interning, the Core Competencies reflect knowledge and skills needed to engage in the practice, education, or research of public health. The Core Competencies can be used by individuals for professional and career development; by organizations for workforce assessment, planning, and development; and by academia for courses and curricula.

In addition to the Core Competencies, many public health professionals working in specific disciplines and programs also need specialized knowledge and skills in particular areas. Examples of discipline-specific competencies can be found at the [CDC Public Health Professionals Gateway](#).

### **How Core Competencies Relate to EPHS & FPHS**

The Core Competencies reflect knowledge and skills needed by individuals to engage in public health – whether they are employees, students, or volunteers; whether the organization is governmental or non-governmental; and whether the work is providing EPHS or FPHS. Organizations are made up of people – people who plan and carry out the work described in the EPHS and FPHS frameworks. The Core Competencies of the people within an organization underlie the ability of the organization to deliver the EPHS and FPHS, as illustrated in the figure below.



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