



The Council on Linkages Between Academia and Public Health Practice

Council Activities Report

March 26, 2026

Overview

The [Council on Linkages Between Academia and Public Health Practice](#) (Council) engages in activities that support workforce development for the public health workforce. Since the last Council meeting in September 2025, the Council has focused its efforts on supporting the [Academic Health Department \(AHD\) Learning Community](#), [Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals](#) (Core Competencies), and [Retention and Recruitment \(R&R\) Toolkit](#).

Academic Health Department Learning Community

The AHD Learning Community supports the development of [AHD partnerships](#) between public health practice organizations and academic institutions. As a national community of more than 1,400 practitioners, educators, and researchers, the AHD Learning Community stimulates discussion and sharing of knowledge; the development of resources; and collaborative learning around establishing, sustaining, and expanding AHD partnerships.

Highlighting successful AHD partnerships is a significant focus of the support currently provided in conjunction with the AHD Learning Community, much of which is funded by the [Association of State and Territorial Health Officials](#) (ASTHO) through the [Public Health Infrastructure Grant](#) (PHIG) program. In fall 2025, the [Public Health Foundation](#) (PHF) and ASTHO collaborated on two webinars, [Strengthening Academic Health Department Partnerships for Student Success in Vermont](#) in October and [Ask Me Anything: Academic Health Department Partnerships](#) in November. Planning is underway for an additional two webinars in the series that are anticipated to occur in May and June 2026. AHD partnerships were also highlighted with a presentation at the [2025 American Public Health Association \(APHA\) Annual Meeting](#).

Technical assistance (TA) continues to be available to public health professionals and organizations interested in developing and sustaining AHD partnerships. Since the last Council meeting, Council staff have responded to eight focused requests from eight organizations across five states and have continued to work with [Washington University in St. Louis](#) on a National Institutes of Health-funded study focused on improving cancer prevention and control through AHD partnerships. In addition, more in-depth TA engagements related to environmental scanning and fact-finding have been completed with the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services, the Connecticut Department of Public Health, and the Salt Lake County Department of Health and Utah Department of Health and Human Services. These services have been funded through PHIG and are also [available from PHF on a fee-for-service basis](#). In 2026, PHIG funding from ASTHO will support an environmental scan to better understand the current and desired future state of AHD partnerships for an additional state or local health department. Organizations interested in learning more about the AHD Partnership Environmental Scan service may reach out to Mayela Arana at marana@phf.org.

Resources and tools to support AHD partnerships can be found in the [AHD Partnerships Toolkit](#). This toolkit includes information on developing and sustaining AHD partnerships; operationalizing partnerships; stories from the field; AHD partnership research; expert TA; and ways to join the AHD Learning Community and is updated regularly to reflect new resources and tools. In spring 2026, PHF expects to add a new AHD partnership success story as well as archives of the two webinars with ASTHO, among other resources. Suggestions of AHD partnership success stories to share or other resources to add to the toolkit can be sent to Mayela Arana at marana@phf.org.

More information about the AHD Learning Community is available through the [AHD Learning Community](#) section of the Council website or by contacting Mayela Arana at marana@phf.org.

Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals

The Core Competencies reflect foundational or crosscutting knowledge and skills for professionals engaged in the practice, education, and research of public health. The current version of the Core Competencies was released in 2021.

The Core Competencies are widely used across the US, including by approximately [80% of state health departments](#), [43% of Tribal health organizations](#), and [55% of local health departments](#). Since the last Council meeting, seven requests for assistance with the Core Competencies have been filled by Council staff, serving five organizations in five states and the Philippines. PHF also provides additional Core Competencies TA through funding arrangements with other organizations and is currently assisting the [Indian Health Service](#) with its work on environmental health competencies.

Tools and resources to assist public health professionals and organizations in using the Core Competencies for workforce development are available [online](#) and are among the most popular on the PHF website. During this time period, the [Core Competencies page](#) was the most visited page on the PHF website, and the [Core Competencies Tools page](#) and the [Competency Assessments for Public Health Professionals page](#) also appeared in the top 10. Feedback on resources and tools or ideas for new ones are always welcome and may be shared by email to Mayela Arana at marana@phf.org.

Dissemination of the Core Competencies also continues, with a presentation at the [APHA Annual Meeting](#) and content in multiple sessions at the [Public Health Learning Forum](#) in November 2025. Public Health Learning Forum sessions were recorded and are available via the [TRAIN Learning Network](#) (TRAIN). Additionally, ASTHO hosted a webinar in February 2026 on [Workforce Planning: Incorporating Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals](#), which focused on using the Core Competencies in workforce planning and training. The archive of that webinar is also available through TRAIN.

Additional information about the Core Competencies can be found through the [Core Competencies](#) section of the Council website or by contacting Mayela Arana at marana@phf.org.

Retention and Recruitment Toolkit

The Council and PHF continue to support workforce retention and recruitment by equipping public health agencies with valuable tools and resources through the R&R Toolkit. This toolkit offers practical strategies to strengthen your workforce; improve retention; reduce recruitment needs; and build a diverse, skilled team. The toolkit is updated as resources are developed or shared; the most recent update occurred in February 2026 with the addition of the [Student Careers Pathways Toolkit](#) from the [New England Public Health Training Center](#) and [Joy in Work](#) resources from the [National Association of County and City Health Officials](#).

With funding from the [Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health](#), work is also underway on a recruitment and retention tool that brings together training and resources aligned with the job domains from the [2024 Governmental Public Health Job Task Analysis](#).

For more information about the [R&R Toolkit](#), please contact Mayela Arana at marana@phf.org.