



Interview Guide

Building Strong Hiring Practices Through Interviews

A more connected and effective public health workforce begins with how we hire. That means creating a process rooted in trust, clarity, and intention. Before interviews even begin, take a moment to revisit your job listing. Is the language clear and accessible? Does it focus on the qualifications that truly matter? Does it reflect your organization's mission and the role this position will play in advancing community health?

Be transparent. Highlight flexible work options, mentorship opportunities, and the impact this role can make in communities with limited access to care. These details matter. They help remove barriers and open the door to candidates with lived experience—people who often know their communities best and are most ready to serve them. To support this effort, we've included a sample **Interview Guide** for a Public Health Epidemiologist. It's designed to go beyond technical expertise, helping hiring teams assess a candidate's real-world experience, cultural humility, and ability to lead with purpose.

Use it as a foundation, and tailor it to reflect your team's needs and values. Because when we hire with intention, we don't just fill a role; we find the right person. We move public health forward.

Before the Interview:

Crafting a Strong Job Listing

To attract candidates from a variety of backgrounds, consider these best practices when creating the job listing:



USE CLEAR LANGUAGE

Avoid jargon and overly technical terms that may deter qualified candidates unfamiliar with industry-specific phrasing. Replace words like “rockstar,” “expert,” or “native speaker” with more accessible options.



FOCUS ON KEY SKILLS, NOT CHECKLISTS

Stick to what’s essential. Lengthy or overly strict requirement lists can unintentionally exclude strong candidates with transferable skills.



HIGHLIGHT YOUR COMMITMENT TO FAIR ACCESS

Clearly state your organization’s dedication to equal opportunity, transparency, and working with various communities.



SHOWCASE FLEXIBILITY AND SUPPORT

Mention flexible work arrangements, mentorship programs, and leadership development – all factors that appeal to candidates balancing multiple responsibilities.



SHARE THE IMPACT

Highlight how the role contributes to improving health for under-resourced communities and addressing gaps.



Rubric for Early Interview Assessment

This first-round interview rubric for a Public Health Program Coordinator ensures consistent, job-related screening. It evaluates candidates' program experience, communication and coordination, stakeholder engagement, problem-solving, commitment to public health, and professionalism to determine who should advance in the hiring process.

RATING SCALE

Score	Rating	Description
5	Exceptional	Strong, clear, and relevant evidence; exceeds expectations for this stage.
4	Strong	Solid evidence; clearly meets expectations.
3	Acceptable	Meets basic expectations; some gaps or limited depth.
2	Limited	Partially meets expectations; notable concerns.
1	Poor	Does not demonstrate the competency or fit needed for advancement.

CORE ASSESSMENT AREAS FOR EARLY INTERVIEWS

Assessment Area	What to Look For	Score (1 – 5)
Relevant Experience	Candidate can clearly describe experience related to the role, even if not extensive.	
Communication Skills	Speaks clearly, answers questions directly, and explains experience in an organized way.	
Interest in the Role	Demonstrates genuine interest in the position, mission, or field.	
Understanding of the Work	Shows a basic understanding of the responsibilities and expectations of the role.	
Problem-Solving/Initiative	Gives examples of handling challenges, taking initiative, or supporting solutions.	
Professionalism	Appears prepared, respectful, responsive, and able to engage appropriately.	
Overall Fit for Next Round	Based on early evidence, appears likely to succeed in a fuller interview process.	



Suggested Rating Guidance by Area

1. RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

5

Highly relevant experience with clear examples directly aligned to the role

4

Good relevant experience with solid examples

3

Some relevant experience, but limited depth or transferability

2

Minimal relevant experience or unclear connection to role

1

No meaningful relevant experience presented

2. COMMUNICATION SKILLS

5

Extremely clear, concise, and confident communicator

4

Communicates well with only minor gaps

3

Adequate communication, though answers may lack focus or detail

2

Communication is unclear, disorganized, or difficult to follow

1

Unable to clearly respond to questions

3. INTEREST IN THE ROLE

5

Strong motivation and clear connection to mission and responsibilities

4

Clear interest and thoughtful reasons for applying

3

General interest, but somewhat broad or generic

2

Limited enthusiasm or weak understanding of why they want the role

1

Little or no demonstrated interest

4. UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORK

5

Strong understanding of the role and how their background applies

4

Good general understanding of the role

3

Basic understanding, though somewhat superficial

2

Limited understanding of responsibilities

1

Misunderstands the role or cannot describe its purpose

5. PROBLEM-SOLVING/INITIATIVE

5

Gives a strong example of initiative, judgment, and follow-through

4

Gives a good example with a clear positive outcome

3

Gives a basic example, but impact or ownership is limited

2

Example is weak, vague, or incomplete

1

Cannot provide an example

6. PROFESSIONALISM

5

Very polished, prepared, and highly professional

4

Professional and well prepared

3

Acceptable professionalism with minor concerns

2

Some concerns about preparation, tone, or responsiveness

1

Significant professionalism concerns

7. OVERALL FIT FOR NEXT ROUND

5

Strong candidate; should clearly advance

4

Good candidate; recommend advancing

3

Borderline; could advance if pool is limited or role is flexible

2

Significant concerns; generally, should not advance

1

Should not advance

Interview Questions Template

BUILDING RAPPORT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

1. Please describe your educational background, professional journey, and any lived experiences that have shaped your approach to public health.
2. Can you describe a public health project or issue you have worked on that aligns with this role's responsibilities, including how you balanced research findings with practical public health interventions?
3. How have you used your cultural knowledge, language skills, or community experience to connect with under-resourced or high-need communities? What did you learn from that experience?
4. How do you ensure that public health programs, materials, and messages are accessible and appropriate for diverse communities, including non-English speakers and people with varying levels of health literacy?
5. What strategies do you use to build trust with communities that may be hesitant to participate in public health initiatives, outreach efforts, or research studies?

ETHICS, COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

1. How do you ensure that ethical principles guide your work, particularly when conducting research, managing sensitive public health data, or protecting individual privacy in smaller communities?
2. How do you communicate complex or sensitive public health findings, such as outbreaks, health disparities, or policy updates, to different audiences clearly and respectfully?
3. Public health often requires interdisciplinary collaboration. Can you share an example of how you worked with professionals from different fields or provided technical support or training to public health partners?

CRITICAL THINKING, GROWTH, AND ADAPTATION

1. Can you provide an example of how you used critical thinking to address a complex public health issue, and explain how you continue to strengthen your expertise to remain effective in a changing public health environment?
2. How do you ensure that your research and analyses are relevant and impactful for real-world public health practice?

CONCLUSION

1. Why do you believe you are a strong fit for this role, and how can you contribute to our team's success in advancing public health goals?
2. Do you have any questions for us?

Interview Questions Template

Additional Questions

DATA, EPIDEMIOLOGY, AND SURVEILLANCE

1. How do you manage, analyze, and interpret large public health datasets, and what statistical tools, software, or methods are you proficient in using?
2. What steps do you take to identify the root cause of a disease outbreak or public health problem, and how do you use surveillance data to monitor trends and inform interventions?
3. How do you identify and address gaps in health outcomes across different population groups, and how do you involve community partners in developing solutions?

CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

1. Public health is constantly changing. How do you stay informed about the latest epidemiological methods, policies, and community health strategies?
2. Are there particular areas within epidemiology or public health that you are especially interested in developing further expertise in?
3. How do you ensure that public health programs or materials are accessible to non-English speakers or communities with limited resources? Have you created or contributed to multilingual resources?

POPULATION HEALTH AND COMMUNITY NEEDS

1. What challenges have you faced when working with under-resourced or high-need populations, and how have you worked to overcome these obstacles?
2. How do you make sure that public health messages and interventions are suitable for all community members?
3. How do you communicate complex health data in ways that are understandable to different audiences, including those with varying levels of health literacy or English proficiency?
4. What strategies do you use to build trust within communities that might be hesitant to participate in public health initiatives or research studies?
5. How do you incorporate public health models and frameworks (e.g., social determinants of health, ecological model) into your work? Can you explain how you've used one of these frameworks in a past project?
6. Can you explain how you balanced research findings with practical public health considerations and interventions?
7. Can you provide an example of how you've used your cultural knowledge or language skills to connect with under-resourced communities or enhance outreach? What did you learn from that experience?

