

# **Recruitment and Retention through Post Doctoral Programs**

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# Recruitment and Retention through Post Doctoral Programs

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## Organizations and Type of Activity

The SC Public Health Consortium (Consortium) is an innovative program designed to strengthen the partnership between the Arnold School of Public Health (A-SPH) at the University of South Carolina and the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC). The Consortium was started under the Academic Health Department grant program of the Association of Schools of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. When funding for the Academic Health Department grant ended, the practice and academic partners in SC decided to continue the collaboration through the Consortium and jointly fund its projects. One of these projects is the Public Health Practice Post Doctoral Program, which was established to assist with recruiting and retaining doctoral trained employees.

## Description of Project

The state health department found itself challenged in its ability to recruit and retain doctoral prepared evaluators and epidemiologists. With multiple departures of doctoral prepared staff to academia, the practice and academic partners of the South Carolina Public Health Consortium developed the innovative Public Health Practice Post Doctoral Program. Involving a 25/75 split between academia and practice, respectfully, the program allows post doctoral scholars an opportunity to enhance their practice experience while improving the evaluation and epidemiologic capacity of the health department. At the same time, the post doctoral scholars are associated with an academic department or center of the school of public health and are able to build upon their research agenda or teaching experience. Additionally, these post doctoral scholars assist with the implementation of the joint research agenda between the partners. By fostering the scholar's connection with an academic department within the Arnold School, the Consortium aims to satisfy a doctoral trained employee's academic aspirations.

## Successes, Difficulties, and "The Unexpected"

The new program has been enthusiastically received by both institutions and has grown from an initial two scholars to five total. In developing and implementing the program, the Consortium was challenged in processing a training program through a research-oriented system; establishing a recruiting and hiring process that bridged both systems; developing mutually beneficial development plans and opportunities for scholars; and creating a process evaluation plan to monitor and improve the program. An unexpected addition to the program has been the development of a faculty exchange component. This involves faculty providing technical assistance and mentorship as their summer work.

## Benefits to the Agency & Community

The primary benefit of the program to DHEC is the ability to recruit nationally for doctoral trained evaluators and epidemiologists and retain these workers by satisfying a desire to have a connection with academia. For the Arnold School, the primary benefit is seen in the infusion of practice into academia. A benefit to all is the enhancement of the partners ability to more proactively pursue the joint research agenda, which was developed to meet the needs of the school and the health department to better the quality of life for South Carolinians.