



COUNCIL ON LINKAGES BETWEEN ACADEMIA AND PUBLIC HEALTH PRACTICE

CORE COMPETENCIES FOR PUBLIC HEALTH PROFESSIONALS - TIERS 1 THROUGH 3 (Last Updated October 2009)

INTRODUCTION

This document has two sections: 1) Guidance Definitions for Tiers 1 through 3; and, 2) A matrix showing the adopted Tier 2 (Mid Tier) Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals (Core Competencies) and drafts of Tier 1 and Tier 3 Core Competencies. While the “Guidance Definitions” do not apply to everyone, they highlight the general skills and job duties of some individuals in the various Tiers. The matrix delineates how the Core Competencies sets build on each other. Put differently, it shows the various skills that individuals at different stages of their public health career may want to possess. Tier 2 Core Competencies can be used to assist public health organizations with workforce development efforts; Core Competencies for Tier 1 and 3 may be used for the same purpose upon being adopted. (Please Note: Examples pertaining to individual Core Competencies are used for emphasis and appear in parentheses.) Please [email us](#) with questions.

1. GUIDANCE DEFINITIONS

Tier 1 Core Competencies—Tier 1 Core Competencies apply to public health professionals who carry out the day-to-day tasks of public health organizations and are not in management positions. Responsibilities of these public health professionals may include basic data collection and analysis, fieldwork, program planning, outreach activities, programmatic support, and other organizational tasks. In general, an individual at the Tier 1 level may be educated at the baccalaureate level, or educated at a higher level with limited experience as a public health professional.

Tier 2 Core Competencies—Tier 2 Core Competencies apply to individuals with program management and/or supervisory responsibilities. Other responsibilities may include: program development, program implementation, program evaluation, establishing and maintaining community relations, managing timelines and work plans, presenting arguments and recommendations on policy issues etc. In general, Tier 2 competencies apply to individuals who have earned an MPH or related degree and have at least 5 years of work experience in public health or a related field (combined pre and post master's degree) or individuals who do not have an MPH or related degree, but have at least 10 years of experience working in the public health field.

Tier 3 Core Competencies—Tier 3 Core Competencies apply to individuals at a senior/management level and leaders of public health organizations. In general, an individual who is responsible for the major programs or functions of an organization, setting a strategy and vision for the organization, and/or building the organization's culture can be considered to be a Tier 3 public health professional. Tier 3 public health professionals (e.g. health officers, executive directors, CEOs etc.) typically have staff that report to them, and are educated at a similar or higher level than their Tier 2 counterparts.

2. MATRIX SHOWING CORE COMPETENCIES FOR TIERS 1, 2, AND 3

Tier 1 Draft (Includes examples)	Tier 2 (Mid Tier) Adopted June 2009 (Includes examples)	Tier 3 Draft (Includes examples)
Analytical/Assessment Skills		
1. Identifies the health status of populations and their related determinants of health and illness (e.g. factors contributing to health promotion and disease prevention, the quality, availability and use of health services)	1. Assesses the health status of populations and their related determinants of health and illness (e.g. factors contributing to health promotion and disease prevention, availability and use of health services)	1. Assesses the health status of populations and their related determinants of health and illness (e.g. factors contributing to health promotion and disease prevention, the availability and use of health services)
2. Describes the characteristics of a population-based health problem (e.g. equity, social determinants, environment)	2. Describes the characteristics of a population-based health problem (e.g. equity, social determinants, environment)	2. Describes the characteristics of a population-based health problem (e.g. equity, social determinants, environment)
3. Recognizes variables that measure public health conditions	3. Selects variables that measure public health conditions	3. Selects variables that measure public health conditions
4. Uses valid and reliable methods and instruments for collecting quantitative and qualitative data	4. Uses methods and instruments for collecting valid and reliable quantitative and qualitative data	4. Critiques methods and instruments for collecting valid and reliable quantitative and qualitative data
5. Identifies sources of public health data and information	5. References sources of public health data and information	5. References sources of public health data and information
6. Recognizes the integrity and comparability of data	6. Evaluates the integrity and comparability of data	6. Evaluates the integrity and comparability of data
7. Identifies gaps in data sources	7. Identifies gaps in data sources	7. Identifies gaps in data sources

8. Applies ethical principles in the collection, maintenance, use, and dissemination of data and information	8. Employs ethical principles in the collection, maintenance, use, and dissemination of data and information	8. Ensures the application of ethical principles in the collection, maintenance, use, and dissemination of data and information
9. Describes the public health applications of quantitative and qualitative data	9. Interprets quantitative and qualitative data	9. Interprets quantitative and qualitative data
10. Makes community-specific associations from quantitative and qualitative data (e.g. risks and benefits to the community, health and resource needs and assets)	10. Makes community-specific inferences from quantitative and qualitative data (e.g. risks and benefits to the community, health and resource needs)	10. Reviews community-specific inferences from quantitative and qualitative data (e.g. risks and benefits to the community, health and resource needs)
11. Uses information technology to collect, store, and retrieve data	11. Uses information technology to collect, store, and retrieve data	11. Uses information technology to collect, store, and retrieve data
12. Describes how data are used to address scientific, political, ethical, and social public health issues	12. Utilizes data to address scientific, political, ethical, and social public health issues	12. Synthesizes data to address scientific, political, ethical, and social public health issues
		13. Identifies the resources to meet community health needs

Policy Development/Program Planning Skills

Tier 1 Draft (Includes examples)	Tier 2 (Mid Tier) Adopted June 2009 (Includes examples)	Tier 3 Draft (Includes examples)
1. Discusses information relevant to specific public health policy issues	1. Analyzes information relevant to specific public health policy issues	1. Analyzes information relevant to specific public health policy issues
2. Discusses policy options	2. Articulates policy options	2. Decides the policy for the public health organization
3. Recognizes the expected outcomes of policy options (e.g. health, fiscal, administrative, legal, ethical, social,	3. Determines the feasibility and expected outcomes of policy options (e.g. health, fiscal, administrative, legal, ethical,	3. Contrasts the feasibility and expected outcomes of various policy options (e.g. health, fiscal, administrative, legal,

political)	social, political)	ethical, social, political)
4. Gathers information that will inform policy decisions (e.g. health, fiscal, administrative, legal, ethical, social, political)	4. Articulates the implications of policy options (e.g. health, fiscal, administrative, legal, ethical, social, political)	4. Defends selected policy (e.g. health, fiscal, administrative, legal, ethical, social, political)
	5. Utilizes decision analysis for policy development and program planning	5. Critiques decision analyses that result in policy development and program planning
5. Describes the public health laws and regulations governing public health programs	6. Manages public health programs consistent with public health laws and regulations	6. Ensures public health programs are consistent with public health laws and regulations
6. Describes a planning process to implement policy and programs	7. Develops a plan to implement policy and programs	7. Implements programs consistent with policy
7. Incorporates policy into organizational plans, structures, and programs	8. Incorporates policy into organizational plans, structures, and programs	8. Ensures the consistency of policy integration into organizational plans, structures, and programs
8. Identifies mechanisms to monitor and evaluate programs for their effectiveness and quality	9. Develops mechanisms to monitor and evaluate programs for their effectiveness and quality	9. Develops mechanisms to evaluate programs for their effectiveness and quality
9. Describes the importance of informatics to public health (e.g. use of information systems infrastructure to improve health outcomes)	10. Incorporates public health informatics practices (e.g. use of data and information technology standards across the agency where applicable, and use of standard software development life cycle principles when developing new IT applications)	10. Oversees public health informatics practices (e.g. use of data and information technology standards of the agency where applicable, and use of standard software development life cycle principles when developing new IT applications)
10. Applies strategies for continuous quality improvement	11. Develops strategies for continuous quality improvement	11. Implements organizational – or system-wide strategies for continuous quality

		improvement
		12. Integrates emerging trends into the fiscal, social and political environment in public health strategic planning
Communication Skills		
Tier 1 Draft (Includes examples)	Tier 2 (Mid Tier) Adopted June 2009 (Includes examples)	Tier 3 Draft (Includes examples)
1. Identifies the health literacy of populations served	1. Assesses the health literacy of populations served	1. Ensures that the health literacy of populations served is considered throughout all communication strategies
2. Communicates in writing and orally, in person, and through electronic means, with linguistic and cultural proficiency	2. Communicates in writing and orally, in person, and through electronic means, with linguistic and cultural proficiency	2. Communicates in writing and orally, in person, and through electronic means, with linguistic and cultural proficiency
3. Solicits input from individuals and organizations	3. Solicits input from individuals and organizations	3. Ensures that the public health organization seeks input from other organizations and individuals
4. Provides public health information using a variety of approaches (e.g. community-based efforts, traditional and emerging media)	4. Utilizes a variety of approaches to disseminate public health information (e.g. social networks, media, blogs)	4. Ensures a variety of approaches are considered and used to disseminate public health information (e.g. social networks, media, blogs)
5. Supports the development of demographic, statistical, programmatic and scientific presentations	5. Presents demographic, statistical, programmatic, and scientific information for use by professional and lay audiences	5. Presents demographic, statistical, programmatic, and scientific information for use by professional and lay audiences
6. Applies communication strategies (e.g. principled negotiation, conflict resolution, active listening, risk communication) in interactions with individuals and groups	6. Applies communication strategies (e.g. principled negotiation, conflict resolution, active listening, risk communication) in interactions with individuals and groups	6. Applies communication strategies (e.g. principled negotiation, conflict resolution, active listening, risk communication) in interactions with individuals and groups

		7. Communicates the role of public health within the overall health system
Cultural Competency Skills		
Tier 1 Draft (Includes examples)	Tier 2 (Mid Tier) Adopted June 2009 (Includes examples)	Tier 3 Draft (Includes examples)
1. Incorporates strategies for interacting with persons from diverse backgrounds (e.g. cultural, socioeconomic, educational, racial, gender, age, ethnic, sexual orientation, professional, religious affiliation, mental and physical capabilities)	1. Incorporates strategies for interacting with persons from diverse backgrounds (e.g. cultural, socioeconomic, educational, racial, ethnic, sexual orientation, professional)	1. Incorporates strategies for interacting with persons from diverse backgrounds (e.g. cultural, socioeconomic, educational, racial, ethnic, sexual orientation, professional)
2. Recognizes the role of cultural, social, and behavioral factors in the accessibility, availability, acceptability and delivery of public health services	2. Considers the role of cultural, social, and behavioral factors in the accessibility, availability, acceptability and delivery of public health services	2. Ensures the consideration of the role of cultural, social, and behavioral factors in the accessibility, availability, acceptability and delivery of public health services
3. Responds to diverse needs that are the result of cultural differences	3. Responds to diverse needs that are the result of cultural differences	3. Responds to diverse needs that are the result of cultural differences
4. Describes the dynamic forces that contribute to cultural diversity	4. Explains the dynamic forces that contribute to cultural diversity	4. Assesses the dynamic forces that contribute to cultural diversity
5. Describes the need for a diverse public health workforce	5. Describes the need for a diverse public health workforce	5. Assesses the need for a diverse public health workforce
6. Participates in the assessment of the cultural competence of the public health organization	6. Assesses the public health organization for its cultural competence	6. Assesses the public health organization for its cultural competence

		7. Ensures the public health organization's cultural competence
Community Dimensions of Practice Skills		
Tier 1 Draft (Includes examples)	Tier 2 (Mid Tier) Adopted June 2009 (Includes examples)	Tier 3 Draft (Includes examples)
1. Recognizes community linkages and relationships among multiple factors (or determinants) affecting health (e.g. the Socio-Ecological Model)	1. Assesses community linkages and relationships among multiple factors (or determinants) affecting health	1. Evaluates the community linkages and relationships among multiple factors (or determinants) affecting health
2. Describes community-based participatory research efforts	2. Collaborates in community-based participatory research efforts	2. Encourages community-based participatory research efforts within the public health organization
	3. Establishes linkages with key stakeholders	3. Establishes linkages with key stakeholders
3. Collaborates with community partners to promote the health of the population	4. Facilitates collaboration and partnerships to ensure participation of key stakeholders	4. Ensures the collaboration and partnerships of key stakeholders
4. Maintains partnerships with key stakeholders	5. Maintains partnerships with key stakeholders	5. Maintains partnerships with key stakeholders
5. Uses group processes to advance community involvement	6. Uses group processes to advance community involvement	6. Advances community involvement through the use of group processes
6. Describes the role of governmental and non-governmental organizations in the delivery of community health services	7. Describes the role of governmental and non-governmental organizations in the delivery of community health services	7. Teaches others the role of governmental and non-governmental organizations in the delivery of community health services

7. Identifies community assets and resources	8. Negotiates for the use of community assets and resources	8. Negotiates for the use of community assets and resources
8. References community input to policymakers and program developers when developing public health policies and programs	9. Uses community input when developing public health policies and programs	9. Ensures community input when developing public health policies and programs
9. Promotes public health policies, programs, and resources	10. Promotes public health policies, programs, and resources	10. Defends the use of public health policies, programs, and resources
		11. Evaluates effectiveness of community engagement strategies on public health policies, programs, and resources

Public Health Sciences Skills

Tier 1 Draft (Includes examples)	Tier 2 (Mid Tier) Adopted June 2009 (Includes examples)	Tier 3 Draft (Includes examples)
1. Describes the scientific foundation of the field of public health	1. Describes the scientific foundation of the field of public health	1. Describes the scientific foundation of the field of public health
2. Identifies prominent events in the history of the public health profession	2. Identifies prominent events in the history of the public health profession	2. Explains prominent events in the history of the public health profession
3. Relates public health science skills to the Core Public Health Functions and Ten Essential Services of Public Health	3. Relates public health science skills to the Core Public Health Functions and Ten Essential Services of Public Health	3. Incorporates the Core Public Health Functions and Ten Essential Services of Public Health into the practice of the public health sciences
4. Identifies the basic public health sciences ¹ (including, but not limited to biostatistics, epidemiology, environmental health sciences, health services administration, and social and behavioral health sciences)	4. Applies the basic public health sciences (including, but not limited to biostatistics, epidemiology, environmental health sciences, health services administration, and social and behavioral health sciences) to public health policies and	4. Applies the basic public health sciences (including, but not limited to biostatistics, epidemiology, environmental health sciences, health services administration, and social and behavioral health sciences) to public health policies and

	programs	programs
5. Describes the scientific evidence related to a public health issue, concern, or, intervention	5. Conducts a comprehensive review of the scientific evidence related to a public health issue, concern, or, intervention	5. Integrates a review of the scientific evidence related to a public health issue, concern, or, intervention into the practice of public health
6. Retrieves scientific evidence from a variety of text and electronic sources	6. Retrieves scientific evidence from a variety of text and electronic sources	6. Synthesizes scientific evidence from a variety of text and electronic sources
7. Discusses the limitations of research findings (e.g. limitations of data sources, importance of observations and interrelationships)	7. Determines the limitations of research findings (e.g. limitations of data sources, importance of observations and interrelationships)	7. Critiques the limitations of research findings (e.g. limitations of data sources, importance of observations and interrelationships)
8. Describes the laws, regulations, policies and procedures for the ethical conduct of research (e.g. patient confidentiality, human subject processes)	8. Determines the laws, regulations, policies and procedures for the ethical conduct of research (e.g. patient confidentiality, human subject processes)	8. Advises on the laws, regulations, policies and procedures for the ethical conduct of research (e.g. patient confidentiality, human subject processes)
9. Partners with other public health professionals in building the scientific base of public health	9. Contributes to building the scientific base of public health	9. Contributes to building the scientific base of public health
Financial Planning and Management Skills		
Tier 1 Draft (Includes examples)	Tier 2 (Mid Tier) Adopted June 2009 (Includes examples)	Tier 3 Draft (Includes examples)
1. Describes the local, state, and federal public health and health care systems	1. Interprets the interrelationships of local, state, and federal public health and health care systems for public health program management	1. Leverages financial, human and technical resources through the interrelationships of local, state, and federal public health and health care systems for public health program management

2. Describes the organizational structures, functions, and authorities of local, state, and federal public health agencies	2. Interprets the organizational structures, functions, and authorities of local, state, and federal public health agencies for public health program management	2. Explains the organizational structures, functions, and authorities of local, state, and federal public health agencies for public health program management
3. Uses the judicial and operational procedures of the governing body and/or administrative unit that oversees the operations of the public health organization	3. Develops partnerships with agencies within the federal, state, and local levels of government that have authority over public health situations or with specific issues, such as emergency events	3. Develops partnerships with agencies within the federal, state, and local levels of government that have authority over public health situations or with specific issues, such as emergency events
	4. Implements the judicial and operational procedures of the governing body and/or administrative unit that oversees the operations of the public health organization	4. Implements the judicial and operational procedures of the governing body and/or administrative unit that oversees the operations of the public health organization
4. Participates in the development of a programmatic budget	5. Develops a programmatic budget	5. Defends a programmatic and organizational budget
5. Operates programs within current and forecasted budget constraints	6. Manages programs within current and forecasted budget constraints	6. Ensures that programs are managed within current and forecasted budget constraints
6. Identifies strategies for determining budget priorities	7. Develops strategies for determining budget priorities	7. Critiques strategies for determining budget priorities
7. Reports program performance	8. Evaluates program performance	8. Evaluates program performance
8. Translates evaluation report information into performance improvement action steps	9. Uses evaluation results to improve performance	9. Uses evaluation results to improve performance
9. Contributes to the preparation of proposals for funding from external sources	10. Prepares proposals for funding from external sources	10. Prepares proposals for funding from external sources

10. Applies basic human relations skills to internal collaborations, motivation of colleagues, and resolution of conflicts	11. Applies basic human relations skills to the management of organizations, motivation of personnel, and resolution of conflicts	11. Applies basic human relations skills to the management of organizations, motivation of personnel, and resolution of conflicts
11. Describes public health informatics skills to improve program and business operations (e.g. performance management and improvement)	12. Applies public health informatics skills to improve program and business operations (e.g. business process analysis, enterprise-wide information planning)	12. Integrates public health informatics skills into program and business operations (e.g. business process analysis, enterprise –wide information planning)
12. Participates in the development of contracts and other agreements for the provision of services	13. Negotiates contracts and other agreements for the provision of services	13. Approves contracts and other agreements for the provision of services
13. Describes how cost-effectiveness, cost-benefit, and cost-utility analyses affect programmatic prioritization and decision making	14. Utilizes cost-effectiveness, cost-benefit, and cost-utility analyses in programmatic prioritization and decision making	14. Demonstrates the use of cost-effectiveness, cost-benefit, and cost-utility analyses in programmatic prioritization and decision making
		15. Synthesizes data and information to improve organizational processes and performance
		16. Establishes a performance management system
Leadership and Systems Thinking Skills		
Tier 1 Draft (Includes examples)	Tier 2 (Mid Tier) Adopted June 2009 (Includes examples)	Tier 3 Draft (Includes examples)
1. Incorporates ethical standards of practice as the basis of all interactions with organizations, communities, and	1. Incorporates ethical standards of practice as the basis of all interactions with organizations, communities, and	1. Incorporates ethical standards of practice as the basis of all interactions with organizations, communities, and

individuals	individuals	individuals
2. Describes how public health operates within a larger system	2. Incorporates systems thinking into public health practice	2. Integrates systems thinking into public health practice
3. Participates with stakeholders in identifying key values and a shared vision as guiding principles for community action	3. Participates with stakeholders in identifying key values and a shared vision as guiding principles for community action	3. Partners with stakeholders to determine key values and a shared vision as guiding principles for community action
4. Identifies internal and external problems that may affect the delivery of essential public health services	4. Identifies internal and external problems that may affect the delivery of essential public health services	4. Rectifies internal and external problems that may affect the delivery of essential public health services
5. Uses individual, team and organizational learning opportunities for personal and professional development	5. Promotes individual, team and organizational learning opportunities	5. Promotes individual, team and organizational learning opportunities
	6. Establishes mentoring, peer advising, coaching or other personal development opportunities for the public health workforce	6. Promotes mentoring, peer advising, coaching or other personal development opportunities for the public health workforce
6. Contributes to the measuring, reporting and continuous improvement of organizational performance	7. Contributes to the measuring, reporting and continuous improvement of organizational performance	7. Contributes to the measuring, reporting and continuous improvement of organizational performance
7. Recognizes the impact of changes in the public health system, and larger social, political, economic environment on organizational practices	8. Modifies organizational practices in consideration of changes in the public health system, and the larger social, political, and economic environment	8. Ensures organizational practices are in concert with changes in the public health system, and the larger social, political, and economic environment
		9. Ensures the management of organizational change

We thank Janet Place of the North Carolina Public Health Academy at the University of North Carolina for preparing this matrix and her work chairing the Tier 1 Committee.