

2019-2020 Iowa Workforce Development Assessment: Survey and Focus Group Report



Midwestern Public Health Training Center

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Executive Summary

This report seeks to report the results of the Iowa Public Health Workforce Development Survey and its corresponding Focus Group activity, to supplement the Public Health Workforce Interests and Needs (PH WINS) survey. A preliminary synthesis of the State Survey with the Focus Group activity is also provided.

PH WINS was fielded to a nationally representative sample of State Health Agency Central Office (SHA-CO) staff, as well as local health department (LHD) staff. Forty-seven state health agencies (SHAs), 26 large LHDs, and 71 midsize LHDs participated. Staff from LHDs were randomly sampled across 20 strata, based on agency size and geographic region. Staff also contributed with certainty from large LHDs in non-decentralized states. The frame is representative of staff at LHDs serving more than 25,000 people and with 25 or more staff members. Other LHDs are excluded, and so PH WINS is not representative of smaller LHDs. There are some differences between staff at smaller locals and midsize/larger departments.

Given the differences existing between larger, more urban agencies and smaller, more rural agencies, J.P. Leider, et. al, advises, "...deeper examination of these respondents [serving smaller LHDs] and their comparability with their peers at larger jurisdictions may be worthwhile in examining considerations of generalizability to smaller LHDs." (Leider, 2017)

PH WINS data were reported at the national and regional levels, so no state-specific data for Iowa was created. As an effort to fill in the gaps, the Iowa Public Health Association (IPHA), in partnership with the Midwestern Public Health Training Center (MPHTC), conducted a workforce needs assessment in 2019 entitled the Iowa Public Health Workforce Development Survey.

The Iowa Public Health Association also conducted a series of focus group sessions regarding workforce development that focused on current needs, barriers, and a vision for the future state of Iowa LHDs. In conjunction with PH WINS and the Iowa Public Health Workforce Development Survey, these focus groups helped inform Iowa public health workforce development. This report details the procedure, major findings, notable comments, and rankings of domain skills needed.

PH WINS and the Statewide Survey

A decision was made that Iowa should create its own survey to determine the workforce interests and needs of smaller health departments, since data from the Public Health Workforce Interests and Needs Survey (PH-WINS) excluded roughly 33% of the Local Health Departments (LHDs) in Iowa, due to a small department size. Members of IPHA and MPHTC recognized the need to represent our rural populations excluded in the national survey. The statewide survey fielded questions modeled from the PH-WINS survey and pertained to demographics, workforce perceptions and needs, supervisory status, and plans on leaving the public health workforce.

In the PH WINS data for Region 7, a total of 65 individual skill items were grouped into 8 larger focus areas: effective communication, data for decision-making, cultural competence, budget and financial management, change management, systems and strategic thinking, developing a vision for a health community, and cross-sectoral partnerships. Overall, non-supervisor, supervisor/manager, and

executive-level respondents who have a gap in each focus area were identified. If a respondent reported a skill gap (high importance/low skill) in one of the individual items that makes up the larger focus area, they were also considered to have a gap in that focus area.

The Statewide Survey and Focus Groups

The Statewide Workforce Development Survey and the IPHA Workforce Development Focus Group project are being compared to detect common themes. Early observations find participants rank greater communication highly as both a skill need and an ingredient for a more effective public health workforce.

Survey Data

Data on PH WINS, the State Survey, and the IDPH Focus Groups are provided below for the purpose of comparison and analysis.

PH WINS (National and HHS Region 7)

PH WINS provides information critical to understanding and improving the workforce that delivers public health services nationally, as well as actionable data for participating health agencies to address cross-cutting training needs and skill gaps. Findings have been used by participating health agencies to better understand and address workforce development, as well as federal and foundation partners to help inform future investments in public health workforce development.

Skill Gap data

PH WINS defines a Skill Gap as a skill which respondents identify as being of high importance to their day-to-day work, but also report as having low proficiency in that skill (high importance/low skill). Both Regional and National data were reported.

Respondents were asked “how important is this item in your day-to-day work?” and given the answer choices “not important,” “somewhat unimportant,” “somewhat important,” and “very important.”

- Low importance is the aggregate of “not important” and “somewhat unimportant.”
- High importance is the aggregate of “somewhat important” and “very important.”

Respondents were then asked, “what is your current skill level for this item?” and given the answer choices “not applicable,” “unable to perform,” “beginner,” “proficient,” and “expert.”

- Low skill is the aggregate of “unable to perform” and “beginner.”
- High skill is the aggregate of “proficient” and “expert.”

Most important training need: Non-supervisors

Of skills identified as very important, which is most important skill gap (according to the respondent)	Region 7	National – 2017
Effectively target communications to different audiences	8%	10%
Communicate in a way that persuades others to act	17%	17%
Identify appropriate sources of data and information to assess the health of a community	2%	3%
Collect valid data for use in decision making	19%	17%
Identify evidence-based approaches to address public health issues	9%	5%
Describe the value of a diverse public health workforce	1%	1%
Support inclusion of health equity and social justice principles into planning for program and service delivery	1%	3%
Deliver socially, culturally, and linguistically appropriate programs and customer service	11%	13%
Describe financial analysis methods applicable to program and service delivery	1%	1%
Describe how public health funding mechanisms support agency programs and services	1%	1%
Describe the value of an agency business plan	0%	0%
Describe the influence of internal changes on organizational practices	1%	1%
Assess the external drivers in your environment that may influence your work	1%	1%
Describe how social determinants of health impact the health of individuals, families, and the overall community	2%	2%
Participate in quality improvement processes for agency programs and services	5%	5%
Describe the value of community strategic planning that results in a community health assessment or community health improvement plan	1%	1%
Describe your agency's strategic priorities, mission, and vision	1%	2%
Describe the importance of engaging community members in the design and implementation of programs to improve health in a community	2%	2%
Engage community assets and resources to improve health in a community	8%	5%
Collaborate with public health personnel across the agency to improve the health of the community	5%	6%
Describe your role in improving the health of the community served by the agency	5%	3%

Most important training need: Supervisors/Managers

Of skills identified as very important, which is most important skill gap (according to the respondent)	Region 7	National - 2017
Communicate in a way that different audiences can understand	23%	18%
Identify appropriate sources of data and information to assess the health of a community	1%	3%
Communicate in a way that persuades others to act	14%	13%
Use valid data to drive decision making	10%	16%
Apply evidence-based approaches to address public health issues	9%	7%
Incorporate health equity and social justice principles into planning for programs and services	1%	3%
Implement socially, culturally, and linguistically appropriate policies, programs, and services that reflect the diversity of individuals and populations in a community	2%	4%
Use financial analysis methods in managing programs and services	3%	3%
Identify funding mechanisms and procedures to develop sustainable funding models for programs and services	5%	3%
Implement a business plan for agency programs and services	1%	1%
Modify programmatic practices in consideration of internal and external changes	3%	3%
Assess the drivers in your environment that may influence public health programs and services across the agency	1%	0%
Integrate current and projected trends into organizational strategic planning	0%	1%
Apply findings from a community health assessment or community health improvement plan to agency programs and services	0%	1%
Implement an organizational strategic plan	2%	2%
Engage community members in the design and implementation of programs to improve health in a community	3%	2%
Identify and engage assets and resources that can be used to improve health in a community	3%	2%
Engage in collaborations within the public health system, including traditional and non-traditional partners, to improve the health of a community	5%	5%
Assess how agency policies, programs, and services advance population health	2%	1%
Support development of a diverse public health workforce	1%	2%

Build cross-sector partnerships to address social determinants of health	1%	2%
Apply quality improvement processes to improve agency programs and services	11%	11%

Most important training need: Executives

Of skills identified as very important, which is most important skill gap (according to the respondent)	Region 7	National – 2017
Communicate in a way that persuades others to act	8%	9%
Ensure the use of appropriate sources of data and information to assess the health of a community	7%	1%
Use valid data to drive decision making	0%	8%
Ensure the application of evidence-based approaches to address public health issues	9%	5%
Ensure the implementation of socially, culturally, and linguistically appropriate policies, programs, and services that reflect the diversity of individuals and populations in a community	9%	4%
Communicate in a way that different audiences can understand	0%	4%
Develop a diverse public health workforce	0%	3%
Incorporate health equity and social justice principles into planning across the agency	1%	3%
Use financial analysis methods in making decisions about programs and services across the agency	9%	5%
Leverage funding mechanisms and procedures to develop sustainable funding models for the agency	8%	7%
Design a business plan for the agency	0%	1%
Manage organizational change in response to evolving internal and external circumstances	13%	14%
Assess the drivers in your environment that may influence public health programs and services across the agency	0%	1%
Integrate current and projected trends into organizational strategic planning	2%	2%
Influence policies external to the organization that address social determinants of health	2%	2%
Create a culture of quality improvement at the agency or division level	0%	8%
Ensure health department representation in a collaborative process resulting in a community health assessment or community health improvement plan	0%	2%
Ensure the successful implementation of an organizational strategic plan	14%	6%
Ensure community member engagement in the design and implementation of programs to improve health in a community	0%	1%

Negotiate with multiple partners for the use of assets and resources to improve health in a community	0%	2%
Build collaborations within the public health system among traditional and non-traditional partners to improve the health of a community	11%	10%
Advocate for needed population health services and programs	7%	4%

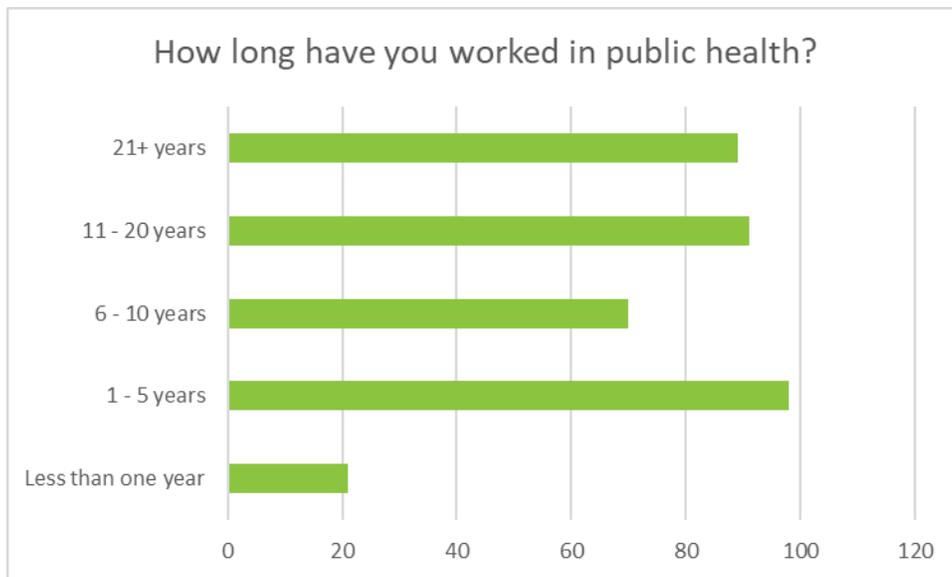
Iowa Public Health Workforce Development Survey

The Statewide Survey was developed to determine the workforce needs of smaller health departments, since data from PH-WINS excluded roughly 33% of the LHDs in Iowa due to a small department size. IPHA and MPHTC saw the need to represent the rural populations excluded in the national survey. Modeled from the PH-WINS survey, this survey fielded questions pertaining to demographics, workforce perceptions, supervisory status, and plans on leaving the public health workforce (Reinke, 2019).

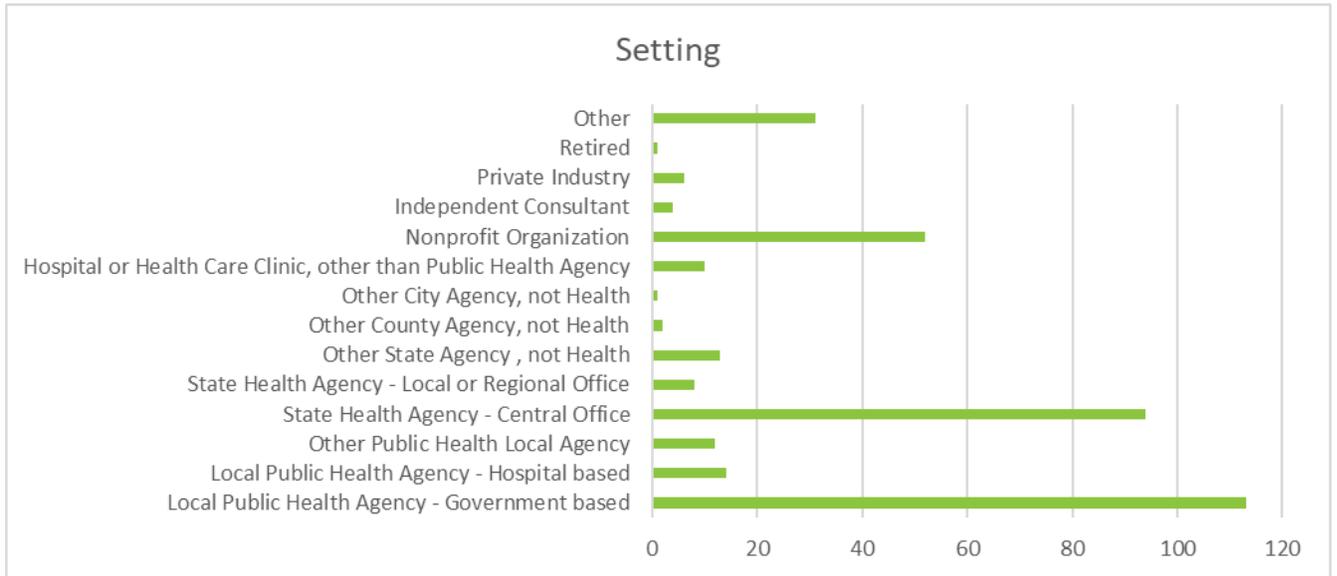
Summary Data

“Q” numbers refer to question numbers in the survey.

Q75: How long have you worked in public health? (n=369)



Q29: Please specify your setting (“Other” may include “Other City Agency not Health” or “Other County Agency, not Health”).



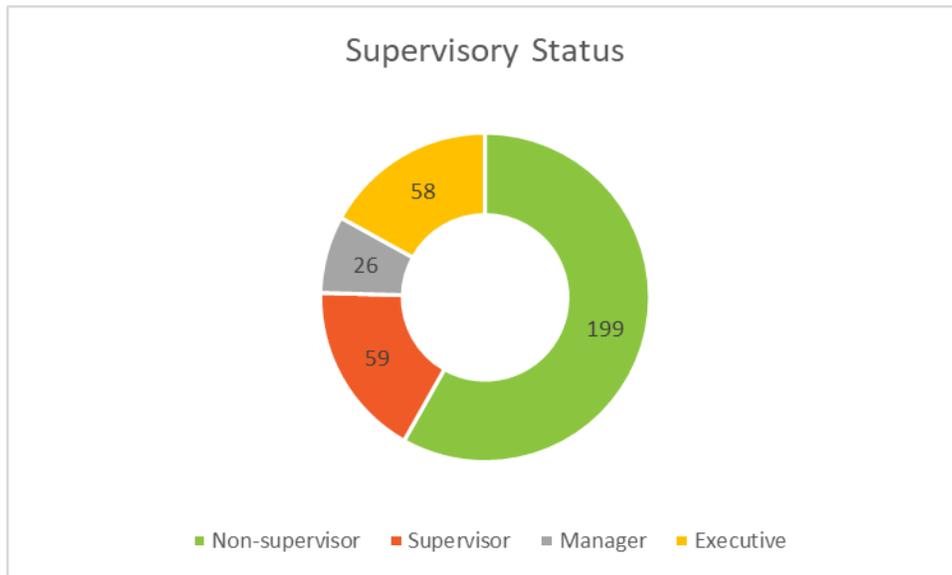
Q30: Please describe your setting further:

Please describe your setting further:
Extension and Outreach
University of Iowa, Dept of Preventive & Community Dentistry
Academic
Higher Education
Student, Dietitian in retail setting
Environmental Health and Zoning Administrator
Academic setting
Public health education
Laboratory
academic institution
K-12 Education - public school
College of Public Health
University Center
College/University Health Promotion
University of Iowa
State Public Health Laboratory
University
independent consultant working primarily for nonprofits
Academic faculty. Higher educational faculty MPH
Higher education
7 years in a District Health Department and 5 years in a Local Health Department
Laboratory
Public Water and Wastewater Utility provider
University-Applied research center

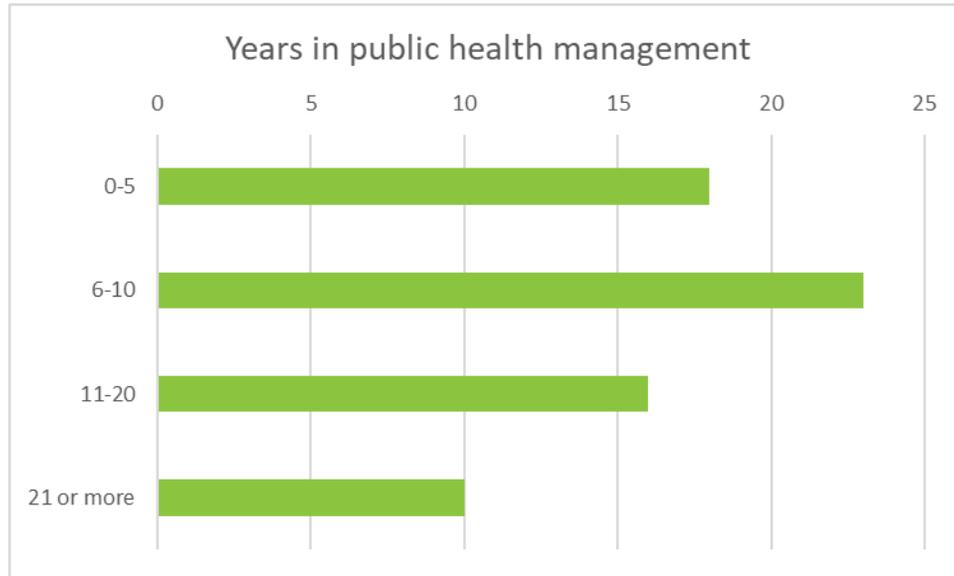
Q32: How many employees in your agency are dedicated to public health? + Q35 In which region do you work?

Region	Range
Region 1	1-700
Region 2	2-46
Region 3	1-350
Region 4	1-30
Region 5	2-100
Region 6	1-500
Statewide	1-1000

Q3: What is your supervisory status?



Q28: How many years have you been in public health management (in any agency, in any public health manager or executive position)?



Q4-Q12: Please rank the following skills in terms of importance to your current position. Top skills were ranked either 1 (First-highest) or 2 (Second-highest).

Q4: Non-supervisors (n=198)

- Communicate in a way that persuades others to act (1)
- Collect valid data for use in decision making (1)
- Support inclusion of health equity and social justice principles into planning for program and service delivery (1)

Q5: Supervisors & managers (n=83)

- Communicate in a way that persuades others to act (2)
- Use valid data to drive decision making (1)
- Apply evidence-based approaches to address public health issues (1)

Q6: Executives (n=57)

- Communicate in a way that different audiences can understand (2);
- Communicate in a way that persuades others to act (1)
- Use valid data to drive decision making (2)
- Ensure the implementation of socially, culturally, and linguistically appropriate policies, programs, and services that reflect the diversity of individuals and populations in a community (1)

Q7: Non-supervisors (n=198)

- Describe the influence of internal changes on organizational practices (2)

- Describe how social determinants of health impact the health of individuals, families, and the overall community (1)
- Participate in quality improvement processes for agency programs and services (2)

Q8: Supervisors & managers (n=83)

- Identify funding mechanisms and procedures to develop sustainable funding models for programs and services (2)
- Assess the drivers in your environment that may influence public health programs and services (1)
- Build cross-sector partnerships to address social determinants of health (1)

Q9: Executives (n=57)

- Leverage funding mechanisms and procedures to develop sustainable funding models for the agency (2)

Q10: Non-supervisors (n=198)

- Describe the importance of engaging community members in the design and implementation of programs to improve health in a community (2)
- Engage community assets and resources to improve health in a community (2)
- Collaborate with public health personnel across the organization to improve the health of the community (1)

Q11: Supervisors & managers (n=83)

- Engage community members in the design and implementation of programs to improve health in a community (2)
- Engage in collaborations within the public health system, including traditional and non-traditional partners, to improve the health of a community (1)

Q12: Executives (n=57)

- Ensure the successful implementation of an organizational strategic plan (1)
- Build collaborations within the public health system among traditional and non-traditional partners to improve the health of a community (1)
- Advocate for needed population health services and programs (1)

Skill ranking data

Where PH WINS identified skill gaps by matching skills of high importance with low proficiency in that skill, the State Survey identified perceived skills of high importance and asked respondents to which of the 10 Strategic Skills were incorporated into their work by either a lot or a little. For Questions 16 and 17, respondents were asked if they incorporate the de Beaumont set of eight strategic skills, plus two additional skills, into their day-to-day work. These skills are based on definitions of the Strategic Skills listed in Appendix C.

Most important training need: Non-supervisors (n=140)

Skills identified as most important to your current position (respondents either replied with 1, Most Important, or 2, Highly Important)	State Survey
Effectively target communications to different audiences	25%
Communicate in a way that persuades others to act	32%
Identify appropriate sources of data and information to assess the health of a community	20%
Collect valid data for use in decision making	35%
Identify evidence-based approaches to address public health issues	30%
Describe the value of a diverse public health workforce	5%
Support inclusion of health equity and social justice principles into planning for program and service delivery	22%
Deliver socially, culturally, and linguistically appropriate programs and customer service	32%
Describe financial analysis methods applicable to program and service delivery	9%
Describe how public health funding mechanisms support agency programs and services	21%
Describe the value of an agency business plan	6%
Describe the influence of internal changes on organizational practices	24%
Assess the external drivers in your environment that may influence your work	36%
Describe how social determinants of health impact the health of individuals, families, and the overall community	49%
Participate in quality improvement processes for agency programs and services	34%
Describe the value of community strategic planning that results in a community health assessment or community health improvement plan	22%
Describe your agency's strategic priorities, mission, and vision	26%
Describe the importance of engaging community members in the design and implementation of programs to improve health in a community	43%
Engage community assets and resources to improve health in a community	50%

Collaborate with public health personnel across the agency to improve the health of the community	54%
Describe your role in improving the health of the community served by the agency	27%

Most important training need: Supervisors/Managers (n=62)

Skills identified as most important to your current position (respondents either replied with 1, Most Important, or 2, Highly Important)	State Survey
Communicate in a way that different audiences can understand	33%
Identify appropriate sources of data and information to assess the health of a community	27%
Communicate in a way that persuades others to act	32%
Use valid data to drive decision making	35%
Apply evidence-based approaches to address public health issues	38%
Incorporate health equity and social justice principles into planning for programs and services	14%
Implement socially, culturally, and linguistically appropriate policies, programs, and services that reflect the diversity of individuals and populations in a community	24%
Use financial analysis methods in managing programs and services	8%
Identify funding mechanisms and procedures to develop sustainable funding models for programs and services	35%
Implement a business plan for agency programs and services	18%
Modify programmatic practices in consideration of internal and external changes	19%
Assess the drivers in your environment that may influence public health programs and services across the agency	33%
Integrate current and projected trends into organizational strategic planning	19%
Apply findings from a community health assessment or community health improvement plan to agency programs and services	31%
Implement an organizational strategic plan	26%
Engage community members in the design and implementation of programs to improve health in a community	37%
Identify and engage assets and resources that can be used to improve health in a community	29%
Engage in collaborations within the public health system, including traditional and non-traditional partners, to improve the health of a community	55%
Assess how agency policies, programs, and services advance population health	23%
Support development of a diverse public health workforce	18%
Build cross-sector partnerships to address social determinants of health	43%
Apply quality improvement processes to improve agency programs and services	25%

Most important training need: Executives (n=44)

Skills identified as most important to your current position (respondents either replied with 1, Most Important, or 2, Highly Important)	State Survey
Communicate in a way that persuades others to act	42%
Ensure the use of appropriate sources of data and information to assess the health of a community	22%
Use valid data to drive decision making	44%
Ensure the application of evidence-based approaches to address public health issues	16%
Ensure the implementation of socially, culturally, and linguistically appropriate policies, programs, and services that reflect the diversity of individuals and populations in a community	29%
Communicate in a way that different audiences can understand	31%
Develop a diverse public health workforce	20%
Incorporate health equity and social justice principles into planning across the agency	29%
Use financial analysis methods in making decisions about programs and services across the agency	23%
Leverage funding mechanisms and procedures to develop sustainable funding models for the agency	34%
Design a business plan for the agency	25%
Manage organizational change in response to evolving internal and external circumstances	32%
Assess the drivers in your environment that may influence public health programs and services across the agency	16%
Integrate current and projected trends into organizational strategic planning	18%
Influence policies external to the organization that address social determinants of health	27%
Create a culture of quality improvement at the agency or division level	25%
Ensure health department representation in a collaborative process resulting in a community health assessment or community health improvement plan	30%
Ensure the successful implementation of an organizational strategic plan	36%
Ensure community member engagement in the design and implementation of programs to improve health in a community	11%
Negotiate with multiple partners for the use of assets and resources to improve health in a community	21%
Build collaborations within the public health system among traditional and non-traditional partners to improve the health of a community	66%
Advocate for needed population health services and programs	37%

Q16: How much, if at all, do you currently incorporate the following skills in your day-to-day work (3 = A lot; 2 = A little)?

- Change Management (2)
- Cultural Competency (3)
- Cultural Humility (3)
- Data Analytics (2)
- Diversity and Inclusion (3)
- Persuasive Communication (3)
- Policy Engagement (2)
- Problem Solving (3)
- Resource Management (3)
- Systems Thinking (3)

Q17: How much, if at all, would you like to have training opportunities for the following concepts in your agency (3 = A lot; 2 = A little)?

- Change Management (3)
- Cultural Competency (3)
- Cultural Humility (3)
- Data Analytics (2)
- Diversity and Inclusion (3)
- Persuasive Communication (3)
- Policy Engagement (3)
- Problem Solving (3)
- Resource Management (3)
- Systems Thinking (3)

Summary tables (% of respondents per Skill)

Skills identified as being incorporated in day-to-day work (respondents either replying with 3, A lot, or 2, A little)	State Survey
Change Management	74%
Cultural Competency	78%
Cultural Humility	69%
Data Analytics	77%
Diversity and Inclusion	75%
Persuasive Communication	84%
Policy Engagement	72%
Problem Solving	96%
Resource Management	85%
Systems Thinking	83%

Summary tables (% of respondents per Concept)

Concepts identified as ones respondents would like to have training opportunities in their agency (respondents either replying with 3, A lot, or 2, A little)	State Survey
Change Management	79%
Cultural Competency	78%
Cultural Humility	76%
Data Analytics	73%
Diversity and Inclusion	75%
Persuasive Communication	86%
Policy Engagement	73%
Problem Solving	79%
Resource Management	74%
Systems Thinking	80%

Q13: What would motivate you to seek out professional development training?

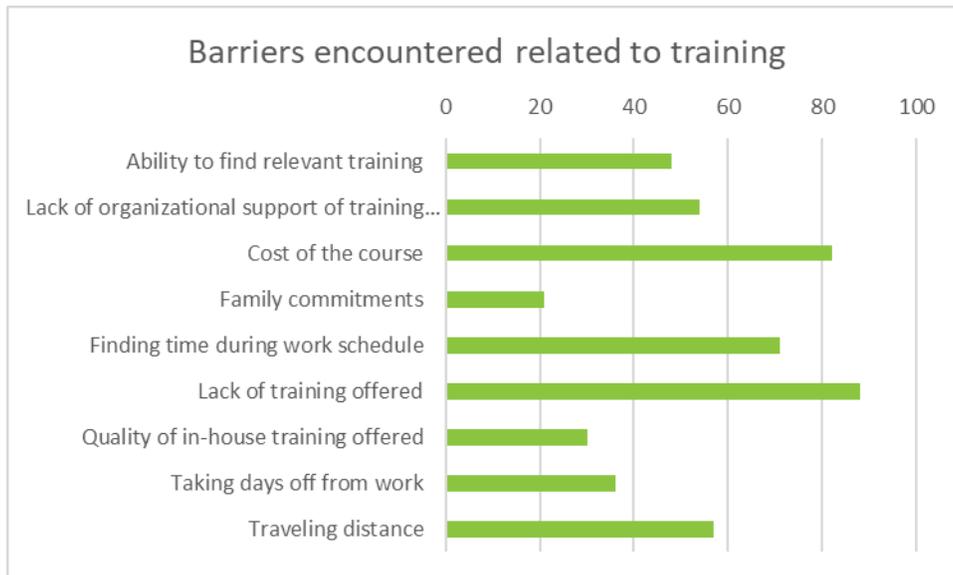


Other responses
time and location of offering
High Quality Information/Skilled Presenters
Necessary for high professional performance
Excellent, high quality training that has a business concept basis
low cost of training
A community gathered, created, and strengthened by all seeking out the same training and skills.
Topic relevant to my work and would improve my skills and performance
Ideas, programs, concepts that advance public health impact.
is beneficial to the work I do
All of these are mandatory except the bottom four squares
Applicable to my work
Funding to pay for training
importance to client
Help me do my job better

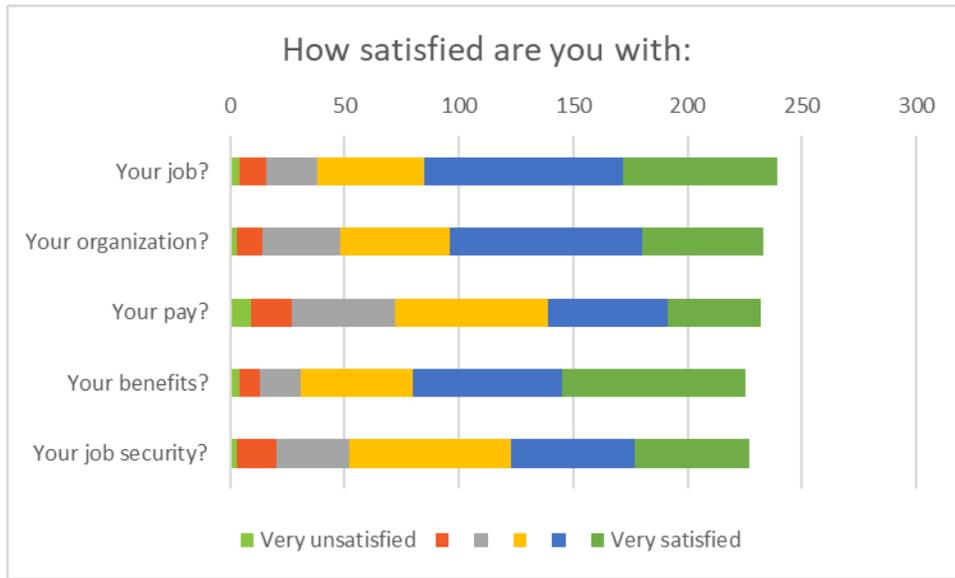
Q14: Have you experienced any barriers to professional development training? (Y=116; N=130)



Q15: Please select the barriers you've encountered related to training.



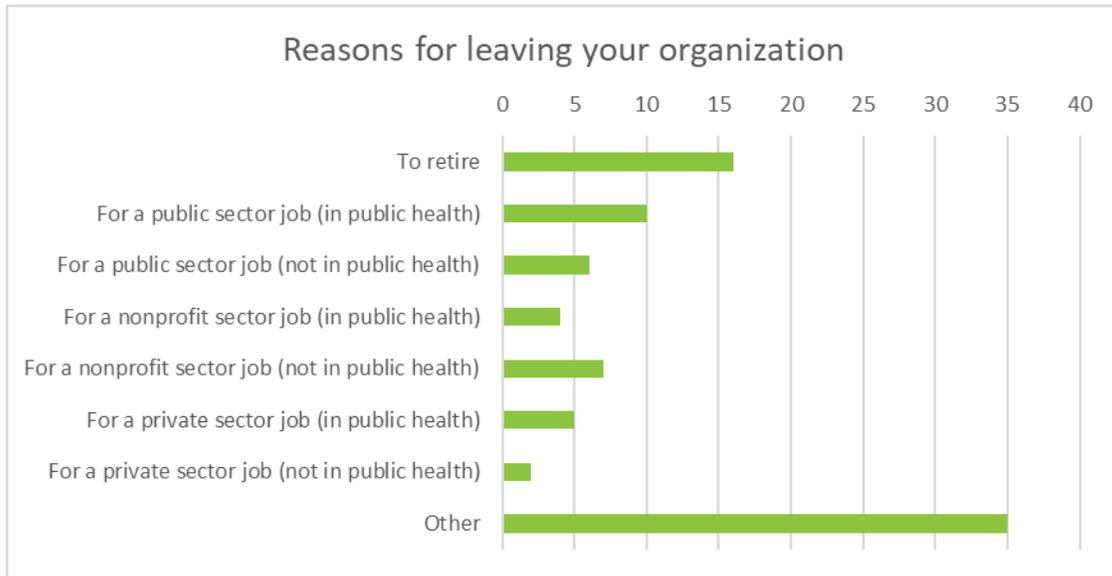
Q18: Considering everything, how satisfied are you with:



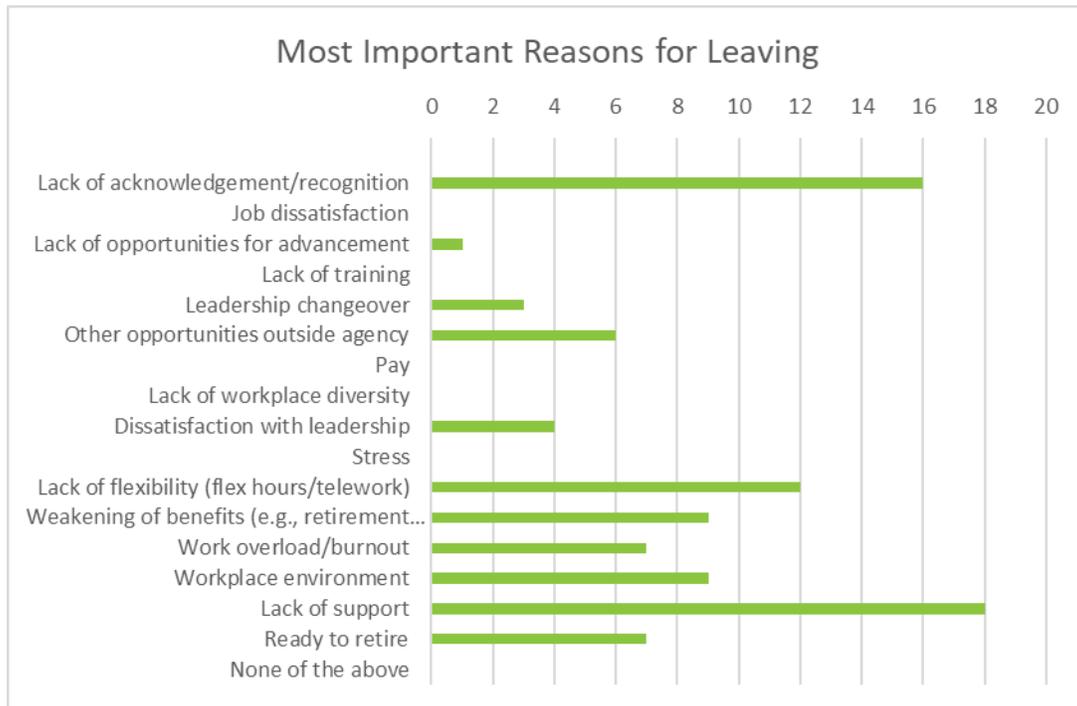
Q19: Are you considering leaving your organization within the next year, and if so, why?



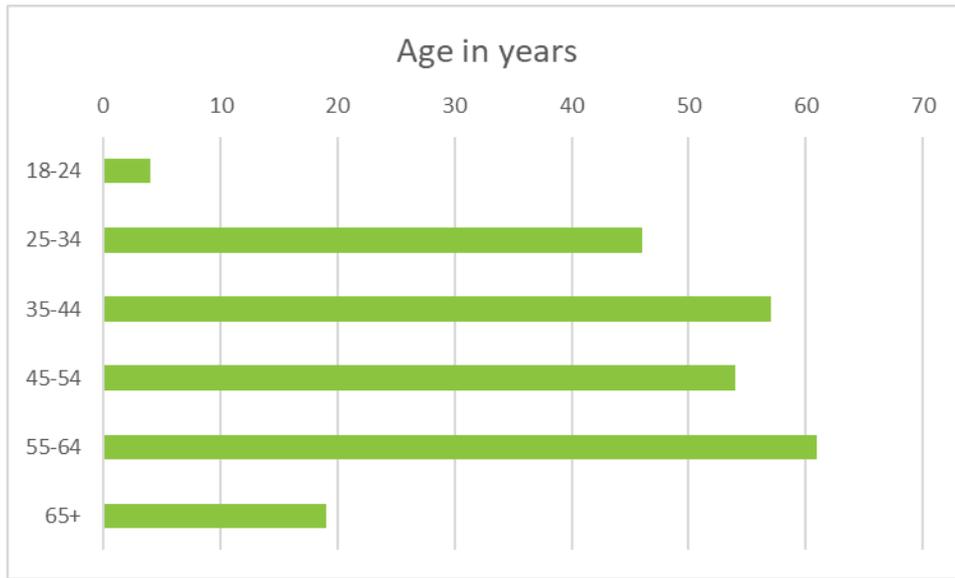
Q19: Are you considering leaving your organization within the next year, and if so, why?



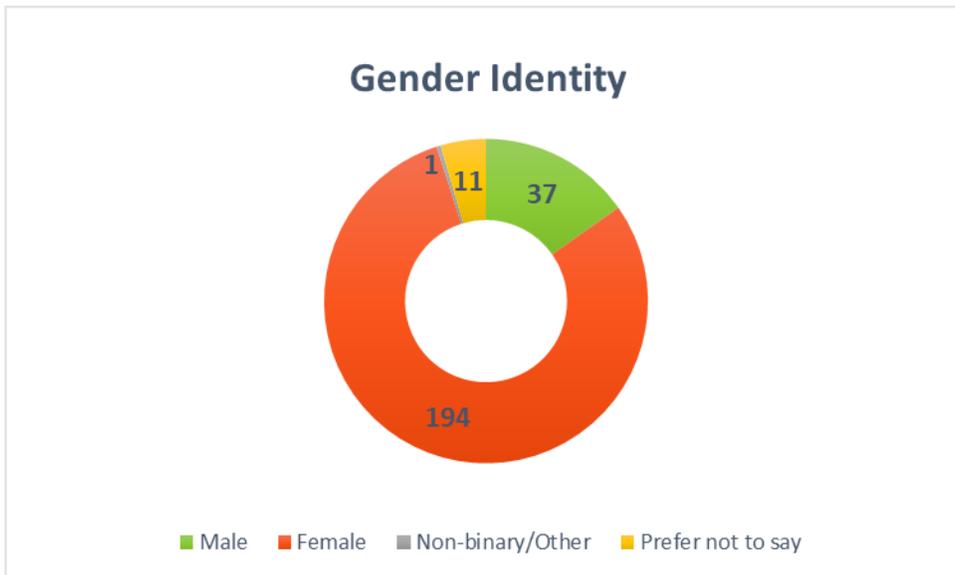
Q20: Please select the most important reason(s) why you are considering leaving your organization in the next year.



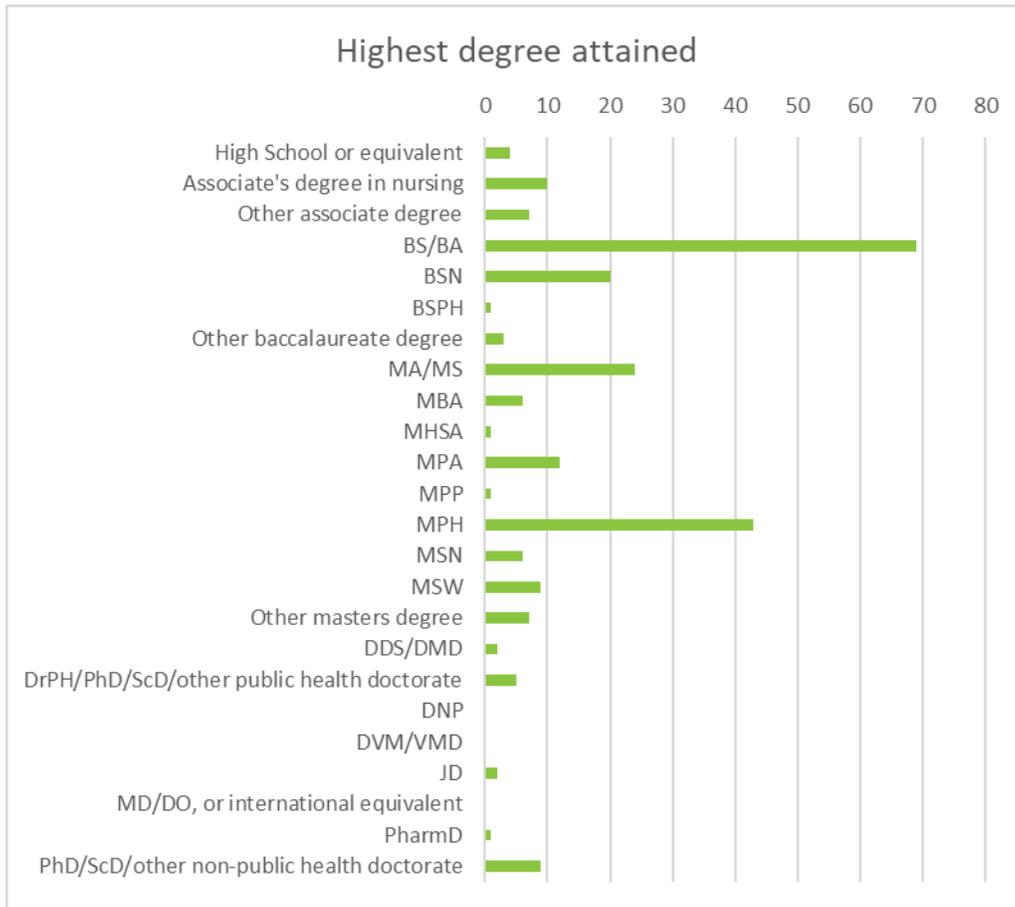
Q27: What is your age in years?



Q23: What is your gender identity? (n=243)



Q33: Please indicate the highest degree you have attained.



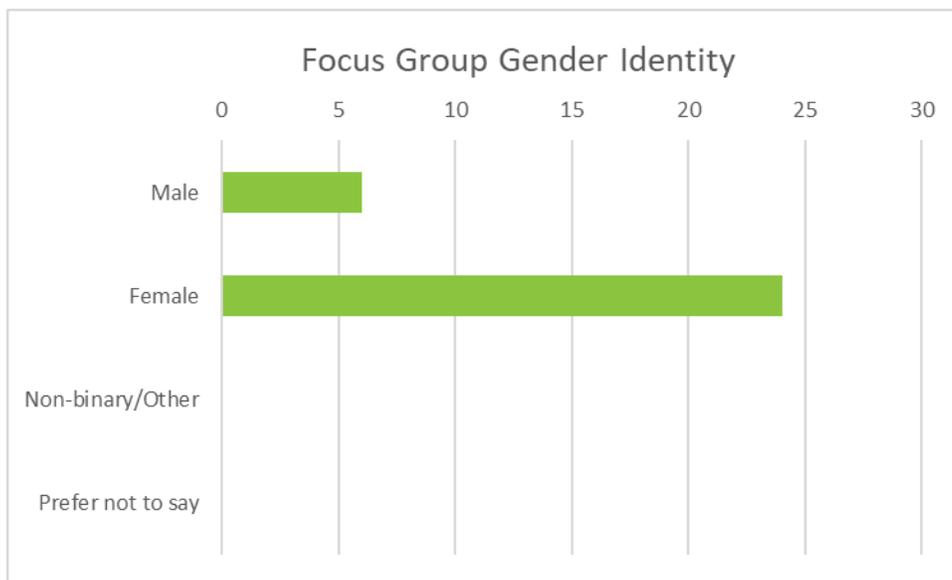
Focus Group Activity

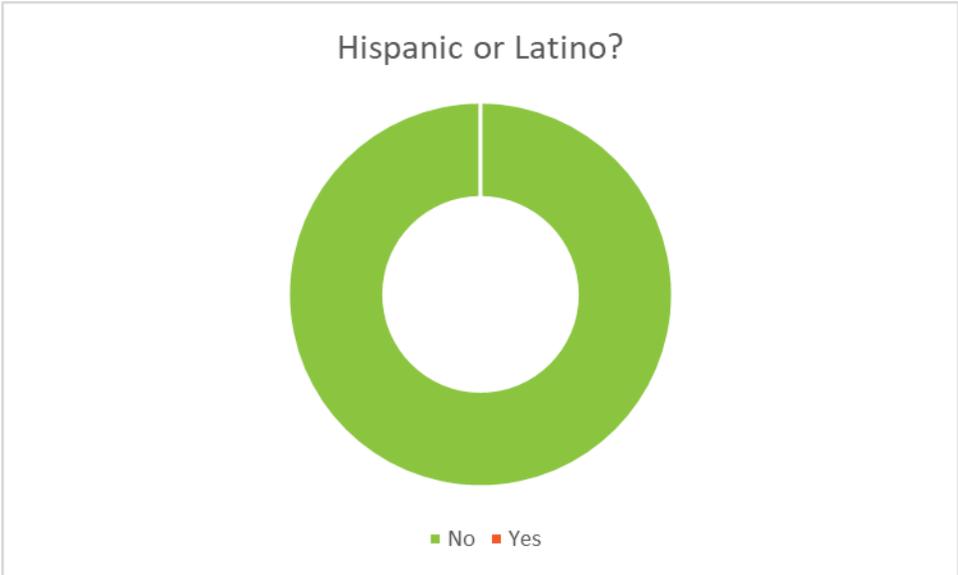
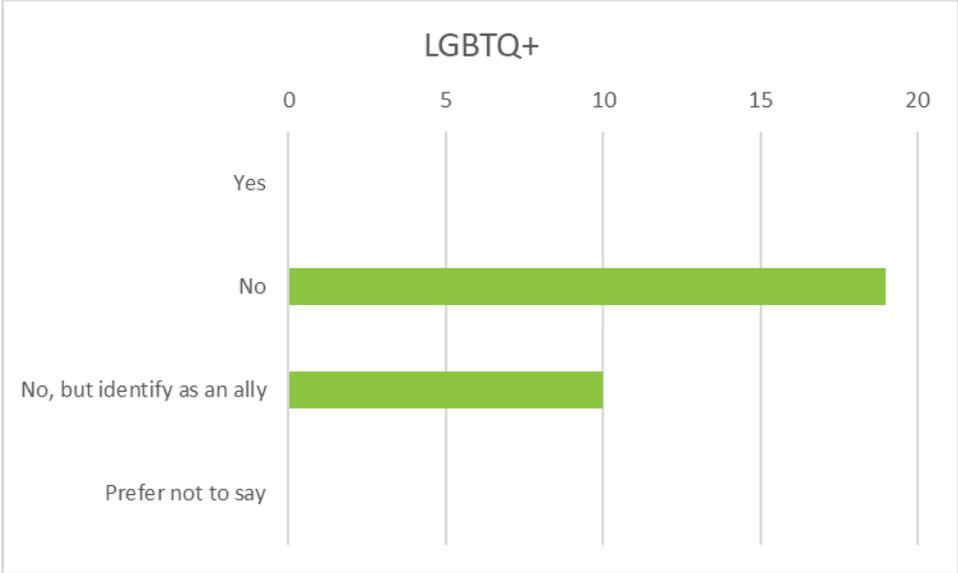
Purpose & Procedures

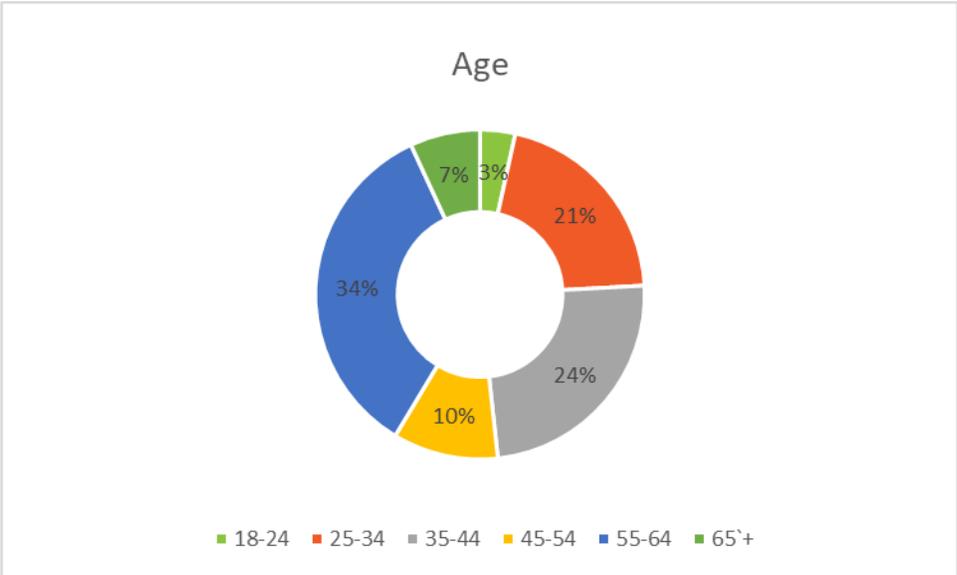
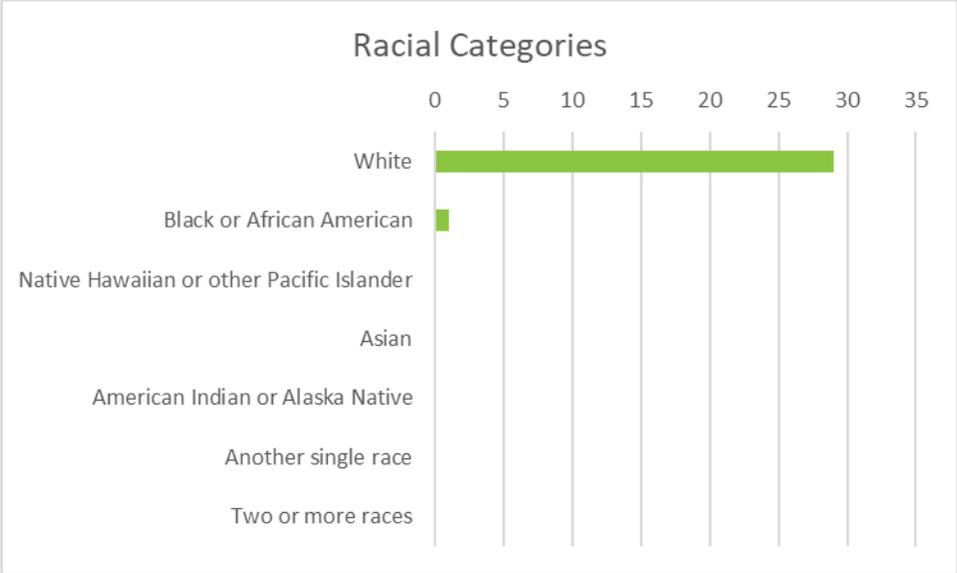
The purpose of these focus groups is to assist in the creation of a statewide workforce development framework. To assure geographic representation, participants were invited to register for one of several focus groups taking place in distinct Iowa communities, or an online session via Zoom.

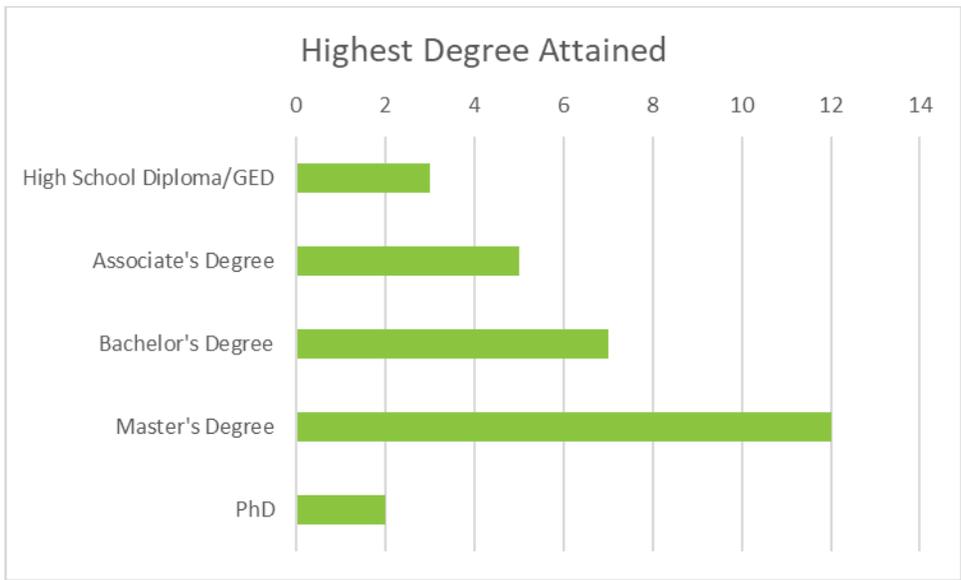
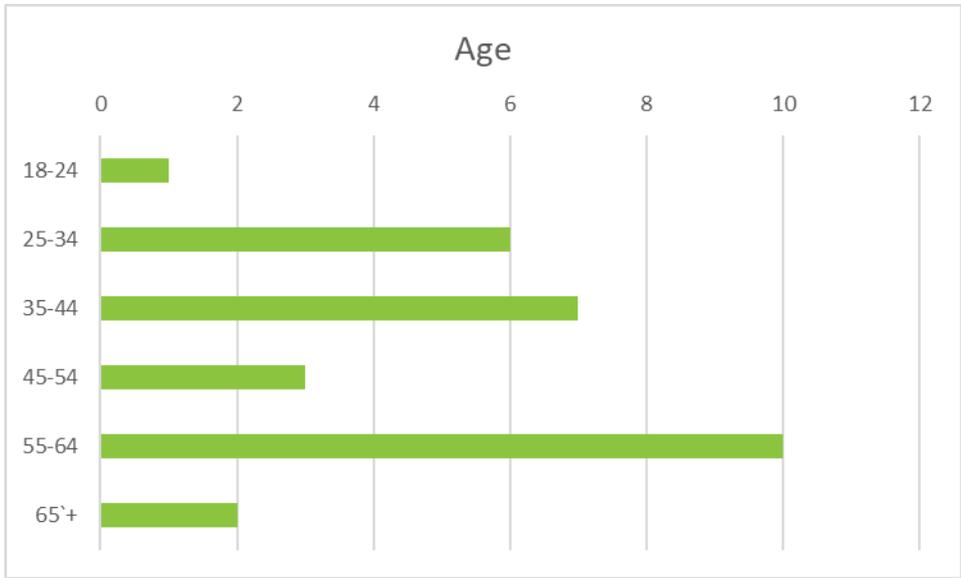
Attendees were asked several demographic questions regarding gender, race, ethnic background, age, highest degree attained, and supervisory status. Listed below are the results.

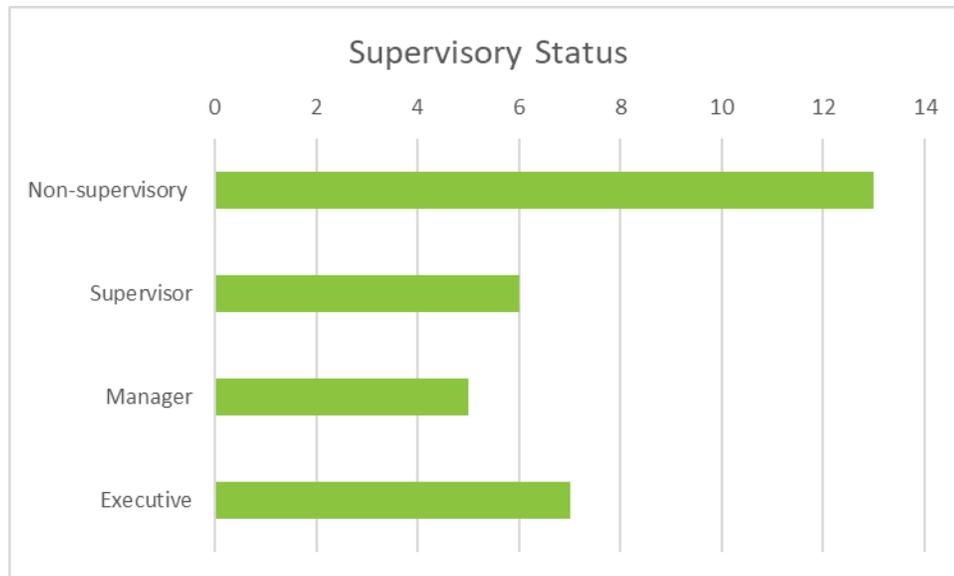
Focus Group Demographic data









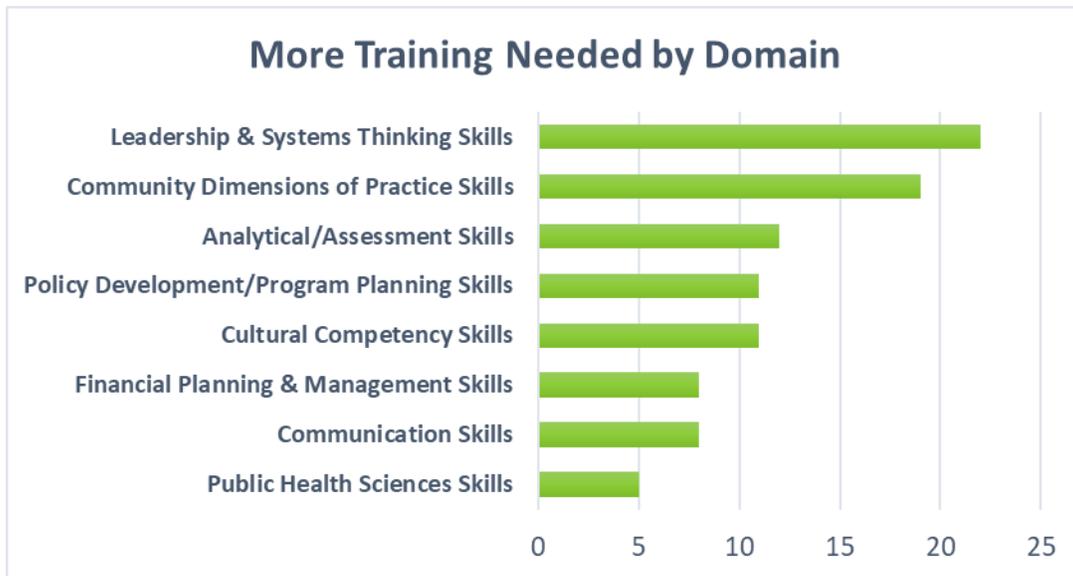


Focus group sessions

Focus group facilitator Elizabeth Faber began with an introduction of herself, provided a review of the guiding principles, and went over what the session would include. Workforce survey results were reviewed and discussed, and participants ranked eight public health domains:

- Analytical/Assessment Skills,
- Policy Development/Program Planning Skills,
- Communication Skills,
- Cultural Competency Skills,
- Community Dimensions of Practice Skills,
- Public Health Sciences Skills,
- Financial Planning and Management Skills, and
- Leadership and Systems Thinking Skills.

Listed below is a chart detailing training needs as reported by focus group participants. Participants were asked to vote for the three domains in which they feel they needed more training. The two domains most often cited as needing more training were Leadership and Systems Thinking Skills, followed by Community Dimensions of Practice Skills.



Warm-up session: leading question themes

To help participants start thinking about what they wanted to discuss concerning the three questions, the facilitator instructed each participant to write answers to those questions on separate pieces of paper. They were asked to write one idea per card and each idea was limited to five to seven words. Listed below are some of the general themes that emerged from this exercise.

Question 1: What makes a public health workforce effective?

General themes common to most of the focus groups revolved around characteristics which include a workforce that is communicative, team-based, culturally diverse, highly skilled, adaptive, and has ethical leadership. Additional factors include a unit which is properly funded, manages resources well, is supported by its community, and adopts quality initiatives.

Question 2: What are the challenges for Iowa to have the most effective public health workforce?

The focus groups listed several barriers to effectiveness, generally citing resistance to change, a lack of cultural diversity, recruitment and retention issues, work/life balance issues, burnout, ineffective or lack of training, communication gaps, and a lack of clear organization. A lack of sustainable funding, a community unaware of their services, and geographical diversity (rural vs. urban issues) among units were also cited.

Question 3: What is needed for Iowa to have the most effective public health workforce?

Needs common to most of the focus groups centered around better workforce collaboration and partnering, retention, definition of success, staff empowerment, skilled leadership, focused training, and teamwork. Also mentioned were more support by and for the community, improved organizational structuring, and an increase in resources.

The final phase of the focus group activity was to discuss the questions in a facilitated session. Everyone participated by using sticky notes for individual ideas and then grouping ideas into overall concepts. Clarification on ideas and concepts were asked to be provided when necessary so that everyone fully understood each interpretation. If time allowed, the concepts were then prioritized.

Findings

The following summarizes the major themes which came out of the focus group discussions for each question. Comments taken from participants related to each theme are found in Appendix A.

Question 1: What makes a public health workforce effective?

Most often, participants mentioned being concerned with:

- Knowledgeable and Passionate Staff
- Leadership Commitment, Accountability, and Support
- Understands Cultural Humility
- Cross-sector Collaboration
- Strategic Planning (vision/goals)
- Persuasive Communication (success/stories)
- Innovation and Diversity of Thought

Question 2: What are the challenges for Iowa to have the most effective public health workforce?

The themes that emerged most frequently dealt with:

- Workforce Investment (diversity, retention, recruitment, succession)
- Financial Resources
- Cooperation and Collaboration (fragmentation, inconsistency)
- Public and Political Engagement (trust, understanding)
- Certifications/Licensing (standardization)
- Training (barriers)
- Rurality

Question 3: What is needed for Iowa to have the most effective public health workforce?

Themes include:

- Visibility, Sharing, and Acknowledgement
- Cross-sector Collaboration and Coordination
- Strategic Planning (conversations, cooperation)
- Reinvestment in the Workforce (support, incentives, succession)
- Persuasive Communication Skills and Strategies
- Public Endorsement
- Consistency/Standardization (licensing, certification)
- Funding
- Embracement of technology

Early comparisons to the State Survey

An initial mapping of focus group conversations back to workforce skills from the State Survey yielded several observations shown below.

Skills most often identified as needed for an effective workforce during the main sessions include identifying evidence-based approaches to address issues, addressing social determinants of health, and collaboration within the public health system to improve community health.

Frequently cited training barriers include finding time during work schedule, cost of the course, and lack of organizational support of the training.

One workforce skill based on perceived importance was collect valid data to drive decision making.

Regarding Cultural Humility, perceived training needs were expressed with, “what do I need to say or how do I be sensitive to this group versus what we've been dealing with all our lives?” and “I think Iowa is becoming more culturally diverse.” When asked what training is needed, one focus group respondent replied with, “I would say something around cultural competence, but not the same old.” One other said, “...I get a lot of requests for cultural competency training.” Related themes include communication, knowledgeable staff, and public support.

Change Management also prompted discussion: “...change management is important. Being in public health is just constantly changing. So how to train them to be able to handle those situations.” Themes related to change management also include leadership strength, strategic planning, innovation, workforce investment, and new technologies.

Themes around Resource Management were often discussed. “...there's a lot of different things in the works that all needs to come together, and put all of our resources...” Themes related to resource management included collaboration, communication, innovation, workforce investment, and financial resources.

Conclusion

The Statewide Workforce Development Survey and the IPHA Workforce Development Focus Group project are currently in the process of cross-comparison to detect more common themes. Early observations find participants consistently rank communicating persuasively and effectively highly both as a skill need and as an ingredient for a more effective public health workforce.

For example, PH WINS data for Region 7 ranks Effective Communication highly in all three leadership roles (Non-supervisors, Supervisors/Managers, and Executives), while the State Survey for Iowa, Persuasive Communication rated as being used extensively in day-to-day work, and as a training need. The focus group activity also reported Persuasive Communication skills as an ingredient to making an effective public health workforce, and as necessary for Iowa to have the most effective public health workforce.

Other skills presenting themselves as highly important across all three studies include Change Management and Systems & Strategic Thinking. Cultural Issues, such as Cross-sector Collaboration and Cultural Competency, are also ranked highly in all three studies.

The goal of the state survey and focus group activities was to fill in any gaps between LHDs reported in PH WINS, and smaller LHDs not included the PH WINS survey. Overall, several skill rankings differed in emphasis or priority, and not all of the local feedback mirrored the national/regional data. Inclusion of smaller LHDs' input will be critical in developing an effective public health workforce, for the sake of gaining a larger perspective, and to find solutions common with larger LHDs. Further cross-sectional analyses are suggested in future research.

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Appendix A: The Iowa Public Health Workforce Development Survey Instrument

The Iowa Public Health Workforce Assessment is designed to collect information about the public health workforce in Iowa and will be used to help develop a statewide public health workforce development plan. The survey is being administered jointly by Iowa Public Health Association (IPHA) and Midwestern Public Health Training Center (MPHTC), with funding support from the Telligen Community Initiative.

Your participation is voluntary and confidential. Individual information will not be shared outside the survey team. Data will only be published in aggregate. Please contact Lina Tucker Reinders of IPHA or Laurie Walkner of MPHTC with any questions about the survey or our broader public health workforce development efforts.

Thank you for taking the time to complete IPHWA 2019.

Q75 How long have you worked in public health?

- Less than one year
- 1 - 5 years
- 6 - 10 years
- 11 - 20 years
- 21+ years

Q29 Please specify your setting.

- Local Public Health Agency - Government based
- Local Public Health Agency - Hospital based
- Other Public Health Local Agency
- State Health Agency - Central Office
- State Health Agency - Local or Regional Office
- Other State Agency, not Health
- Other County Agency, not Health
- Other City Agency, not Health
- Hospital or Health Care Clinic, other than Public Health Agency
- Nonprofit Organization
- Independent Consultant
- Private Industry
- Other

Q30 Please describe your setting further: _____

Q32 How many employees in your agency are dedicated to public health?

Q35 In which region do you work? See map below.

- Region 1
- Region 2
- Region 3
- Region 4
- Region 5
- Region 6
- Statewide

The first series of questions asks you to rank the importance of a set of skills to your current position (Non-supervisor, Supervisor, Manager, or Executive). Each question has a different set of skills to rank. Please answer all the questions to the best of your ability.

Q3 What is your supervisory status?

- Non-supervisor (you do not supervise other employees)
- Supervisor (you are responsible for employees' performance appraisals and approval for their leave, but you do not supervise other supervisors)
- Manager (you are in a management position and supervise one or more supervisors)
- Executive (you are a member of senior leadership or equivalent)

Q28 How many years have you been in public health management (in any agency, in any public health manager or executive position)? Please round up to the nearest year.

- 0–50

Q4 Please rank the following skills in terms of importance to your current position. Drag and drop your answers to change order. (1 = most important, 8 = least important)

- Effectively target communications to different audiences
- Communicate in a way that persuades others to act
- Identify appropriate sources of data and information to assess the health of a community
- Collect valid data for use in decision making
- Identify evidence-based approaches to address public health issues
- Describe the value of a diverse public health workforce
- Support inclusion of health equity and social justice principles into planning for program and service delivery
- Deliver socially, culturally, and linguistically appropriate programs and customer service

Q5 Please rank the following skills in terms of importance to your current position. Drag and drop your answers to change order. (1 = most important, 8 = least important)

- Communicate in a way that different audiences can understand
- Communicate in a way that persuades others to act
- Identify appropriate sources of data and information to assess the health of a community
- Use valid data to drive decision making
- Apply evidence-based approaches to address public health issues
- Support development of a diverse public health workforce
- Incorporate health equity and social justice principles into planning for programs and services
- Implement socially, culturally, and linguistically appropriate policies, programs, and services that reflect the diversity of individuals and populations in a community

Q6 Please rank the following skills in terms of importance to your current position. Drag and drop your answers to change order. (1 = most important, 8 = least important)

- Communicate in a way that different audiences can understand
- Communicate in a way that persuades others to act
- Ensure the use of appropriate sources of data and information to assess the health of a community
- Use valid data to drive decision making
- Ensure the application of evidence-based approaches to address public health issues
- Develop a diverse public health workforce
- Incorporate health equity and social justice principles into planning across the agency
- Ensure the implementation of socially, culturally, and linguistically appropriate policies, programs, and services that reflect the diversity of individuals and populations in a community

Q7 Please rank the following skills in terms of importance to your current position. Drag and drop your answers to change order. (1 = most important, 8 = least important)

- Describe financial analysis methods applicable to program and service delivery
- Describe how public health funding mechanisms support agency programs and services
- Describe the value of an agency business plan
- Describe the influence of internal changes on organizational practices
- Assess the external drivers in your environment that may influence your work
- Describe how social determinants of health impact the health of individuals, families, and the overall community
- Participate in quality improvement processes for agency programs and services
- Describe the value of community strategic planning that results in a community health assessment or community health improvement plan

Q8 Please rank the following skills in terms of importance to your current position. Drag and drop your answers to change order. (1 = most important, 8 = least important)

- Use financial analysis methods in managing programs and services
- Identify funding mechanisms and procedures to develop sustainable funding models for programs and services
- Implement a business plan for agency programs and services
- Modify programmatic practices in consideration of internal and external changes
- Assess the drivers in your environment that may influence public health programs and services
- Integrate current and projected trends into strategic planning for programs and services
- Build cross-sector partnerships to address social determinants of health
- Apply quality improvement processes to improve agency programs and services

Q9 Please rank the following skills in terms of importance to your current position. (1 = most important, 8 = least important)

- Use financial analysis methods in making decisions about programs and services across the agency
- Leverage funding mechanisms and procedures to develop sustainable funding models for the agency
- Design a business plan for the agency
- Manage organizational change in response to evolving internal and external circumstances
- Assess the drivers in your environment that may influence public health programs and services across the agency
- Integrate current and projected trends into organizational strategic planning
- Influence policies external to the organization that address social determinants of health
- Create a culture of quality improvement at the agency or division level

Q10 Please rank the following skills in terms of importance to your current position. Drag and drop your answers to change order. (1 = most important, 5 = least important)

- Describe your organization's strategic priorities, mission, and vision
- Describe the importance of engaging community members in the design and implementation of programs to improve health in a community
- Engage community assets and resources to improve health in a community
- Collaborate with public health personnel across the organization to improve the health of the community
- Describe your role in improving the health of the community served by your organization

Q11 Please rank the following skills in terms of importance to your current position. Drag and drop your answers to change order. (1 = most important, 6 = least important)

- Apply findings from a community health assessment or community health improvement plan to organizational programs and services
- Implement an organizational strategic plan
- Engage community members in the design and implementation of programs to improve health in a community
- Identify and engage assets and resources that can be used to improve health in a community
- Engage in collaborations within the public health system, including traditional and non-traditional partners, to improve the health of a community
- Assess how organization policies, programs, and services advance population health

Q12 Please rank the following skills in terms of importance to your current position. Drag and drop your answers to change order. (1 = most important, 6 = least important)

- Ensure health department representation in a collaborative process resulting in a community health assessment or community health improvement plan
- Ensure the successful implementation of an organizational strategic plan
- Ensure community member engagement in the design and implementation of programs to improve health in a community
- Negotiate with multiple partners for the use of assets and resources to improve health in a community
- Build collaborations within the public health system among traditional and non-traditional partners to improve the health of a community
- Advocate for needed population health services and programs

Q16 How much, if at all, do you currently incorporate the following skills in your day-to-day work? (Not at all, Not much, A little, A lot)

- Change Management
- Cultural Competency
- Cultural Humility
- Data Analytics
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Persuasive Communication
- Policy Engagement
- Problem Solving
- Resource Management
- Systems Thinking

Q17 How much, if at all, would you like to have training opportunities for the following concepts in your agency? (Not at all, Not much, A little, A lot)

- Change Management
- Cultural Competency
- Cultural Humility
- Data Analytics
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Persuasive Communication
- Policy Engagement
- Problem Solving
- Resource Management
- Systems Thinking

Q13 What would motivate you to seek out professional development training? Select all that apply.

- Maintenance of license or certification

- Taken into account during performance reviews
- Requirement for promotion
- Peers were taking it
- Expectation from my supervisor
- Mandated by agency supervisor / management / leadership
- Covered time for training
- Paid travel for training
- Availability of applicable in-person training opportunities
- Availability of applicable online training opportunities
- Personal growth / interest
- None of the above
- Other _____

Q14 Have you experienced any barriers to professional development training?

- Yes
- No

Q15 Please select the barriers you've encountered related to training.

- Ability to find relevant training
- Lack of organizational support of training (approval to attend, time off, paying for course)
- Cost of the course
- Family commitments
- Finding time during work schedule
- Lack of training offered
- Quality of in-house training offered
- Taking days off from work
- Traveling distance

Q18 Considering everything, how satisfied are you with: (Very unsatisfied, Very satisfied, Not Applicable)

- Your job?
- Your organization?
- Your pay?
- Your benefits?
- Your job security?

Q19 Are you considering leaving your organization within the next year, and if so, why?

- No
- Yes, to retire

- Yes, for a public sector job (in public health)
- Yes, for a public sector job (not in public health)
- Yes, for a nonprofit sector job (in public health)
- Yes, for a nonprofit sector job (not in public health)
- Yes, for a private sector job (in public health)
- Yes, for a private sector job (not in public health)
- Yes, other _____

Q20 Please select the most important reason(s) why you are considering leaving your organization in the next year.

- Lack of acknowledgement / recognition
- Job dissatisfaction
- Lack of opportunities for advancement
- Lack of training
- Leadership changeover
- Other opportunities outside agency
- Pay
- Lack of workplace diversity
- Dissatisfaction with leadership
- Stress
- Lack of flexibility (flex hours / telework)
- Weakening of benefits (e.g., retirement contributions/pensions, health insurance)
- Work overload / burnout
- Workplace environment
- Lack of support
- Ready to retire
- None of the above
- Other _____

Q21 I am planning to retire in:

- 2019
- 2020
- 2021
- 2022
- 2023
- 2024
- I am not planning to retire before 2025

Q23 What is your gender identity?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary/Other
- Prefer not to say

Q24 Do you consider yourself as a member of the LGBTQ+ community?

- Yes
- No
- No, but identify as an ally
- Prefer not to say

Q25 Are you Hispanic or Latino?

- No
- Yes

Q26 Please select the racial category or categories with which you most identify.

- White
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- Asian
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Another single race
- Two or more races

Q27 What is your age in years?

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+

Q33 Please indicate the highest degree you have attained.

- High School or equivalent
- Associate's degree in nursing
- Other associate degree
- BS/BA
- BSN

- BSPH
- Other baccalaureate degree
- MA/MS
- MBA
- MHSA
- MPA
- MPP
- MPH
- MSN
- MSW
- Other masters degree
- DDS/DMD
- DrPH/PhD/ScD/other public health doctorate
- DNP
- DVM/VMD
- JD
- MD/DO, or international equivalent
- PharmD
- PhD/ScD/other non-public health doctorate

Appendix B: Focus Group Data

Question 1: What makes a public health workforce effective?

Theme	Comments from participants
Knowledgeable and Passionate Staff	<p>“You have to be committed to it. You have to be stable. You have to be well-trained. You have to have all of those things because you are out there working on your own.”</p> <p>“So just plain knowledge of what public health is, it's such a broad field and I think that's both the knowledge for your workforce knowledge, that the community has knowledge of it. You need knowledgeable staff to make it work.”</p>
Leadership Commitment, Accountability, and Support	<p>“Because we are so small and most of us and do things by ourselves, we need leaders to step up, but also to be a leader in your own position.”</p> <p>“...the leaders need to be on the same page and working towards the same goal.”</p> <p>“I mean I need support from the county for the people that are giving us money from the general fund to be able to support these programs. I mean we just need support from our higher ups.”</p>
Understands Cultural Humility	
Cross-sector Collaboration	<p>“I know it's one of those things that I didn't realize coming out of school was the need for partnership and to work well with others and to not go after every grant if you're the local health department, to let other agencies be involved. And bringing in, of course the non-traditional partners, like lately law enforcement, there's an increasing need to have them involved. Especially as we get further and further into social determinants and now 3.0 ...”</p>
Strategic Planning (vision/goals)	<p>“Like trusting in the process, trusting within your organization. And the big picture one also kind of connects with some of that learning culture, where we're going. So I did put down, I was thinking like vision and big picture.”</p> <p>“...your planning has to be pretty efficient, and then, also, knowledge of the resources of your county.”</p>
Persuasive Communication (success/stories)	<p>“Public health is valued. It's not dismissed.”</p>
Innovation and Diversity of Thought	

Question 2: What are the challenges for Iowa to have the most effective public health workforce?

Theme	Comments from participants
<p>Workforce Investment (diversity, retention, recruitment, succession)</p>	<p>“As there's less individuals and as those institutional individuals retire or move on, pass away ... the fluctuations are more extreme. They're stronger fluctuations. And so the person who used to know how everything got done, if they're gone that really cripples the network.”</p> <p>“I guess I would say, because relating it to my place of employment, the employee base doesn't represent the community ... right, and not just along color lines, but in gender and gender identity and things like that, it's not represented, and so I don't think there's been a real good kind of invite for people that are, that don't look like us, to come in, or don't live like we live ...”</p> <p>“So if you do have staff turnover, are you keeping that knowledge in the organization?”</p> <p>“Even just thinking about a community embedded workforce. So having individuals that are working with a population, living within that population. Having that identity, that brings awareness.”</p>
<p>Financial Resources</p>	<p>“Come in already training. The challenges, uncertainty, money and policy.”</p> <p>“Over 50% of deaths are from heart disease, cancer and COPD. So those three causes alone are over half of all deaths in the state of Iowa. And virtually no money is allocated towards those and so then no local health departments do them because without a revenue stream you can't, or at least not meaningfully.”</p>
<p>Cooperation and Collaboration (fragmentation, inconsistency)</p>	<p>“I felt like the different types of healthcare are so siloed ... just that collaboration, like you said, and advocating, and really just educating people and the public about all the different things that are so siloed, it seems like sometimes that it's more helpful to have people working together so people are really accessing all of the services.”</p> <p>“Our public health managers from within several counties, we get together occasionally and just have a work day. Just to discuss and talk about, well how do you do that? Or how do you do that and how do you do that?”</p>

<p>Public and Political Engagement (trust, understanding)</p>	<p>“There aren't a lot of people up there who are introducing and championing public health bills ...”</p> <p>“Maybe it's implied, but I had lack of support from community and policymakers, and so it's a cross between the lack of public engagement and all the financial ones ... These are calling out, but do people really understand what public health does?”</p>
<p>Certifications/Licensing (standardization)</p>	<p>“You have to put a focus on clinical care because there's more certification requirements around staff being credentialed. Anything else that isn't required credential, even a CHES a certified public health is a far distant concern. I even have my certified public health, but it's one of those that, there aren't a lot of us walking around. And that test is mean.”</p>
<p>Training (barriers)</p>	<p>“Yeah, I would say ours is finding time during work schedule. Cost is always an issue. Traveling, I mean, if you're super busy, just trying to find the time to travel ... something I very much see in my department is family commitments.”</p>
<p>Rurality</p>	<p>“But I would think you would get extra because you have such a rural population... See that would be my appropriate funding because I believe there should be extra.”</p> <p>“...it's challenging to get people to want to work in that area, to find cross sector partnerships to work in, in rural areas.”</p> <p>“That's an issue I see. One of mine is rural. It's hard to get staffing out here in these rural little counties when it's more appealing to go to a metropolis like Des Moines or even ... a hospital and competition. So if you can go to the private sector and make far more money that you're going to make at a county level-”</p>

Question 3: What is needed for Iowa to have the most effective public health workforce?

Theme	Comments from participants
<p>Visibility, Sharing, and Acknowledgement</p>	<p>“Like advertisement in the community.”</p> <p>“We're a community hub because health is the most important thing in our community and everything else comes from that. Trying to get the public to see that way, not all at once. They're not all going to spend a career in healthcare or public health or whatever, but moving that direction where we say this is central to what we believe.”</p>
<p>Cross-sector Collaboration and Coordination</p>	<p>“Knowledge of the work that I'm doing could impact them and vice versa, that we could be better together. Someone said</p>

	<p>earlier about killing two birds with a single stone. Are there opportunities where we have siloed programs, that we could work together and do more with the same amount of funding, but we're able to integrate funding.”</p> <p>“I think if the administrators look at what colleges we have in our county, and make sure you have relationships with those public health and those colleges, and make sure that somehow either your programming is in that college or your ... That college is coming to your programming and start relationship building at the local level too, because I think sometimes that was lacking, and how can you help the college and how can the college help you?”</p>
<p>Strategic Planning (conversations, cooperation)</p>	<p>“Yes, you can do a bunch of things as an administrator, as somebody with an MPH but you're probably going to spend time doing things that somebody with much less training could do because you don't have the resources to delegate it out. And so you need bigger staff ... having more of a community health advocate doing some of those follow-ups versus somebody with a Master's degree in epidemiology doing that. And best utilizing resources. So how do we get people to work more at the top of their training instead of having to do everything?”</p> <p>“I just think, in all of healthcare, you need to think differently about who's on the healthcare team, so if there's challenges with recruitment, then think different about what your needs are and how you could meet those needs by changes in the workforce, like community health workers or others.”</p>
<p>Reinvestment in the Workforce (support, incentives, succession)</p>	<p>“They're too busy worrying about Iowa being 47th in mental health treatment, to worry about your own.”</p> <p>“I think that also goes with [inaudible 01:39:44], and succession planning, and that cross training ... because if you're getting that group, particularly, of your managers together and, say, if you sit there and you begin talking about, we've got to really be coming up with some kind of plans for onboarding of- whether that's going to be managers, because a lot of us are probably all at or close to the same age. How are we going to do succession planning if we have policies in place, like what you said, that we can't bring someone on and follow us for a year because the policy says you're out of here.”</p> <p>“I think that's a hard thing. So two years from now I'm going to retire. I want to start planning for how the knowledge will stand there. It's almost like you can't with some of the policies in institutional legacy that is in there.”</p>

<p>Persuasive Communication Skills and Strategies</p>	<p>“Because we have, as a profession, I speak broadly, a lot of our messages are stale. And so trying to find a way to engage people in the things that we have to say is difficult. You see very little ability in graphic design or those sort of like ... can we not just make it visually appealing ... Can we have health departments that have a full time marketing communications person on staff ...”</p> <p>“Something in that communication area, being influential, changing that conversation, and getting other people engaged with what you're trying to do and your goals.”</p>
<p>Public Endorsement</p>	<p>“What I meant by public endorsement was that if the entire public thinks it's something that's important and should be addressed, and we give time to it, we give money to it, that then people want to go in to do that job, because they feel valued and they feel it's important to their community, and so it's like being a fireman or an EMT. The community thinks it's important, so I want to do that job. Little kids, when they're little, you never hear them say ‘I want to be a public health person.’”</p>
<p>Consistency/Standardization (licensing, certification)</p>	<p>“Just in environment health we don't have that requirement across the state, so we've got a mixed bag of people who are, people who aren't. That even goes for our people doing, the contractors and stuff like that. Part of the state requires it, part of the state doesn't.”</p>
<p>Funding</p>	
<p>Embracement of technology</p>	<p>“I like the idea of the Zoom meeting technology to facilitate storytelling. There's always standing in front of the board or the elected officials and being able to tell that story, but then there's also, how do you distribute stories?”</p> <p>“Well, the first thing that comes to my mind is on demand. Trying to break down barriers. From a legislative perspective or even Iowa Code perspective, it gets in the way of being able to provide some of those services in a way that Iowans potentially want them to be delivered to them, but there may be rules that say they can't be delivered that way, if that's making sense.”</p>

Appendix C: Strategic Skill Definitions

The following is a list of the eight de Beaumont Strategic Skills (de Beaumont, 2017), plus two additional skills (Cultural Competency and Cultural Humility):

Change Management: The selection of strategies to facilitate the transition of individuals, teams, or organizations from a current state of operations to the new, desired state

Cultural Competency: The ability of providers and organizations to effectively deliver health care services that meet the social, cultural, and linguistic needs of patients

Cultural Humility: Commitment to learning and reflection as opposed to mastery of a culture that is not one's own. Cultural humility encourages self-critique, addressing power imbalances, and maintaining partnerships

Data Analytics: The process of inspecting, cleansing, transforming and modeling data with the goal of discovering useful information, informing conclusion and supporting decision-making

Diversity and Inclusion: Diversity refers to the traits and characteristics that make people unique while inclusion refers to the behaviors and social norms that ensure people feel welcome to participate

Persuasive Communication: The process through which people attempt to influence the beliefs or actions of others

Policy Engagement: Understanding and thinking about how governments, stakeholders, communities and ordinary citizens can work together to achieve complex, societal goals

Problem Solving: The process of finding solutions to difficult or complex issues

Resource Management: The process by which businesses manage their various resources effectively

Systems Thinking: A holistic approach to analysis that focuses on the way that a system's constituent parts interrelate and how systems work over time and within the context of larger systems

Appendix D: Follow-up Questions

Fundamental workforce development questions:

- How do these align with strategies, goals, and recommendations presented in the full report?
- What public health workforce development gaps exist in Iowa?
- How can this information be used to address workforce shortages, advance the workforce, strengthen organizational capabilities, improve community resilience and engagement, improve diversity, equity and inclusion, and advance systems practice?
- What innovative workforce development activities can be used to advance the culture of learning (learning organization)?
- How can we integrate evidence-based practice into this work?
- How do we measure success (PH 3.0)?
- How has COVID-19 impacted the workforce?
- Have we increased the degree of representation of smaller LHDs?