Competencies and Competency Implementation: What, Why, How

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The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Excellent Laboratories, Outstanding Health
What are Competencies?

- Competencies are action-oriented statements that delineate the essential knowledge, skills, and abilities critical to the effective and efficient performance of work responsibilities.
Why Competencies?

- A tool for quality improvement in staff recruitment, retention, performance and management

- Integral to any workforce development program
Why Competencies?

- Can aid laboratories with personnel management and supporting staff professional development, for example:
  - Development of position descriptions, career paths and ladders
  - Defining performance expectations
  - Assessing staff performance
  - Identifying training needs and informing curriculum
Domain 8: Maintain a Competent Public Health Workforce

Domain 8 includes two standards:

- **Standard 8.1:** Encourage the Development of a Sufficient Number of Qualified Public Health Workers
- **Standard 8.2:** Ensure a Competent Workforce through Assessment of Staff Competencies, the Provision of Individual Training and Professional Development, and the Provision of a Supportive Work Environment
Standard 8.2: Ensure a competent workforce through the assessment of staff competencies, the provision of individual training and professional development, and the provision of a supportive work environment.

- Provide a workforce development plan that includes an assessment of current staff competencies (using, for example, “Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals”, state developed, or specially focused sets)
- Document recruitment of qualified individuals (e.g., using competency-based job descriptions)
Driver:
Ensuring PHL workforce pipeline and capabilities

Workforce Recommendations:

- Develop a sustainable public health workforce pipeline plan
- Promote PHL successes and PHL practice as an attractive career choice
- Seek ways to create a sustainable funding base to support fellowships

Some Benefits of Implementation

**Manager**
- Efficient recruitment as candidates are better matched and onboarded based on well-defined job requirements
- Improved retention as employees are more likely to stay if they have a defined career path
- Systematic evaluation of employee development

**Employee**
- Better understanding of position expectations
- Improved self-assessment of training needs
- More strategic development of a professional growth plan
Comprehensive Laboratory Competency Guidelines

➢ Foundational to creating and sustaining a capable, well-trained, and prepared laboratory workforce

- Defines expected levels of performance and knowledge across 15 areas

* PHL broadly defined to include governmental public health, environmental, and agriculture labs
Comparison to CLIA Competencies

- Differ from the personnel competency assessments needed to meet regulatory requirements such as CLIA, ISO or NELAC

- Measures proficiency of performing laboratory testing through 6 assessment methods
  - Does not provide for a progression of KSAs with behaviors that demonstrate professional or personal growth

- Guides professional assessment and development across 15 domains of laboratory practice (technical and non-technical)
  - Provides for a progression of KSAs with behaviors that demonstrate professional or personal growth
Culture Change
Putting Competencies into Practice

Observable and measurable activities/verbs

- Signify a hierarchy of learning and skill acquisition (i.e., more complex action)

- Broad statements describing the “what”, not the “how”

- No correlation to any particular job title or degree
Early Resources to Aid Competency Implementation (2015/2016)

PHL Competency Assessment Tool

Competencies are distinct from goals. Goals are concerned with 'what' has been accomplished; competencies are concerned with 'how' it was accomplished. Identifying the competencies that an individual already has and those that they need to develop is important to the individual and organization's success.

Biosafety Officer Competency-Based Position Description Template

Program/Department: Public Health Laboratory
Position Title: Biosafety Officer
Reports to: Laboratory Director / Operations Director / Division Director
Previous Incumbent: None (New position)
Job Position Summary:

The Biosafety Officer within the public health laboratory will ensure adequate biosafety training and practices to avoid potential hazards associated with the handling of biological materials, the spread of multi-drug resistant pathogens and threats of emerging pathogens, and acts of biological terrorism. The Biosafety Officer will collaborate with the existing health and safety officer to develop a biosafety program.
Local/Regional Workforce Development Efforts

- NH created a competency-based training needs assessment
- IA’s leadership program
- City of Milwaukee PHL created competency-based PDs, career ladder; used competencies in annual staff evaluation to create employee development plans
Competency Implementation Resources 2.0

Implementation Toolbox:

- Informational resources
- Implementation roadmap and video
- Competency and training assessment tool
- Position description and career ladder tool
- Sample career ladders
- Sample position descriptions

Launching NOW!
Are You Ready to Implement?

For more information, tools and resources go to the

APHL Competency Implementation Tool Box

APHL Public Health Laboratory Competencies website
https://www.aphl.org/professional_development/Pages/Competencies.aspx
Final Thoughts (and Plea!)

**Learn**

**Implement**

**Share**

(PHLcompetencies@aphl.org)
QUESTIONS?
Informatics Self Assessment Tool
“Practice-based learning”

Laboratories are using the newly designed SA Tool to:

- **Advocate:**
The tool highlights strengths and gaps and gives you the data you need to communicate needs for funding, resources, and support.

- **Grow:**
Monitor your longitudinal progress or compare capabilities across domains within your laboratory.

- **Contribute:**
All data is aggregated to establish a National Report Card. Help us identify national trends and strengthen the public health infrastructure.

Did you miss the deadline?
**The SA Tool is now open through August 4, 2017.**
Join the 21 labs who are using this to better understand and strengthen their capabilities. Get on the map!
Visit [https://satool.aphl.org/](https://satool.aphl.org/) to get started