

PH WINS Learning Collaborative Change Package

Enhancing Cultural Awareness in the Workforce

Introduction

The Public Health Workforce Interests and Needs Survey

([PH WINS](#)) is the first nationally representative survey of individual state health agency workers. More than 10,000 public health workers from 37 states and 14 cities participated in the 2014 survey. This document is part of a series of change packages, a collection of great ideas and practices aimed at promoting lasting change, that discusses findings from the 2016-2017 PH WINS Learning Collaborative (LC), supported by the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials ([ASTHO](#)) and the [de Beaumont Foundation](#). Health department staff who participated in the LC completed PH WINS in 2014 and used the survey findings to develop and address a workforce development opportunity within their agencies through the LC. Participating health departments included the Boston Public Health Commission, Houston Health Department, Maryland Department of Health, Minnesota Department of Health, Nebraska Division of Public Health, and South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control.

These change packages aim to help public health agencies hire and retain a well-prepared workforce that finds a career in public health fulfilling and impactful. This specific change package provides a menu of potential actions that public health agencies can use to enhance cultural awareness in their workforces. This document is organized into several sections:

- A **table** listing a goal that an agency might wish to accomplish to enhance cultural awareness in its workforce. This is followed by several key changes that could support that goal, a potential list (“menu”) of different ideas that agency staff can try to affect the change, and associated resources that may assist with implementing the idea.
- General **resources** that could be helpful overall and address more than one idea.
- **Stories** (successes, lessons learned, and resources) from public health colleagues in the LC who have experience related to enhancing cultural awareness in the workforce.

Please note that this document is not intended to be all-inclusive: it is meant to help agencies start thinking about change and present bold and creative ideas for impacting change. If you have ideas or suggestions for additions to this resource, please contact the PH WINS team at phwins@debeaumont.org.

Preparing for Change

The following best practices may be useful for agencies that are preparing for, or in the early stages of, change that affects the workforce:

- **Conduct an organizational assessment** to determine what your agency is already doing to enhance cultural awareness in the workforce. (This assessment may include some of the actions listed in this section.) The assessment may help agency leadership select priority actions, determine readiness for action, and identify initial steps. See “General Resources for Enhancing Cultural Awareness in the Workforce” later in this document for links to existing organizational assessment guides. Agencies may also find it helpful to review the PH WINS change package focused on change management.
- **Explore your organization’s resources.** Specifically, consider which existing policies, practices, workforce development plans, organized labor benefits, and structures could help support efforts related to enhancing cultural awareness in the workforce or connect you to key formal or informal agency leaders. Additionally, consider your agency’s history and current climate relative to the change you seek. Some agencies will benefit from selecting basic actions to start, while other agencies with already-established initiatives may benefit from tackling more advanced ideas.
- **Engage agency staff and stakeholders** in planning and implementing interventions. Engaging diverse perspectives and knowledge will encourage buy-in and build a cohort of individuals who can champion enhancing cultural awareness in the workforce. Internal agency representatives may include human resources, information technology systems, communications/public relations, management, and front-line staff. External resources may include academic institutions, professional associations, training providers, subject matter experts, or consultants. You may also choose to hold roundtable discussions or focus groups, form an advisory committee, conduct key informant interviews, or engage the broader workforce in a variety of other ways around enhancing cultural awareness in the workforce.
- **Clearly define what you are trying to accomplish.** The clearer you are, the more directly you will be able to develop strategies to address the issue. Consider applying quality improvement methods to tackle the problem: Plan, Do, Study, Act cycles could provide structure to solving bigger organizational workforce issues.
- Changes and ideas presented in this document require different levels of organizational and individual commitment. Therefore, consider **aligning your actions with your strategic plan** and other guiding documents and **explore any potential financial implications** before taking any action.

PH WINS Measures

This change package focuses on the following PH WINS measures:

- Addressing the needs of diverse populations in a culturally sensitive way.
- Collaborating with diverse communities to identify and solve health problems.

The table below identifies a goal that an agency may want to achieve related to enhancing cultural awareness in the workforce. It is meant to serve as a guide for achieving or addressing the above PH WINS measures. Please note that the “Other Ideas to Try” incorporate evidence-based recommendations or actions without a link to a specific resource or tool. These ideas may also be specific to an agency’s location.

This change package is one of five that ASTHO and the de Beaumont Foundation developed to assist agencies with their workforce development initiatives. The other change packages discuss **change management, retention and succession planning, creating a culture of learning**, and **improving organizational communication**. They include resources that may also be helpful for addressing cultural awareness in the workforce.



PH WINS Learning Collaborative Change Package

Enhancing Cultural Awareness in the Workforce*

Change package: a curated collection of ideas and practices to create lasting change in your organization.

*Note: Inclusion in this list does not imply endorsement of any particular process or product. Organizations using this change package should always vet resources independently and make the determination for applicability to their unique agencies and workforces.

Goal

What you are trying to accomplish?

Staff are skilled and confident in working with diverse populations.

Key Change

Institutional practice or condition, or individual change or behavior you will see.

Ideas to Try

Curated list of potential actions that may impact the change you wish to see; could be evidence-based or “testable” ideas.

1. Our workforce reflects the diverse population we serve.

A. Include cultural competence in position descriptions and interview practices (including developing a diverse interview panel).

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

- Center for Public Health Practice template and user guide: [Competency-Based Job Descriptions Template](#)
- HR Council toolkit: [Getting the Right People Overview](#)
- National Association of Social Workers report: [Standards and Indicators for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice](#)

Key Change

Ideas to Try

1. Our workforce reflects the diverse population we serve.

B. Build a plan for targeted recruitment practices.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

- Virginia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Services webpage: [Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce](#)

C. Set up workforce pipeline infrastructure in early education programs.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

- Community initiative: [A Step Up to Achieve](#)
- Community initiative: [Right Track](#)
- State of Minnesota program: [Star of the North Fellowship Program](#)

Key Change

Ideas to Try

1. Our workforce reflects the diverse population we serve.

D. Implement a tracking system for processes: applicant, candidate, interviewee, selection, and hiring.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

Minnesota Department of Health resources:

- [Candidate Comparison Table and Narrative](#)
- [Candidate Score Table](#)
- [Monitoring the Hiring Process Form](#)
- [Pre-Offer Review Checklist](#)

Key Change

Ideas to Try

2. Policies, processes, and procedures reflect a workplace well equipped to serve all individuals.

A. Establish an organizational oversight committee.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

- Center for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas toolkit: [The Community Tool Box: Cultural Competence in a Multicultural World](#)

B. Translate materials and documentation into languages that represent the population served.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

- *Hablamos Juntos* toolkit: [More than Words: Assessing Translation – A Manual for Requesters](#)
- Offer language classes for staff that reflect the languages spoken in the community.

Key Change

Ideas to Try

2. Policies, processes, and procedures reflect a workplace well equipped to serve all individuals.

C. Revise clinical intake and data collection documents to allow transgender and non-binary clients to accurately represent their gender identities.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

- University of California, San Francisco learning center: [Transgender Health Learning Center](#)

D. Implement clinical policies that ensure that diverse clients receive respectful services.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

- National LGBT Health Education Center report: [Affirmative Care for Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming People: Best Practices for Front-line Health Care Staff](#)
- National Center for Cultural Competence guide: [A Guide for Advancing Family-Centered and Culturally and Linguistically Competent Care](#)

Key Change

Ideas to Try

3. The workforce is confident and effective when working with diverse populations.

A. Provide in-depth, regular training to staff on cultural competency regarding race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, and disability

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

- Webpage: [Government Alliance on Race and Equity](#)
- Online course: [Roots of Health Inequity](#)
- Family Voices guide: [Growing Your Capacity to Engage Diverse Communities](#)

B. Host a dialogue series for staff with reflective, thought-provoking discussion topics.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

- Training: [Art of Hosting](#)
- Community initiative: [Choose Civility](#)

Key Change

Ideas to Try

3. The workforce is confident and effective when working with diverse populations.

C. Invite staff or community members of diverse backgrounds and abilities to share information about their cultures.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

- Seek government-sponsored groups or councils.

D. Conduct simulations of cultural or physical ability issues, similar to poverty simulation.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

- University of Minnesota resource: [Culture Learning: Simulations & Exercises](#)

Key Change

Ideas to Try

3. The workforce is confident and effective when working with diverse populations.

E. Adopt or adapt an Affinity Group structure around an issue relevant to cultural diversity.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

- Florida State University guide: [Affinity Group Guidelines](#)
- John Hopkins Hospital affinity group guidelines: [Employee Resource Group Program Guidelines](#)

Key Change

Ideas to Try

3. The workforce is confident and effective when working with diverse populations.

F. Host diversity-focused fiction or non-fiction employee book discussions.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

- *And the Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic*
- *Americanah*
- *Are You Practicing Cultural Humility? – The Key to Success in Cultural Competence*
- *Between the World and Me*
- *Hillbilly Elegy*
- *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*
- *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*
- *“Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?” And Other Conversations About Race*

Key Change

Ideas to Try

3. The workforce is confident and effective when working with diverse populations.

G. Incorporate cultural competence into performance review and planning processes.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

- Virginia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Services webpage: [Evaluating Your Workforce for Cultural and Linguistic Competence](#)

Other Ideas to Try

- Take “field trips” to attend community events (e.g. at churches, theaters, or museums).
- Establish/participate in a volunteer program whereby staff assist with community projects or programs (e.g. farmers’ market, youth mentoring, school tutoring, Special Olympics) or community members assist with health department projects or programs.
- Engage community stakeholders and representatives in grant reviews.

Resources

General Resources for Enhancing Cultural Awareness in the Workforce

[Boston Public Health Commission Racial Justice & Health Equity Initiative](#) Organizational initiative aiming to “integrate health equity and racial justice principles and practices” into all of the department’s work. Includes examples of infrastructure, training, and activities.

CDC Report “[A Practitioner’s Guide for Advancing Health Equity: Community Strategies for Preventing Chronic Disease](#)” Part of a larger guide to advancing equity within public health. Look for ideas and “how tos” for engaging others and incorporating equity into an organization’s operations and programming.

[Georgetown University National Center for Cultural Competence](#) Center with resources including self-assessments, online learning, articles, guidebooks, and tools, such as [Checklist to Facilitate the Development of Culturally and Linguistically Competent Primary Health Care Policies and Structures](#). (Note: resources are targeted towards healthcare, but may be generally applicable.)

[Government Alliance on Race and Equity](#) National network offering membership, training, and resources to advance racial equity and advancement.

[Human Resources Council for the Nonprofit Sector](#) Nonprofit supporting workforce efforts. Free resources include a toolkit, templates, and checklists to assist with hiring, retention, and policies. Features major topical sections addressing employee training, workforce development programs, and example policies. (Note: while some resources may be specific to Canada, many are generalizable.)

NACCHO Online Training “[The Roots of Health Inequity](#)” Online content and learning experiences with interactive and varied course materials designed around group participation. (Presented as five “units.”)

National Center for Cultural Competence Report “[Guide to Planning and Implementing Cultural Competence Organizational Self-Assessment](#)” Guide listing the benefits of, tips for, and helpful steps to assessing cultural competence in organizations.

[Office of Personnel Management \(OPM\) Office of Diversity & Inclusion](#) Office within OPM focused on diversity and inclusion with annual reports focused on workforce diversity and best and promising practices from federal agencies.

[Out & Equal Workplace Advocates Toolkits & Guides](#) Resources from a nonprofit focused on achieving LGBT equality in the workforce. Website contains tools, training, videos, and examples for reference or to initiate dialogue.

Resources

cont.

[San Francisco Department of Public Health Policy & Procedures Library](#) Example policies addressing identity data (sex, gender, and sexual orientation) and language diversity.

[The Ohio State University Kirwan Institute for Study of Race and Ethnicity](#) Center with a range of resources for all levels of cultural engagement, including videos, study reports, training, and conversation guides.

HHS Report “[National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health and Health Care](#)” Website listing standards related to culturally-and linguistically-appropriate services to improve quality of health and healthcare services.

The Joint Commission Report “[Advancing Effective Communication, Cultural Competence, and Patient-and Family-Centered Care: A Roadmap for Hospitals](#)” Report providing guidance, examples, and tools intended for hospitals that are adaptable for public health organizations.

University of Kansas Center for Community Health and Development’s The Community Toolbox “[Chapter 27: Cultural Competence in a Multicultural World](#)” Collection of ideas, examples, and resources to assist organizations in building their workforce and culture. These resources can be used to plan initiatives in schools, communities, or organizations to initiate dialogue or learn more about specific actions.

Virginia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Services Topic Sheet Series “[Building a Diverse and Inclusive Workforce](#)” Guides for addressing workforce diversity, including recruiting, hiring, and professional development. Tools include individual and organizational assessments and interview questions.

Stories from the Field

Minnesota Department of Health

<http://www.health.state.mn.us>

Minnesota's state health agency LC team aimed to raise employee awareness about the need to develop intercultural competence.

The agency began recruiting team members with knowledge and expertise in the areas that the agency had identified as most important for this project. One of the agency's key deliverables involved implementing a tool called the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI). A majority (86%) of those who participated in the IDI agreed or strongly agreed that the tool would be valuable in helping build cultural competence in the public health workforce. Although this tool could be expensive if implemented by an outside contractor, it helped participants evaluate their current intercultural competence and provided advice on how to progress.



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to view all the PH WINS Learning
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Stories from the Field

Houston Health Department

<http://www.houstontx.gov/health>

The Houston Health Department LC team used the information it had collected through environmental scans, policy proposals, and conversation during its LC project to establish or strengthen work groups on communication, workforce development, cultural competency, and morale building.

By providing a robust foundation informed by employee feedback, the Houston LC team strengthened its case for supporting new and ongoing organizational initiatives to address these key areas. Timing has played a critical role in establishing momentum and a trajectory for these projects: the fact that the organization is in a season of planning — and is currently pursuing accreditation — has helped the department garner the support it needs to address these areas and take action.



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Reflections & Acknowledgements

Reflections from the PH WINS Team

Teams in the LC discovered the importance of identifying team members with unique and diverse perspectives and skill sets. This included identifying team members who represented different areas of the organization to ensure buy-in and maximize the overall success of the projects. When faced with adversity, teams regrouped and worked together to identify the necessary resources to accomplish their goals.



PUBLIC HEALTH WORKFORCE
INTERESTS AND NEEDS SURVEY

ASTHO

The Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) is the national nonprofit organization representing public health agencies in the United States, the U.S. Territories, and the District of Columbia, and over 100,000 public health professionals these agencies employ. ASTHO members, the chief health officials of these jurisdictions, formulate and influence sound public health policy and ensure excellence in state-based public health practice. ASTHO's primary function is to track, evaluate, and advise members on the impact and formation of public or private health policy which may affect them and to provide them with guidance and technical assistance on improving the nation's health. ASTHO's vision is "state and territorial health agencies advancing health equity and optimal health for all," and its mission is "to support, equip, and advocate for state and territorial health officials in their work of advancing the public's health and well-being."



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de Beaumont Foundation

The de Beaumont Foundation's mission is to strengthen and transform public health in the United States by improving the effectiveness and capacity of local and state health departments. We believe that a strong public health system is essential and work to improve the practice of public health through thought leadership and strategic and engaged grantmaking. Programs funded by the Foundation build the capacity and stature of the public health workforce, improve public health infrastructure, and advance the distribution of information and data in the field.



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State and Local Health Agencies

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- Boston Public Health Commission
- Houston Health Department
- Maryland Department of Health
- Minnesota Department of Health
- Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services' Division of Public Health
- South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control

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