PH WINS Learning Collaborative Change Package

Creating a Culture of Learning

PH WINS
PUBLIC HEALTH WORKFORCE INTERESTS AND NEEDS SURVEY

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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 create a culture of learning at their organization. This document is organized into several sections:

- A **table** listing a goal that an agency might wish to accomplish related to creating a culture of learning. 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 creating a culture of learning.

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**.

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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 related to creating a culture of learning. (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 Creating a Culture of Learning" 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 creating a culture of learning 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 creating a culture of learning in the organization. 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 creating a culture of learning.

- **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.

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PH WINS Measures

This change package focuses on the following PH WINS measures:

- **Increase proportion of staff who are required to participate in continuing education.**

- **Increase proportion of staff who have performance and training objectives included in performance reviews.**

The table below identifies a goal that an agency may want to achieve related to creating a culture of learning 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**, **enhancing cultural awareness in the workforce**, and **improving organizational communication**. They include resources that may also be helpful for creating a culture of learning.

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PH WINS Learning Collaborative Change Package

Creating a Culture of Learning*

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.

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Goal

What you are trying to accomplish?

Communication internally between leaders, supervisors, and employees is timely, consistent, clear, and effective.

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. Structures and policies support personal, professional and career growth.

A. Develop policies that encourage or incentivize staff to participate in continuing education.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

- Minnesota Department of Health: Employee Development Policy

B. Incorporate continuing education into the performance review and planning processes.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

- Duke University Human Resources: Professional Development Suggestions

- Best Practices for Nonprofit Staff Development

Minnesota Department of Health:

- Individual Development Guide
- Performance Review Form

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Key Change

Ideas to Try

1. Structures and policies support personal, professional and career growth.

C. Provide tuition or certificate program reimbursement.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

■ Employer's Resource Council article

■ EdAssist Tuition Assistance Benchmark report

■ Society for Human Resource Management article: Rejuvenating Tuition Reimbursement Programs

■ Texas Health & Human Services System policy: Tuition Reimbursement Policy

D. Incorporate learning expectations into job descriptions.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

■ CIO article: How to Build a Culture of Learning and Why You Need To

■ Society of Human Resource Management article: How to Recruit for a Winning Work Culture

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Key Change

Ideas to Try

1. Structures and policies support personal, professional and career growth.

E. Offer language and computer skills classes. (Check for government discounts from commercial providers.)

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

- Custom Guide
- Lynda.com
- Skillsoft
- MIT OpenCourseWare
- EdX
- Duolingo

F. Publicly recognize advanced educational achievements.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

- University of Kansas toolbox: The Community Toolbox Rewarding Accomplishments

G. Create a break room library.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

- Little Free Library

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Key Change

Ideas to Try

1. Structures and policies support personal, professional and career growth.

H. Establish a career development grant program.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

- Ohio State University Office of Human Resources Learning and Development webpage: Staff Career Development Grant

Other Ideas to Try

- Provide time off or flexible scheduling to allow participation in education and training programs.

- Promote existing learning opportunities offered through county, city, or state government administrative offices or collective bargaining entities.

- Provide in-person or live video/broadcast training at satellite office locations.

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Key Change

2. Employee data is used to better understand workforce and workplace needs.

Ideas to Try

A. Conduct or participate in a staff engagement survey.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

- PH WINS
- Qualtrics: How to Design an Employee Engagement Survey
- CEB blog post The 9 Questions that Should Be in Every Employee Engagement Survey

B. Supplement training needs assessment with focus group data to better understand needs and barriers.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

- University of Kansas toolbox: The Community Toolbox: Conducting Focus Groups
- TalentMap article

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Key Change

Ideas to Try

3. Formal and informal growth opportunities are varied to meet the needs and preferences of our workforce.

A. Create an in-house article or book discussion group.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

- The Balance Careers: Implement a Book Club at Work
- City of Baltimore program: Good Government Book Club
- Governing.com: Can a Book Club Improve Government?
- University of Kansas toolbox: The Community Toolbox Techniques for Leading Group Discussions
- The Mevyn Group: Starting a Business Book Club

B. Support professional memberships in national or local chapters of training and instructional-related associations.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

- Association for Talent Development
- International Society for Performance Improvement

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Key Change

Ideas to Try

3. Formal and informal growth opportunities are varied to meet the needs and preferences of our workforce.

C. Implement a mentoring program.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

- United States Office of Personnel Management resource: **Best Practices Mentoring**
- Inc.com article: **How to Start a Mentoring Program**

D. Initiate a "public health grand rounds."

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

- CDC webpage: **Public Health Grand Rounds**
- Vermont Department of Health webpage: **Public Health Grand Rounds**
- Community Toolbox: **Developing a Speakers Bureau**

E. Hold a lunch meeting to view and discuss videos related to workplace topics.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

- Videos: **TED**

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Key Change

Ideas to Try

3. **Formal and informal growth opportunities are varied to meet the needs and preferences of our workforce.**

F. **Conduct "hot wash" or after-action meetings after completing major projects or initiatives.**

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

- Manager Tools podcast: **The Hot Wash**

Other Ideas to Try

- Implement formal agreements with academic institutions to provide access to non-degree courses or libraries.

- Encourage staff to present work at public health conferences.

- Encourage staff who have attended conferences to present key learnings during staff meetings.

- Implement peer-to-peer training to capitalize on in-house expertise.

- Incorporate job shadowing into new employee onboarding processes.

- Promote learning opportunities available through outside sources, such as local universities and community colleges.

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Key Change

Ideas to Try

4. Foster learning among new employees and standardized onboarding.

A. Create an operational agency onboarding checklist.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

- Maryland Department of Health checklist: Onboarding Checklist

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Resources

General Resources for Developing a Culture of Learning

Association for Talent Development Website with a range of resources, including events, certificates, articles, and tools for those working to create a culture of learning. Includes the online course Developing an Organizational Learning Culture. (Fees apply for some resources.)

Association of State and Territorial Health Officials

■ Workforce Development and Research Webpage
PH WINS project web page, which provides information, resources, and supportive technical assistance opportunities for state health departments.

■ Workforce Development Plan Toolkit
Report with tips, sample processes, and tools for writing a workforce development plan.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Training Resources Organizational website containing a variety of learning opportunities; search generally by "training" or by topic area. (Various modalities of delivery.)

Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) Regional Public Health Training Centers Website for HRSA's national network of public health-focused training providers located in academic institutions across the U.S. providing online and in-person training, as well as related services (e.g., training assessment and workforce planning).

Human Resources Council for the Nonprofit Sector
Nonprofit organization supporting workforce efforts. Free resources including a toolkit with information, 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.)

LinkedIn Report "**Creating a Culture of Learning in 6 Steps**" Report with basic steps for creating a culture of learning with helpful ideas for getting started.

NACCHO Workforce Resource Center Website containing a range of resources related to competencies, education programs, and publications related to workforce competence and development.

Public Health Foundation
■ Competency Assessments for Public Health Professionals
Web page with resources to identify and assess necessary job competencies, including assessments based on Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals and a guide to improving and measuring the impact of training.

■ TRAIN Learning Network Website that hosts a nationally-available learning platform for browsing and accessing training.

Stanford Social Innovation Review Article "**The Challenge of Organizational Learning**" Article outlining challenges and solutions for organizational learning.

University of Kansas Center for Community Health and Development's The Community Toolbox
Website with information, resources, and tools that pertain to a variety of topics, including cultural competence, partnership development, action planning, leadership development, grant writing, and management. Can be used individually or in group settings to develop an organization's workforce and culture.

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Stories from the Field

Maryland Department of Health

https://health.maryland.gov

Maryland Department of Health's LC team conducted a quality improvement project to support its agency staff's learning and development.

One office agreed to pilot the project, and began addressing professional development in both job descriptions and performance evaluations. The office collected information about a baseline number of courses that each staff member had taken in their learning management system before the office began implementing changes during the new review process. A second measure will be taken at the next performance evaluation and the number of courses over time will be compared to determine whether the changes led to an improvement. From this pilot, the Maryland LC team established whether participants understood the questions and then based on the findings made small adjustments. The Maryland team is focusing on addressing meeting staff training needs as well as administering the survey again in the future.

CLICK HERE
to view all the PH WINS Learning Collaborative Change Packages

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Stories from the Field

Minnesota Department of Health

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

The Minnesota Department of Health uses internal resources to train staff by having staff with subject matter expertise volunteer to provide training to other staff.

For instance, IT staff offer training on Structured Query Language, and legal unit staff provide training on proper records management and data practices. Public health practice staff train other staff on quality improvement and community engagement, as well as other topics. The agency offers internal classes to help staff improve their presentation skills and training facilitation skills, which benefits the agency's external partners and supports a culture of learning.

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Reflections & Acknowledgements

Reflections from the PH WINS Team

ASTHO found that all of the learning collaborative teams understood the importance of fostering a culture of learning within their organizations. ASTHO also found that the process of developing an organizational culture that is supportive of and reflective of learning will vary from organization to organization: what might work for one agency may not work for another. In order to further develop their culture of learning, many of the teams developed new practices to make adopting professional development best practices a priority, often by partnering with other organization offices and staff engaged in quality improvement.

PH WINS
PUBLIC HEALTH WORKFORCE
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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 juris-dictions, 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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