



Conversation Guide for Supervisors: Career Trajectories

Insights to Action is a suite of resources meant to help state and local public health agencies improve recruitment and retention by acting on their data from the Public Health Workforce Interests and Needs Survey (PH WINS). Find more tools like this at <http://debeaumont.org/programs/insights-to-action/>.

Part of a supervisor's role is setting staff up for success in their next position, whatever that might be. To effectively do that, supervisors must understand each employee's professional goals and provide information about opportunities within the agency. This conversation guide is to support supervisors in having these conversations about career trajectories with employees they supervise.

General Guidelines

These conversations can be challenging for both parties involved. To best support your employee through this conversation, it is best to:

- Listen with empathy
- Affirm any experiences or concerns they share
- Be as transparent as possible

The Public Health Workforce Interests and Needs Survey (PH WINS), conducted in 2014, 2017, 2021, and 2024, supports the government public health workforce by measuring strengths and gaps to inform future investments in funding, training, recruitment, and retention.

PHWINS

PUBLIC HEALTH WORKFORCE
INTERESTS AND NEEDS SURVEY

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Conversation Guide

| Goal | What to Ask or Say |
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| Open the conversation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Where do you see yourself in five years, professionally?”• “What do you like most about the work you’re doing?” |
| Suggest potential future opportunities within the agency. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Based on your goals, I think that [internal role] may be something you’d like to work toward.” |
| Look at the job description and collaboratively decide what skills are needed to prepare for those roles. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Based on this job description, what skills do you think you need to build in order to be ready to apply for a role like that?” <p>(Note: if a job description is not available, leverage the public health core competencies to determine where employees should focus on growing their skills).</p> |
| Be transparent about what is in your control, and what is outside of your control. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “I can’t guarantee that this role will be available when you’re ready for it. But I can help you be as prepared as possible if that does happen, and along the way, you’ll gain skills that would help you in any role.” |
| Create a plan with next steps. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Let’s identify some skill-building opportunities within your role that can help you gain some of this experience. You can also let me know if you identify any external professional development opportunities that would help you build these skills, and we’ll try to budget for them.” |