



# How-to Guide: Recruit at Career Fairs and Other Community Events

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/>.

Career fairs and other community events are a great opportunity to educate potential employees about public health careers. They can also be a valuable tool to recruit more applicants for health department positions. But if discussing public health careers is not a part of your regular role, having these conversations for the first time can be daunting. Below are some tips based on the experiences of staff at the Madera County Department of Public Health in Madera, CA.

## Create supplemental materials

Brayan Preciado, an employee at the Madera County Department of Public Health (MCDPH), entered the department through a fellowship before becoming a full-time employee. When he first joined, he did not know all the careers that were available within public health. So, when he became a full-time employee, he suggested the health department create a resource for that purpose. Together with his colleagues, he created flyers that describe all the different roles available in the health department. Staff now bring copies of these flyers to every career fair and community-facing event.

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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## Drop the jargon

One of the reasons MCDPH's materials are so effective is that they are written in plain language, not public health jargon. "Be sure to adapt the language to be understandable to folks outside of human resources and the health department," says Brayan.

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## Show career progression

Not all jobs – or applicants – are entry-level. Brayan and his colleagues at MCDPH ensure that the materials they create and the conversations they have with community members show the progression of careers that are available at the health department.

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## Take an educational approach

Many people outside of health departments do not understand its role or purpose in the community. Career fairs are a great opportunity to educate job seekers and community members alike about **what public health is and the role of the health department** in safeguarding community health.

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## Offer volunteer and shadowing opportunities

To further the public's education about what health departments do, MCDPH offers both volunteer and shadowing opportunities to community members. At career fairs and other community events, attendees can sign up and then receive an email from a staff member to book a volunteer opportunity or a tour.

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## Agree on goals

At some career fairs, the goal may be to encourage attendees to apply for jobs; at other career fairs or community events, the goal may be to educate community members about what public health careers exist. It is important for all employees involved to decide what the goals are before a given event.

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## Recruit interns and fellows

Interns and fellows are integral to the success of MCDPH, and staff often recruit for these positions at career fairs and other community events. Many current employees at MCDPH are past interns or fellows. MCDPH also works closely with local universities to recruit interns.

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## Promote pathways programs

In the event that there are no job or internship openings at MCDPH, staff members will still go into the community and promote public health careers – they'll just focus on promoting pathway programs such as [Health Career Connection](#).

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## Showcase the work of current employees and interns

Another way to promote public health careers – and educate the public about what health departments do – is to showcase the current work of health department employees and interns. When attending community events, MCDPH staff bring physical examples and tell stories about real work that is happening at the health department.

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## Encourage alumni to attend

When a local college or university is hosting a career fair, encourage health department employees who graduated from that institution to attend.

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## Get familiar with what everyone at the agency does

When attending a career fair or community event, ensure that you can speak fluently about work across the health department – not just your own.