

## **Engaging K12 Students, Schools, and Districts: The Pathway to Entry-Level Professions in Public Health**

Trailhead Institute in Denver is deploying innovative public health workforce development initiatives, including hosting the Colorado Public Health Workforce Collaborative (the Collaborative) established in April 2020 to initially support pandemic response. The future of public health starts now, and we need a skilled and competent workforce to propel us forward.

More than 20 statewide Collaborative members together identified four focus areas in RESTORATION: The Colorado Blueprint for Innovative Public Health Workforce Development. The Blueprint will guide the development of unique and innovative action plans across Colorado. The focus areas are offered as evidence-informed strategies to develop, advance, modernize, and transform the public health workforce.

The Blueprint is a guiding tool to inform unique and innovative action plans across Colorado to support building a stronger public health workforce. The focus areas are intended to be a call to action for all public and environmental health employers, local public health agencies, institutes and community-based organizations, colleges and universities, policymakers, hospitals, healthcare providers, faith-based organizations, schools, civic leaders, and members of the larger public health community. It is intended to be transferable for consideration across the diverse capabilities, services, and clinical career pathways in public health.

To address public health workforce gaps and needs, the Collaborative together identified the following four focus areas for this Blueprint:

1. Recruit and attract a diverse workforce into public health;
2. Develop career and educational pathways including training for those interested in pursuing a career in public health;
3. Retain the public health workforce to keep talented employees, sustain positive outcomes, and foster a positive work atmosphere; and
4. Inform public health decisions with workforce data to identify trends, gaps, and develop metrics.

## **How can K12 organizations create career and learning pathways into public health?**

Schools, districts, and educational partners can identify new opportunities to engage students in the pathway to entry-level professions in public health. Following the Plan-Do-Study-Act approach<sup>1</sup>, general action plans can be developed over several months and shared publicly. Additionally, detailed aspects of the action planning can be maintained internally within respective organizations as appropriate. Here's a good tool to help with action planning.

### **High School Seniors, Entering College Freshmen, and Gap-Year Opportunity**

[Colorado Public Health Works](#) is a groundbreaking AmeriCorps Apprenticeship program providing career entry into the field of public health from local communities throughout Colorado. This innovative program marks the first time AmeriCorps has integrated with a registered community health worker apprenticeship program and is paving new pathways into the field for Colorado's next generation of public health leaders.

Through the Colorado Public Health Works program, AmeriCorps members will serve in regions throughout the state and many will simultaneously pursue certification as a Community Health Worker through a U.S. Department of Labor registered apprenticeship designed to increase the capacity of local public health agencies.

### **Action Planning Support Tool**

- **Plan:** What are the greatest workforce problems that face our community and stakeholders? Which focus area/s are most relevant to our mission? Consider creating a fishbone diagram.
  
- **Plan:** What programs, initiatives, and projects do we currently offer that address the focus area(s)? Are there any from the existing inventory discussed in the Blueprint initiated by our organization that we want to consider for further action planning?
  - Describe program, initiative, or project #1:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ahrq.gov/health-literacy/improve/precautions/tool2b.html>

- Describe program, initiative, or project #2:
  
- **Plan:** What opportunities for programs, initiatives, and projects can we develop to address the focus area(s)? What system alignment and coordination will be needed to implement your organization’s action plan? Create your initial storyboard.
  - Describe program, initiative, or project #1:
  
  - Describe program, initiative, or project #2:
  
- **Reflection:** Are there opportunities for collaborative discussion around policy and advocacy to support the implementation of your organization’s action plan?
  
- Are there tools, toolkits, or resources from implementing your activities that can communicate the value of the public health workforce and lessons learned in support of workforce development?
  
- **Do:** How will you implement the new program, initiative, or project? In what ways can justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion be infused across implementation efforts? Consider developing a logic model to demonstrate resources needed, activities, and intended outcomes concerning the Blueprint focus areas.
  - Activities for program, initiative, or project #1:

- Activities for program, initiative, or project #2:
  
- **Study:** What were the successes of the program, initiative, or project? What were the challenges of the program, initiative, or project? How are you measuring and monitoring success?
  - Successes of new program, initiative, or project #1:
  
  - Challenges of program, initiative, or project #1:
  
  - How was this successful? Using what measures?
  
  - Successes of new program, initiative, or project #2:
  
  - Challenges of program, initiative, or project #2:
  
  - How was this successful? Using what measures?
  
  - Successes of existing programs, initiatives, or projects:
  
  - Challenges of existing programs, initiatives, or projects:

- How were they successful? Using what measures?
  
- **Act:** How can you continue the program, project, or initiative based on successful aspects of implementation? How will you fund and sustain the program, project, or initiative? Where can your organization re-examine and adjust its approach for areas where there were challenges?
  - What activities and processes are we continuing for program, project, or initiative #1?
  
  - What activities and processes are we adjusting for program, project, or initiative #1?
  
  - How we will sustain program, project, or initiative #1?
  
  - What activities and processes are we continuing for program, project, or initiative #2?
  
  - What activities and processes are we adjusting for program, project, or initiative #2?
  
  - How we will sustain program, project, or initiative #2?
  
- What activities and processes are we continuing for existing programs, projects, or initiatives?
  
- What activities and processes are we adjusting for existing programs, projects, or initiatives?