Core Competencies for Public Health in Canada: From Concept to Development to Implementation

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Pan American Health Organization and
National Institute of Public Health of Mexico
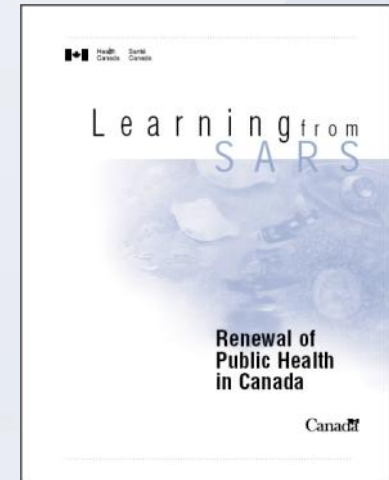
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The Need to Strengthen the Public Health Workforce

- Numerous reports assessing & advising on strengthening public health systems in Canada

- Importance of competency-based workforce development & initiatives across the country are moving forward with this perspective

Learning from
S A R S

Renewal of
Public Health
in Canada

Canada

Workforce Challenges

Lack of:

- qualified public health professionals in Canada - aging workforce & uneven distribution of existing practitioners (especially in rural & remote areas)

- common measure & data to quantify the gap

- 'surge' capacity of public health practitioners in the case of an emergency

- skills development & training opportunities for existing public health practitioners

National Response to Strengthen the Public Health Workforce

Federal/Provincial/Territorial Advisory Groups

Develop pan-Canadian strategies to strengthen public health capacity

Goals of the Public Health Human Resources Strategy

2 Components:

✓ Develop public health core competencies common to all public health professionals

✓ Enhance knowledge & skills among the public health workforce

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Building the Public Health Workforce for the 21st Century

A Pan-Canadian Framework for Public Health Human Resources Planning
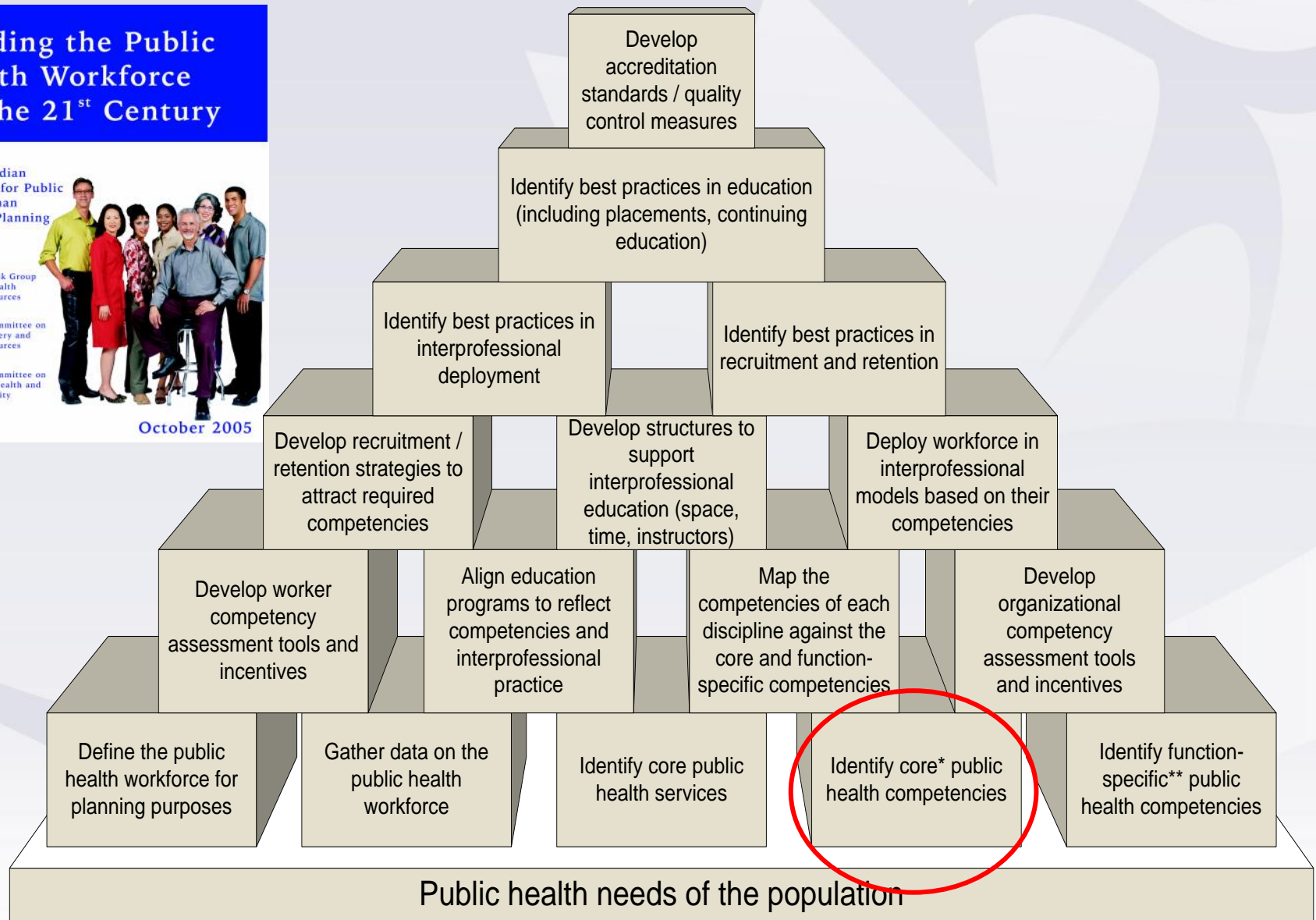
The Joint Task Group on Public Health Human Resources

Advisory Committee on Health Delivery and Human Resources

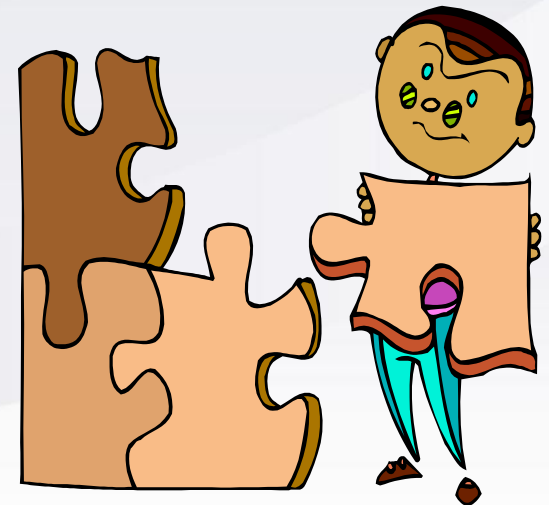Advisory Committee on Population Health and Health Security

October 2005

Develop accreditation standards / quality control measures

Identify best practices in education (including placements, continuing education)

Identify best practices in interprofessional deployment

Identify best practices in recruitment and retention

Develop recruitment / retention strategies to attract required competencies

Develop structures to support interprofessional education (space, time, instructors)

Deploy workforce in interprofessional models based on their competencies

Develop worker competency assessment tools and incentives

Align education programs to reflect competencies and interprofessional practice

Map the competencies of each discipline against the core and function-specific competencies

Develop organizational competency assessment tools and incentives

Define the public health workforce for planning purposes

Gather data on the public health workforce

Identify core public health services

Identify core* public health competencies

Identify function-specific** public health competencies

Public health needs of the population

WHAT are Core Competencies for Public Health in Canada?

Set of essential skills, knowledge & attitudes necessary for the broad practice of public health

- Basic building block to develop the workforce
- Independent of discipline & program

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Process to Develop

2005	Pan-Canadian Framework for Public Health Human Resource Planning recommends development
2005	Draft statements/preliminary consultation
2006	Revised draft statements, glossary of terms
2006/7	National consultation

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Consultation Activities

- Communication & promotion

- Consultation components:

  - **Survey** to determine levels of agreement

  - **Regional consultation meetings** to identify roles & responsibilities among public health partners, & identify opportunities, challenges & strategies for use

  - **Implementation Pilots** to develop tools to support use & identify strategies & implications for use for individuals, organizations, educational institutions & employers

  - **Discipline specific work** to support the development of technical competency sets to accompany the core competencies

Core Competencies for Public Health in Canada: Release 1.0 (2007)

36 statements organized under 7 categories:

Public Health Sciences

Assessment & Analysis

Policy & Program Planning, Implementation
    & Evaluation

Partnerships, Collaboration & Advocacy

Diversity & Inclusiveness

Communication

Leadership

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Our Vision

Identify the knowledge, skills & attitudes required across an organization or program to fulfill public health functions

Develop orientation programs for new or existing staff

Facilitate collaboration, shared goals & interdisciplinary work

Support the development of other complimentary sets of competencies (e.g., discipline-specific, program-specific)

SKILLS / AMÉLIORATION
ENHANCEMENT / DES COMPÉTENCES
FOR PUBLIC / EN SANTÉ
HEALTH / PUBLIQUE

CORE COMPETENCIES FOR PUBLIC HEALTH IN CANADA
Release 1.0

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Provide guidelines for the basic knowledge, skills & attitudes required by individual practitioners

Provide rationale for consistent job descriptions & performance assessments

Identify staff development & training needs

Inform curriculum development

Support the recruitment & retention of staff, ensuring the right number & mix

Current Activities

- Build awareness & knowledge – communications strategy

- Develop tools & resources to support use

    - Core Competencies for Public Health in Canada Orientation Module (*www.corecompetencies.ca*)

    - Tools to demonstrate Core Competencies in practice

    - Performance assessment & management tools for individual practitioners & organizations

    - *Skills Online* professional continuing education program

Current Activities (con't)

- Evaluation plan
- Exploring use & integration of Core Competencies within Public Health Agency of Canada
- Working with public health disciplines to develop discipline-specific competencies
- pan-Canadian Environmental Scan to explore ways Core Competencies are being used & integrated
  - Local/regional public health organizations, & provincial/territorial governments and associations (completed)
  - Master of Public Health programs (completed)
  - Schools of environmental health (completed)
  - Schools of nursing (planned for 2010/11)

pan-Canadian Environmental Scan

- Purpose: to explore ways Core Competencies are being used & integrated

- Target audience: local/regional public health organizations, provincial/territorial governments & public health associations

- Methods:
  - Survey
  - Key informant interviews

Environmental Scan: Strategies, approaches & tools for integration

- Seek formal endorsement at organizational & senior management levels
- Incorporate into strategic, operational & program plans
- Integrate into staff orientation processes
- Identify lead position within organization to champion competencies work
- Build knowledge & awareness with staff
- Develop dissemination & implementation plans
- Develop job postings, position descriptions
- Incorporate into interview processes (recruitment strategies)
- Develop competency-based performance management frameworks & tools
- Ensure that language is being used in performance appraisals
- Incorporate into plans for ongoing professional development

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Environmental Scan: Opportunities

- Core Competencies used as a foundation for other work e.g., discipline, program-specific competencies, managerial/leadership & mentorship programs
- Networking with other public health organizations across the country
- Work with Human Resources to conduct job analysis for staff positions (frame job descriptions & postings)
- Increased support for staff to participate in professional development opportunities

Environmental Scan: Challenges

- Lack of time to reflect on how to use; other competing demands
- Lack of resources to make a priority
- Lack of public health expertise within policy, management & executive levels to move from awareness to implementation
- Lack of support – seen as an add-on rather than essential
- A concept to many – not sure if/when competencies are being demonstrated
- Many questions that impedes implementation e.g., who are they intended for (individual or team); what are the minimum proficiency levels expected; who is responsible for their proficiency (individual or organization)
- Meshing public health competencies with other competencies & performance review processes

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Environmental Scan: Recommendations

- Focus efforts on formal endorsement & adoption of Core Competencies
- Continue to educate about Core Competencies at all levels of public health
- Promote practice-based learning approaches
- Equip organizations with human resources, tools & methods that support integration of competencies into practice

Environmental Scan: Recommendations (con't)

- Promote & support "workforce driven" competency development activities
- Encourage & support competency-based mentoring & coaching
- Continue integration of core & discipline-specific efforts through collaborative projects and partnerships
- Use networks to create 'gathering spaces' for shared learning & collaboration
- Support public health leadership at all levels

For More Information

Core Competencies for Public Health in Canada website:

www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/core_competencies

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