

# **Public Health Workforce Pipeline Development Plan**

**Nevada Health Care Workforce and Pipeline  
Development Workgroup**

**2023**

With support from

**Nevada's Division of Public and Behavioral Health, DHHS  
Center for Public Health Excellence, School of Public Health, UNR  
High Sierra AHEC**



## Background

The Nevada Health Care Workforce and Pipeline Development Workgroup aims to improve, grow, and diversify Nevada’s public health, behavioral health, and primary care workforces and workforce pipelines to ensure the state has a workforce capable of meeting current and future health care needs.

It brings together stakeholders representing public health, behavioral health, primary care, traditional workforce development, K-12 and higher education, minority health and equity, and community-based organizations throughout the state to:

1. Enhance education and awareness of workforce development initiatives in Nevada, connect non-traditional partners, identify opportunities for cross-sector collaboration, and maximize resources statewide;
2. Identify and map workforce pipeline development initiatives in K-12 education, higher education, and the current workforce; and
3. Create and implement workforce pipeline development plans for public health, behavioral health, and primary care.

The Workgroup established three subcommittees—one each for public health, behavioral health, and primary care—to focus on workforce pipeline development within its specific subsector of the health care workforce.

Throughout 2022, the Workgroup and its subcommittees met monthly to pursue the goals above and develop subsector-specific plans to improve the workforce.

## Public Health Workforce Pipeline Development Plan

This Public Health Workforce Pipeline Development Plan was developed by the Public Health Subcommittee of the Nevada Health Care Workforce and Pipeline Development Workgroup. The Subcommittee is comprised of representatives of a variety of sectors, including individuals from the following organizations and agencies:

- Carson City Health and Human Services
- Division of Public and Behavioral Health, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
- Governor's Office of Workforce Innovation
- Nevada Association of Counties
- Nevada's Department of Health and Human Services
- Nevada Minority Health and Equity Coalition, UNLV School of Public Health
- Nevada Office of Minority Health and Equity, DHHS
- Nevada Hospital Association
- Nevadaworks
- Office of the Governor
- PACT Coalition
- Southern Nevada Health District
- University of Nevada, Reno, School of Public Health
- University of Nevada, Las Vegas, School of Public Health
- Washoe County Health District
- Workforce Connections

The Plan identifies a clear vision for the public health workforce in Nevada, as well as specific goals, objectives, and strategies to work toward the vision. Among these are efforts to develop robust pipeline efforts that start in elementary school and end at retirement; increase internship, fellowship, and other work-based learning opportunities; expand and increase the diversity of the pool of applicants for openings at public health agencies and improve retention; and improve navigation into and through the public health career pipeline.

Strategies are divided into three categories: short-term (0-3 months), medium-term (3-12 months), and long-term (12-24 months).

The Public Health Workforce Pipeline Development Plan is a living document that will be revised by the Public Health Subcommittee to include new workforce development activities and reflect changes in existing strategies as appropriate.

## Vision

*A competent, diverse, and trusted public health workforce that provides culturally competent services to meet the needs of the diverse communities we serve—and whose safety, health, and mental wellbeing are prioritized.*

## Goals, Objectives and Strategies

**Goal 1:** Develop robust pipeline efforts that start in elementary school and end at retirement.

**Objective 1:** *Provide a clear understanding of the public health career pipeline and what is required to enter and advance through it.*

### Short Term Strategies (0-3 months)

- Develop career pipeline pathways graphics. Start with traditional public health pathways, and move on to non-traditional pathways, if helpful.

### Medium Term Strategies (3-12 months)

- Develop website to share public health workforce information or add to partners' websites.

### Long Term Strategies (12-24 months)

- Distribute the pipeline pathways graphic regularly through traditional and non-traditional partners, including those working with young people in K-12, vocational training, institutions of higher education, community-based organizations, and public health employers.

**Objective 2:** *Expand public health career education, outreach, and engagement in K-16, building on existing efforts and resources, and targeting:*

- *Students who have demonstrated interest in health careers, including those in the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Health Sciences program, Nevada HOSA, and related programs;*
- *Students in dual enrollment and concurrent enrollment programs, such as those at WNC, CSN, and TMCC;*
- *First- and second-year students at UNR and UNLV;*
- *First generation college students, individuals with disabilities, and low-income individuals through enhancing engagement with federal Trio Programs; and*
- *Students in nursing, medicine, and other programs related to, or that support, public health.*

### Short Term Strategies (0-3 months)

- Encourage UNR and UNLV Schools of Public Health to include information from public health employers about career paths, jobs, and internships in their high school outreach activities, such as on-campus programming.

### Medium Term Strategies (3-12 months)

- Improve early outreach in elementary and middle school by connecting with existing programs and organizations that work with K-12 students and in schools, learning more about what they do and how lessons about public health might be incorporated, and asking them to share relevant information and resources about public health and public health career opportunities that are age- and topic-appropriate.
  - Specifically connect with: Nevada AHECs, Department of Education (DOE) re: CTE, Nevada HOSA, rural school culinary programs (alignment with environmental health), NEPRIS, NSHE institutions
  - Resources to share/consider: Health Care Careers in Nevada Manual
- Participate in high school, college, employer, and local/regional career fairs and career days:
  - Work with partners to develop a list of career events by region, and coordinate with public health partners to ensure that public health is represented at as many as possible (either by a public health representative or by providing resources to other partners who will attend).
  - Enhance collaboration with the Department of Education and Schools of Medicine to ensure public health is represented at their career events.
- Engage public health employers to develop opportunities for high school students to “try on” a career by spending a day on-site and/or in the field with public health practitioners to learn about different careers (e.g. environmental health inspections and HCQC).
  - Develop a system or structured process to formalize rather than ad-hoc opportunities
  - Consider an application process, in which students write an essay regarding why they are interested in exploring health care careers/want to get into public health.
  - Ensure these opportunities are engaging for high school students and provide an opportunity to explore a variety of areas of public health.
- Research the structure *and* content of similar, successful programs.
- Develop or build on an existing public health mentorship program for late high school students and students in higher education.
  - Explore the Nevada Public Health Association’s (NPHA) existing Mentorship Programs—one each currently exists in northern Nevada and southern Nevada.
  - Coordinate with NPHA, public health employers, Schools of Public Health at UNR and UNLV, alumni associations, online programs (e.g. Chamberlain, WGU, Grand Canyon, and Walden).
  - Working closely w/ UNR SPH mentoring program – currently master’s students to undergrad students; opportunity to expand into the high school setting. Working more closely with community closely.

### **Long Term Strategies (12-24 months)**

- Plan and implement 1-2 regional public health career days each year, in collaboration with the Department of Education, school districts, schools, school counselors, colleges, universities, employers, and workforce development boards. Invite educators and employers to talk about their programs, job and career opportunities, financial assistance, pipeline pathways, etc. Involve related programs, such as HOSA and AHECs. This will require planning, funding, site, coordination, etc.

**Objective 3:** *Provide incentives to encourage students and public health professionals to stay in Nevada and/or work in state and local public health agencies.*

### **Short Term Strategies (0-3 months)**

- Expand the Nevada Health Service Corps (NHSC) state loan repayment programs to include public health professionals if sufficient state funding is available by supporting AB 69. This bill expands eligible providers to the NHSC to include certain behavioral health care providers and appropriates \$1,500,000 from the General Fund to repay these loans.

### **Medium Term Strategies (3-12 months)**

- Advocate at the federal level for expanding National Health Service Corps loan repayment program.
- Expand awareness and use of the federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program by public health providers as an incentive to improve recruitment and retention of all staff—including public health professionals and business support staff (e.g. finance, IT, etc.). This federal program forgives the remaining balance on certain individuals' direct loans after 10 years of full-time employment with a federal, state, local, or tribal government or non-profit organization.

### **Long Term Strategies (12-24 months)**

- Support, help expand awareness of, and identify other opportunities to assist with new incentive programs for pipeline progression. Currently, these include:
  - The Division of Public and Behavioral Health received \$4 million in ARPA funding for public health pipeline work to address understaffing and provide opportunities for the current workforce to upskill. Details are still under development, but the goal is to provide financial support (e.g. class, tuition, or degree reimbursement) for DPBH staff to pursue additional training or academic degrees to advance through the pipeline, in exchange for a commitment to work for DPBH for a period of time. The funding will likely be distributed through the RFP process to address pipeline and understaffing issues through 2026.
  - The UNLV School of Public Health received a grant from the federal Health Resources and Services Administration for scholarships for undergraduates, post-grad certificates in public health, and graduate assistantships to encourage individuals to enter public health programs. The UNLV SPH is beginning recruitment efforts, targeting working

professionals and community partners. Jose will share more information to the group to help distribute.

**Objective 4:** *Enhance opportunities and funding for community health workers (CHWs) in public health.*

*Community health workers are an entry-level role in the public health pipeline whose numbers have grown in recent years. Many CHWs are employed through COVID-19 funding that likely will expire in the near term. It is important to identify funding to keep existing CHWs and encourage new CHWs to enter and advance through the public health pipeline.*

**Short Term Strategies (0-3 months)**

- Explore and identify sustainable reimbursement mechanisms for CHWs in public health.

**Medium Term Strategies (3-12 months)**

- Encourage public health partners and employers to continue including CHWs in grants and identify opportunities to include them in grants.

**Long Term Strategies (12-24 months)**

- Increase the number of CHWs working in social services/public health.

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**Goal 2:** Increase internship, fellowship, and other work-based learning opportunities for traditional and non-traditional public health roles.

Approximately one in five employees of governmental public health agencies have formal training in public health; it is important to develop opportunities for the remainder of the workforce as well (e.g., those with degrees in business, management, accounting, fiscal, and policy analysis).

**Objective 1:** *Identify Strengthen relationships and communication between institutions of higher education and employers to better understand workforce needs and create appropriate opportunities for work-based learning with employers.*

**Long Term Strategies (0-24 months)**

- Establish, expand, and fully implement academic health departments (AHD) between governmental public health agencies and institutions of higher education.
  - DPBH is in the process of establishing an AHD between DHHS and UNR, and plans to pursue additional agreements with UNLV and other colleges.
  - SNHD has many AHD agreements, and would like to expand.
  - WCHD has an AHD agreement with the UNR School of Public Health.

**Objective 2:** *Identify and pursue funding for paid internships, fellowships, graduate assistantships, and similar opportunities, and for compensation to incentivize preceptors, advisors, and mentors.*

**Short Term Strategies (0-3 months)**

- Research and identify funding to help pay for internships and/or to incentivize organizations or individuals to host interns or serve as preceptors, advisors, or mentors.  
Consider private donors, whose funding is typically more flexible.

**Medium Term Strategies (3-12 months)**

- Explore innovative options to pay for these work-based experience opportunities, as well as creative ways to incentivize organizational/individual participation as preceptors, advisors, and mentors. Potential options:
  - Pay public health employees do serve as preceptors/advisors after their workday is over – do outside work job. Need to look into it.
  - Provide student scholarships, plus and administrative fee to the organization for hosting the student to help cover their time with the student. (Consider exploring private donations for direct student support. UNLV has this type of program right now). This model may be particularly helpful for smaller organizations.
  - Matching initiative—if the state has a certain amount of money, could this be promoted to private donors to match existing funds? Would it be possible to include as an RFP requirement? Or could be a requirement for NSHE institutions?
  - Consider including responsibility to serve as a preceptor/advisor/mentor into certain job descriptions.
    - DPBH may be able to do this in the long-term; it would have to be written into class specifications for certain positions.
  - Allow service as a preceptor/advisor/mentor to be recognized as additional experience for job progression to increase the likelihood of promotion.
    - DPBH will explore this; may be able to do it in the long term.

**Objective 3:** *Enhance existing internship offerings and develop new internship programs at governmental public health employers.*

**Short Term Strategies (0-3 months)**

- Identify potential preceptor sites and encourage them to offer internships (e.g. the Nevada Office of Minority Health within DHHS)

**Medium Term Strategies (3-12 months)**

- Develop a robust internship program at DPBH, with both paid and unpaid internships.

**Long Term Strategies (12-24 months)**

- Enhance existing internship experience at WCHD by better defining expectations and developing an orientation.



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**Goal 3:** Expand and increase the diversity of the pool of applicants for openings at public health agencies throughout the state to allow for competitive recruitment, and improve retention of diverse employees by improving cultural competence.

**Objective 1:** *Improve public health agencies' recruitment efforts among diverse groups.*

**Short Term Strategies (0-3 months)**

- Identify best practices for inclusive, systemic recruitment and hiring practices and strategies to reach more diverse populations; encourage governmental public health employers to implement these and include them in Workforce Development Plans. Medium.

**Objective 2:** *Recruit individuals with non-traditional but related backgrounds and/or career pathways (outside of traditional public health disciplines)*

**Short Term Strategies (0-3 months)**

- Identify related backgrounds/fields that translate to public health and develop a plan to enhance outreach and engagement to these groups (see Goal 1, Objective 2).

**Objective 3:** *Improve cultural competency, cultural relevance, cultural humility, and health literacy in governmental public health agencies to support diverse staff and engage diverse communities.*

**Medium Term Strategies (3-12 months)**

- Encourage governmental public health authorities to:
  - Assess cultural climate within the organization to better understand how to retain a diverse workforce, using an assessment such as through the Intercultural Developmental Inventory (IDI) or PH WINS; and
  - Build this information and lessons learned into their Workforce Development Plans, as required by PHAB accreditation

**Long Term Strategies (12-24 months)**

- Expand statutory cultural competency training requirements to include this workforce, and/or encourage public health agencies to provide cultural competency training to appropriate staff.

**Objective 4:** *Evaluate and focus on public health workforce climate and integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) into all levels and departments of individual organizations.*

**Medium Term Strategies (3-12 months)**

- Encourage public health employers to:
  - Establish a DEI advisory council with representatives from each subunit;
  - Develop a DEI position or positions outside of HR; and
  - Plan regular trainings, speaker series, and round tables to incorporate and infuse DEI.

**Objective 5:** *Provide opportunities and incentives for the current workforce to upskill to improve retention.*

**Medium Term Strategies (3-12 months)**

- Encourage governmental public health employers to provide and expand opportunities and job flexibility for employees to upskill in order to progress through pipeline at their current agency (e.g. flexible work hours, part-time schedule, etc.)
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**Goal 4:** Improve navigation into and through the public health career pipeline

**Objective 1:** *Help applicants find public health jobs in Nevada by expanding the job boards to which jobs are posted.*

**Short Term Strategies (0-3 months)**

- Develop a Nevada-specific public health job board to which all state and local jobs in public health are posted. Provide this link to national public health job boards, such as PublicHealthCareers.org, which ASTHO.

**Medium Term Strategies (3-12 months)**

- Work with EmployNV, the state’s job board, to list all public health jobs in Nevada. Explore how to use other services provided by EmployNV, such as pushing information to job seekers based on skill/interest/experience. EmployNV reaches a large number of job seekers, including those who may not be looking for careers in public health specifically.

**Long Term Strategies (12-24 months)**

- Maximize use of and promote PublicHealthCareers.org, a national public health jobs board that links to each state’s job board.

**Objective 2:** *Establish a public health career navigation center to:*

- *Provide information about the public health career pipeline, opportunities that exist, potential progression, and the realities/requirements of the job;*
- *Help navigate or translate education and experience into the field of public health and identify potential job opportunities/which positions may be the best fit; and*
- *Provide information about and help navigate funding/financing options to simplify the process (e.g., loan forgiveness, scholarship options/eligibility, and similar programs).*

**Short Term Strategies (0-3 months)**

- Explore models and get begin thinking about what this might look like, where funding would come from, and other key details.

### **Medium Term Strategies (3-12 months)**

- Identify existing partners/resources in Nevada (e.g., Workforce Connections, Nevadaworks).

### **Long Term Strategies (12-24 months)**

- Develop the Center.
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**Goal 5:** Focus efforts of public health and local governments on all aspects of the workforce—from traditional public health professionals to clinical, business, fiscal, support, and administrative staff.

**Objective 1:** *Assess foundational public health services at all state and local public health agencies, identify gaps, assess the cost of these gaps, and use this information to advocate for additional public health funding during the 2023 Legislative Session and beyond.*

### **Short Term Strategies (0-3 months)**

- Encourage state and local public health agencies to assess their current workforce's ability to provide foundational public health services (FPHS) and determine how many (and which types) of additional staff are needed to provide these services.
- Provide the results of the FPHS assessment and associated cost assessment to the Legislature, Governor's Office, and other workforce development entities to generate support for expanding the workforce.

**Objective 2:** *Identify the types of clinical, support, and administrative workforce needed and target workforce development efforts to reach them.*

### **Medium Term Strategies (3-12 months)**

- Publicize/market the types of skills, education, and experience needed for these roles, and job seekers who would not otherwise think about careers in public health consider these job opportunities, providing a bridge from professions in demand into public health.

## Acknowledgements

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**High Sierra Area Health Education Center (AHEC)** is a 501c3 public health non-profit organization, affiliated with the University of Nevada, Reno School of Medicine, dedicated to recruiting, developing, and strengthening the future healthcare workforce of Nevada. It is committed to providing equitable and comprehensive opportunities; engaging in outreach that exposes young people from groups underrepresented in the healthcare workforce to role models and mentors; further inspiring their pursuit and tangibility of a healthcare career. High Sierra AHEC's nationally recognized programs target first-generation, low-income, and rural students in a six-county area, including Carson, Churchill, Douglas, Lyon, Storey, and Washoe Counties.

**The Center for Public Health Excellence, UNR School of Public Health** works to improve the health of all Nevadans by leading efforts to grow and diversify the public health workforce; facilitating and formalizing partnerships between public health agencies and institutions of higher education; working with public health authorities to improve quality and performance; and raising awareness among policymakers about the importance of public health and key policy challenges.

## For More Information

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