

Environmental Health Specialists Self Assessment

Introduction

The purpose of this self assessment is to help you discover your level of competency on the non-technical key dimensions of environmental health practice.

A competency is any knowledge or skill of an individual or organization that has been shown to cause or predict outstanding performance. A collection of competencies make up a behavioral roadmap that is directly related to both individual and organizational performance.


By assessing your level of knowledge or skill for each competency indicator described, you will be able to prioritize your learning time to focus on those areas that are most important to you and to concentrate where the need for training and learning may be greatest.

How to complete this self assessment

The self assessment should take about 20 minutes to complete. It is divided into the following key dimensions of public health practice:

- A. Assessment
 - 1. Research
 - 2. Data Analysis and Interpretation
 - 3. Evaluation
- B. Management
 - 1. Problem Solving
 - 2. Economic and Political Issues
 - 3. Organizational Knowledge and Behavior
 - 4. Managing Work
 - 5. Computer/Information Technology (IT)
 - 6. Reporting, Documentation, and Record-Keeping
 - 7. Partnering
- C. Communications
 - 1. Education
 - 2. Communication
 - 3. Conflict Resolution
 - 4. Marketing Environmental/Public Health as a Service

- 1) Read each competency indicator listed under the key dimension.
- 2) In each dimension, and for each competency indicator, think about what level you are currently able to perform the skill. Then rate your level of proficiency on each

indicator by clicking the drop down menu arrow () to select a number on the continuum from “Novice” (1) to “Proficient” (4) that best describes your self reported level of expertise for that indicator. **Note:** The competency indicators listed in each

key dimension should be interpreted as broadly as possible to apply to your position and principal setting of employment.

In the example below, you would select number “4” for “Proficient” if you think you are excelling at this competency or select “1” for “Novice” if feel you need a great deal of improvement.

Example:

To what degree are you able to effectively...research literature through the Internet?

1=Novice	I am unaware, or have very little knowledge of the item
2=Advanced beginner	I have heard of it; limited knowledge and/or ability to apply the skill
3=Competent	I am comfortable with knowledge or ability to apply the skill
4=Proficient	I am very comfortable, an expert; could teach this to others

- 3) At the end of each key dimension there is a place to write any comments you have. For example, if you think a competency is not applicable to the job or if you feel like an expert but may still want training or learning opportunities in a particular skill, please enter your comments in the comments section. These comments may be helpful to you and your supervisor in planning for your professional development.
- 4) When you have entered in your responses, your results will be tabulated automatically at the end of each key dimension and also entered automatically into the corresponding row in the “Your results” section at the end of the self assessment.
- 5) Review your results and follow the guidance offered in the “Interpreting your results” section to determine your next steps.
- 6) Enter your name, agency, county and date you completed the self assessment into the text boxes on the last page.

To **save** this self assessment with your responses, click "File" then "Save" on the Adobe Reader toolbar. You can now store this file on your computer for future reference.

To **print** the self assessment with your responses, click the "Print" icon on the Adobe Reader toolbar or the "Print Assessment" button at the end of the self assessment.

To **email** your completed self assessment to NC Public Health Academy staff, click the "Email Assessment" button at the end of the self assessment.

Although you are asked to provide your name, the name of the agency you work for, the county in which you work, and the date you completed the self assessment, your responses are confidential and will not be shared with anyone. Your responses will be combined with responses from others who have taken the self assessment and will then be aggregated at the state level. We ask for your name, agency and date only in the event we need to follow up with you about your self assessment or any

comments you have made. The aggregated information will help the NC Public Health Academy understand the training and professional development needs of public health professionals in North Carolina and help us to better plan programs and learning opportunities that address those needs. **Thank you for your important contribution to this effort.**

Acknowledgements

This self assessment is based on the work of the American Public Health Association's Public Health Innovations Project. For more information, please visit:

<http://www.apha.org/programs/standards/healthcomproject/coreontechnicalcompetencies.htm>

A. Assessment

A1. Research: The capacity to identify and compile relevant information to solve a problem, and the knowledge of where to go to obtain the relevant information.

- 1=Novice I am unaware, or have very little knowledge of the item
- 2=Advanced beginner I have heard of it; limited knowledge and/or ability to apply the skill
- 3=Competent I am comfortable with knowledge or ability to apply the skill
- 4=Proficient I am very comfortable, an expert; could teach this to others

To what degree are you able to effectively...		
1	Research literature through the Internet (e.g., in response to a telephone call asking about fecal contamination of a swimming pool).	
2	Know when to consult with experts in the field (e.g., toxicologists, epidemiologists, forensic specialists, environmental engineers, etc.).	
3	Find and use appropriate reference material (e.g., statutes, regulations, reference books, journals).	
	Average total	

Comments:

A. Assessment

A2. Data Analysis and Interpretation: The capacity to analyze data, recognize meaningful test results, interpret results, and present the results in a meaningful way to different types of audiences.

- 1=Novice I am unaware, or have very little knowledge of the item
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- 3=Competent I am comfortable with knowledge or ability to apply the skill
- 4=Proficient I am very comfortable, an expert; could teach this to others

To what degree are you able to effectively...		
1	Read and summarize technical papers, understand tabular and graphical presentations of data, and translate them for a non-technical audience (e.g., reading papers published in academic journals and translating the data into public information materials).	
2	Analyze data generated internally using simple statistics (e.g., percentages, averages, medians, etc.). Understand how statistical surveys are developed, administered, and what results mean (e.g., develop and administer an epidemiological survey for food borne outbreaks).	
3	Represent results in a meaningful way to different types of lay and practitioner audiences, using appropriate graphics (e.g., summarizing inspection reports for a particular location on a spreadsheet, then using Excel to create a graphic for a public meeting; developing slide presentations on well water contamination for homeowner meetings; or presenting graphs of daily results to the Board of Health).	
	Average total	

Comments:

A. Assessment

A3. Evaluation: The capacity to evaluate the effectiveness or performance of procedures, interventions, and programs.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 1=Novice | I am unaware, or have very little knowledge of the item |
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| 3=Competent | I am comfortable with knowledge or ability to apply the skill |
| 4=Proficient | I am very comfortable, an expert; could teach this to others |

To what degree are you able to effectively...		
1	Evaluate the agency's procedures against a given set of standards (e.g., state requirements, vector control surveys or on-site wastewater standards).	
2	Evaluate the results of particular interventions (e.g., working with a restaurant manager to deal with a food service issue, and determining what improvements have been made after three months).	
3	Evaluate the overall environmental health program in which the practitioner is working, in terms of inputs (e.g., number of inspections, number of hotline calls processed) or outcomes (e.g., real-world results, progress).	
	Average total	

Comments:

B. Management

B1. Problem Solving: The capacity to understand and solve problems.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 1=Novice | I am unaware, or have very little knowledge of the item |
| 2=Advanced beginner | I have heard of it; limited knowledge and/or ability to apply the skill |
| 3=Competent | I am comfortable with knowledge or ability to apply the skill |
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To what degree are you able to effectively...		
1	Determine the nature of a problem in broader context by asking appropriate questions and reviewing documentation.	
2	Clearly articulate the problem.	
3	Take appropriate measures to resolve the problem and/or present a range of solutions.	
4	Collaborate in decision-making process.	
Average total		

Comments:

B. Management

B2. Economic and Political Issues: The capacity to understand and appropriately use information concerning the economic and political implications of decisions.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 1=Novice | I am unaware, or have very little knowledge of the item |
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| 4=Proficient | I am very comfortable, an expert; could teach this to others |

To what degree are you able to effectively...		
1	Understand and maintain awareness of basic economic issues (e.g., balancing small business and community resource issues with environmental concerns and regulations).	
2	Understand local history and community demographics, as well as cultural and political issues and sensitivities.	
3	Enforce regulations equitably and consistently - but with an awareness of the political realities of the work.	
4	Develop and present options and recommendations that demonstrate an understanding of environmental, as well as, economic and political conditions, in an effort to find appropriate solutions and prioritize actions.	
5	Understand the economic and political underpinnings and implications of broader agency priorities/decisions.	
6	Draft local rules, using local, state, economic, and political data, to improve local environmental health programs.	
Average total		

Comments:

B. Management

B3. Organizational Knowledge and Behavior: The capacity to function effectively within the culture of the organization and to be an effective team player.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 1=Novice | I am unaware, or have very little knowledge of the item |
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To what degree are you able to effectively...		
1	Understand the formal legislative/administrative system within which the agency operates.	
2	Identify internal agency functions, priorities, and dynamics.	
3	Identify and recognize "agendas" (i.e., how they are set, pursued, and how they impact public health).	
4	Inform supervisor and other appropriate persons regarding political issues as they arise ("heads up").	
	Average total	

Comments:

B. Management

B4. Managing Work: The capacity to plan, implement, and maintain fiscally responsible programs/projects using appropriate skills, and prioritize projects across the employee's entire workload.

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To what degree are you able to effectively...		
1	Formulate goals and objectives. Understand what's necessary to get things done, internally and externally.	
2	Design action steps, using a wide variety of resources as needed.	
3	Establish appropriate timelines and deadlines.	
4	Balance the workload when involved in multiple projects.	
5	Measure outcomes for the program.	
6	Manage programs within budgetary constraints.	
7	Assist in prioritizing needs for budget decisions.	
8	Monitor expenditures/revenues.	
9	Recognize opportunities for external funding and pursue as appropriate.	
10	Understand the agency's finance system, including purchase requisitions, purchase orders, unencumbered/encumbered funds, allocations, and budget revision.	
	Average total	

Comments:

B. Management

B5. Computer/Information Technology (IT): The capacity to use information technology as needed to produce work products.

- 1=Novice I am unaware, or have very little knowledge of the item
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- 3=Competent I am comfortable with knowledge or ability to apply the skill
- 4=Proficient I am very comfortable, an expert; could teach this to others

To what degree are you able to effectively...		
1	Use software available within the agency to perform research, record keeping, communication (e.g., e-mail, word processing programs), data analysis and interpretation (including simple spreadsheet programs), and reporting tasks.	
2	Use Web-based applications as needed, such as searching and retrieving information (e.g., locating state statutes and program rules online).	
Average total		

Comments:

B. Management

B6. Reporting, Documentation, and Record-Keeping: The capacity to produce reports to document actions, keep records, and inform appropriate parties.

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- 3=Competent I am comfortable with knowledge or ability to apply the skill
- 4=Proficient I am very comfortable, an expert; could teach this to others

To what degree are you able to effectively...		
1	Generate an inspection report.	
2	Produce a periodic (e.g., quarterly) activity summary report.	
3	Generate a progress report for your supervisor, your agency, or a grant.	
4	Maintain organized, accurate, and up-to-date files and records (electronic and/or hard copy).	
5	Prepare evidence for an administrative hearing or a court case.	
	Average total	

Comments:

B. Management

B7. Partnering: The capacity to form partnerships and alliances with other individuals and organizations in order to enhance performance on the job.

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- 2=Advanced beginner I have heard of it; limited knowledge and/or ability to apply the skill
- 3=Competent I am comfortable with knowledge or ability to apply the skill
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To what degree are you able to effectively...		
1	Identify key individuals in organizations, community, and media. Networks may be internal to the agency (e.g., with epidemiologists; public health nurses and educators; in-house laboratories; plumbing, electrical, and building inspectors) community-wide (e.g., with non-governmental organizations, industry, academia, labs) or within the government's public health/environmental protection system (e.g., EPA, CDC, other federal agencies; state offices such as State Engineer, Attorney General; and local agencies).	
2	Cultivate effective linkages and partnerships (including those with whom there is limited agreement) by using communications skills, maintaining regular/periodic contact, participating in practitioner organizations, and providing reciprocal help, service, and support (e.g., developing an effective EPI-team).	
	Average total	

Comments:

C. Communications

C1. Education: The capacity to use the environmental health practitioner’s front-line role to effectively educate the public on environmental health issues.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 1=Novice | I am unaware, or have very little knowledge of the item |
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| 3=Competent | I am comfortable with knowledge or ability to apply the skill |
| 4=Proficient | I am very comfortable, an expert; could teach this to others |

To what degree are you able to effectively...		
1	Identify “teachable moments” as part of regulatory function, and opportunities to share “lessons learned” (e.g., identifying alternatives to share with food service personnel during the inspection).	
2	Provide accurate information and demonstrate desired action. Present information in a culturally-appropriate manner.	
3	Recognize the constantly changing state of knowledge and information in the field, by staying abreast of and appropriately using new information.	
4	Emphasize prevention (e.g., explain to homeowners how to monitor and/or maintain their own on-site wastewater system or how to minimize use of pesticides and fertilizers).	
5	Seek continuing opportunities for learning, education and/or mentoring.	
Average total		

Comments:

C. Communications

C2. Communication: The capacity to effectively communicate risk and exchange information with colleagues, other practitioners, clients, policy-makers, interest groups, media, and the public through public speaking, writing effectively, using print and electronic media, and interpersonal relations.

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- 3=Competent I am comfortable with knowledge or ability to apply the skill
- 4=Proficient I am very comfortable, an expert; could teach this to others

To what degree are you able to effectively...		
1	Handle all forms of communication promptly, politely, and professionally. These include letter and e-mail correspondence, telephone calls, site visits, group discussions, meetings, and presentations.	
2	Explain complicated issues and procedures simply and accurately. Identify the target audience and deliver the message appropriately (e.g., identify appropriate activities that will support and meet current rules and standards).	
3	Handle interactions with the public (and media, when necessary) using tactful, objective, non-confrontational, culturally sensitive language. Interactions may include receiving complaints and providing feedback to complainants, sharing information with clients and citizen groups, motivating clients to bring about desired changes, resolving conflicts within a community on use of natural resources and/or presenting a case to a hearing officer against a restaurant that has been closed down, etc.	
4	Seek opportunities for public speaking in order to broaden the audience on environmental health issues (e.g., making speeches to school groups on food safety or to swimming pool and apartment building owners and managers, conducting food handler training, and giving presentations to the Chamber of Commerce).	
	Average total	

Comments:

C. Communications

C3. Conflict Resolution: The capacity to facilitate the resolution of conflicts within the agency, in the community, and with regulated parties.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 1=Novice | I am unaware, or have very little knowledge of the item |
| 2=Advanced beginner | I have heard of it; limited knowledge and/or ability to apply the skill |
| 3=Competent | I am comfortable with knowledge or ability to apply the skill |
| 4=Proficient | I am very comfortable, an expert; could teach this to others |

To what degree are you able to effectively...		
1	Identify situations when conflict resolution strategies can be used and when they cannot, either because of a lack of authority or because of the intractable nature of the conflict.	
2	Recognize the limits of authority and flexibility in a situation (e.g., in a complaint investigation or disagreement over a regulation, a client might inform the environmental health practitioner that he has done business a certain way for years and sees no reason to change, and then announces his intention to seek redress from elected officials).	
3	Use effective listening skills.	
4	Exhibit respect for diversity.	
5	Understand the history and context of the conflict.	
6	Identify the nucleus of problem, separate from symptoms.	
7	Find common ground and areas of agreement, as well as non-negotiable areas.	
8	Determine the willingness of the parties involved to negotiate and promote that willingness.	
9	Obtain the necessary resources to bring conflict to a resolution (e.g., use of facilitators, mediators, etc.).	
Average total		

Comments:

C. Communications

C4. Marketing Environmental Public Health as a Service: The ability to articulate basic concepts of environmental health and public health and convey an understanding of their value and importance to clients and the public.

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- 3=Competent I am comfortable with knowledge or ability to apply the skill
- 4=Proficient I am very comfortable, an expert; could teach this to others

To what degree are you able to effectively...		
1	Articulate the goals, purposes, problems, and needs of environmental health.	
2	Develop, in concert with other key partners, solutions to environmental public health problems that obtain "buy-in" from clients and increase their understanding of environmental public health issues and concerns.	
3	Explain the rationale for environmental health regulatory requirements and the impact of a healthy and safe environment (e.g., less disease, lower health care costs, improved living and working conditions, etc.).	
	Average total	

Comments:

Your results

The average total from each key dimension appears in the corresponding row below.

Key dimension	Average total
A. Assessment	
Research	
Data Analysis and Interpretation	
Evaluation	
B. Management	
Problem Solving	
Economic and Political Issues	
Organizational Knowledge and Behavior	
Managing Work	
Computer/Information Technology (IT)	
Reporting, Documentation, and Record-Keeping	
Partnering	
C. Communications	
Education	
Communication	
Conflict Resolution	
Marketing Environmental/Public Health as a Service	

Interpreting your results

Based on the averages you have for each key dimension in the “Your results” section above, you are now ready to identify the strengths in your practice and the areas that you would like to improve or strengthen.

For example, if you have scored a “1” in any dimension, you will want to consider focusing your time and energy towards achieving the competency indicators in that dimension, followed by dimensions in which you score a “2”, with a lower priority given to dimensions in which you scored a “3” or higher.

Once you have identified your priorities, you can use this information to guide you in developing a learning plan with one or more personal professional goals for the next year, in guiding a discussion with your supervisor, mentor or coach and in choosing learning opportunities that will help you reach your goals and meet the requirements for continuing competence in your occupation or discipline.

To locate a sample learning plan and occupation-or discipline-specific learning opportunities, visit the NC Public Health Academy website at ncpublichealthacademy.org. Then click the link to your occupation or discipline.

Name:

County:

Agency:

Date: