

Public Health Workforce Research: Status and Future Directions

Carol A. Gotway Crawford, PhD
Office of Workforce and Career Development
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
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CDC Research Guide: Workforce Research Theme

Workforce and Career Development

*Conduct research to improve public health
workforce-related recruitment, retention,
and training.*

Source: CDC. Advancing the nation's health: a guide to public health research needs, 2006–2015. Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services, CDC; 2006. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/od/science/PHResearch/cdcra/>.

Multiple Broad Areas

- **Identify and assess**
 - **Best practices for recruitment, training, and retention**
 - **Strategies to create and sustain a workforce that is capable of meeting public health needs**
 - **Information gaps, resources, and other areas needing improvement**
 - **Impacts of trained public health professionals on specific outcomes (e.g., improved health or improved public health practice)**

- **Determine and define**
 - **Current public health workforce needs**
 - **Skill competencies needed and best methods for updating and validating these competencies**
 - **Organizational variables that support development and application of skill competencies**
 - **Best indicators of workforce performance**
 - **How best to facilitate collaboration among academia and community-based groups and integrate with public health practice**

- **Monitor and evaluate**
 - **Workforce trends, including size, distribution, qualifications, and tenure**
 - **The role of labor market forces on recruitment, retention, wage, salary, benefits, and personnel-system characteristics**
 - **Best indicators of workforce performance**
 - **Future workforce needs (forecasts)**

Partnership Meeting

March 29, 2007

- **Assist OWCD in developing**
 - **A 10-year research plan**
 - **Relevant research initially focused on CDC workforce, but generalizable to larger public health workforce**
 - **Working associations that move the public health workforce and career development research agenda forward**

Research Goals

- **Support public health workforce planning, programs, and policies with research that is**
 - **Empirically driven**
 - **Evidence-based**
 - **Strategic**
- **Identify best practices for workforce and career development**
- **Coordinate existing public health workforce research with academia and sector partners**

Initial Sources

- **Cioffi, Lichtveld, and Tilson (2004)**
- **Scientific Issues for Fellowship Programs (D. Koo)**
- **The CDC Research Guide**
- **Literature reviews and e-scans**
- **CDC working group input and discussion**

Literature Review and E-Scan

- **Initially focused on**
 - **2004–Present**
 - **Restricted to public health sector**
 - **Medline, PubMed, ERIC, Copernic Agent Basic, and Google**
 - **The terms *public health workforce* and *research***
- **Expanded to include other sectors, databases, and additional search terms and strategies**
- **Ongoing**

Research Themes and Objectives

- **Derived as a general organizing approach**
- **Developed themes that are broad, not unique, but consistent with those developed previously**
- **Focused on key outcomes of interest**
- **Defined objectives that are exemplary, not completely exhaustive**

Eight Research Themes

- 1. Workforce size and composition**
- 2. Workforce diversity**
- 3. Workforce effectiveness and health impact**
- 4. Recruitment, retention, separation, and retirement**

Research Themes (cont.)

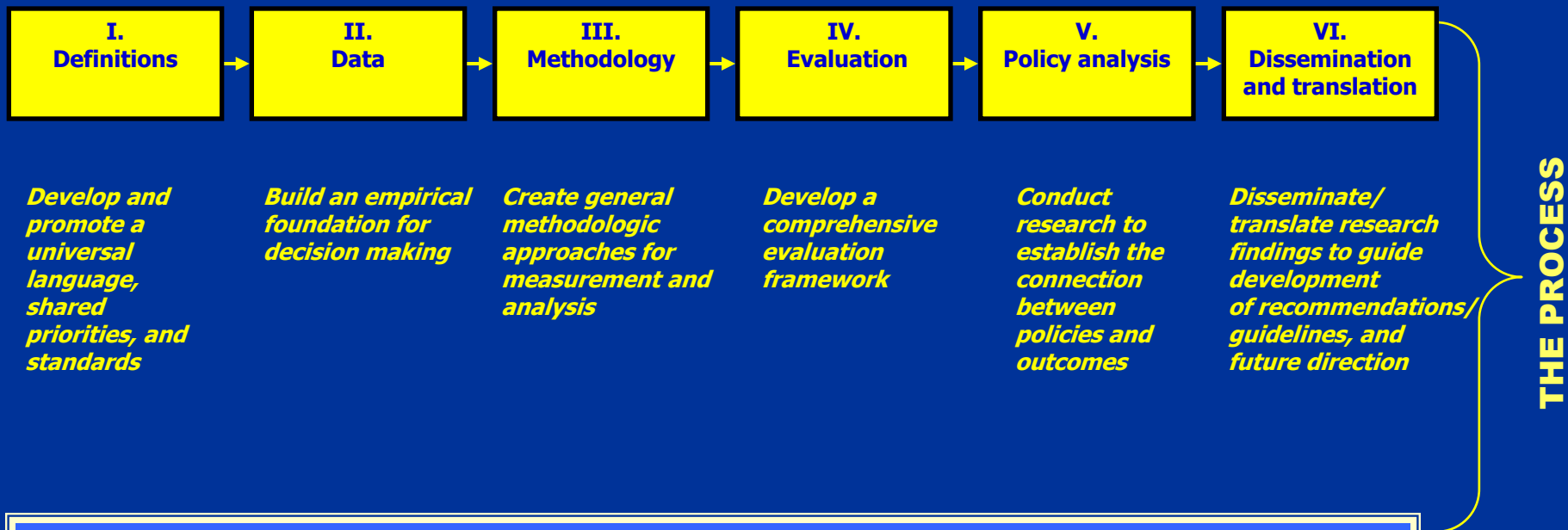
- 5. Worker pay, promotion, performance, and job satisfaction**
- 6. Demand for the public health workforce**
- 7. Education, training, and credentialing the public health workforce**
- 8. Public health workforce policy**

Coordinated Efforts

- **Public health workforce research previously uncoordinated and fragmented**
- **CDC expected by partners to play a leadership role**
- **How to move an entire field forward?**
- **Need a strategic partnership approach that supports evidence-based, policy-focused research**

Public Health Workforce Research: Strategic Development

GOAL: To provide public health decision makers with the scientific research necessary to support *coordinated, systematic, empirically driven, evidence-based* public health workforce and career development planning, program, and policy efforts that ensure a competent, diverse, sustainable, and prepared public health workforce necessary to improve health outcomes.



Outcome: Evidence-based recommendations for programs and policymakers on workforce investments.

Current Activities

- **Identify and develop workforce best practices**
 - Policy research with Univ of Chicago
 - Traditional partners: ASTHO, NACCHO, ASPH, SPHs
 - New partners: BLS, RAND, policy researchers, sociologists, economists
 - CDC Workforce Research Conference, *Social Science Perspectives on Workforce Policy: Opportunities to Inform Public Health Workforce Policy*, August 2008
 - Special issue of *J Public Health Manag Pract*

Current Activities (cont.)

- **Establishment of the Center of Excellence in Public Health Workforce Research (Univ of Kentucky SPH and PHF)**
 - Define in the context of public health systems research
 - Measure and forecast workforce size and composition to match community needs (data harmonization)
 - Determine how workforce components affect public health services
- **Development of a quantitative measure of epi capacity (CSTE)**
- **Geospatial analysis of human and social capital impacts on community health indicators (NACCHO)**
- **Collaboration with OCPHP on public health systems research**

Current Activities (cont.)

- **OWCD research**

- **Determined decreasing gender gap in promotions at CDC**
- **Applying personnel economics to CDC's workforce**
- **Analysis of career path changes at CDC**
- **Analysis of returns to experience and education**
- **General econometrics framework for analysis of public health workforce data**

Future Directions

- **Use methods from such other disciplines as economics and sociology**
- **Unite key partners in research to make strategic decisions and to leverage funding**
- **Establish second Center for Excellence in Public Health Workforce Research at Univ of Michigan to focus on epi capacity and training**
- **Establish extramural research program**