

Purpose:

Create a career advancement portfolio outlining career growth from the Foundational Tier to the Intermediate Tier utilizing the Applied Epidemiology Competencies (AECs) to gain skills in managing small projects independently and advancing technical applied epidemiology capabilities.

The AECs tiers can be used to outline the increasing skill level expected for epidemiologists as they progress in their careers.



What is a Career Advancement Portfolio?

A career advancement portfolio is a new way of looking at career ladders or career paths in a more flexible way. It considers many types of work and personal experiences and the development of skills that may be relevant to future job roles and career goals. A career advancement portfolio highlights the range of experiences that an employee already has and the skills they are hoping to acquire as they progress in their career.

Review the following steps to create a career advancement portfolio for yourself.

Step 1:

Establish your career advancement goals

Think about your career to this point. What kind of advancement aligns with what you want and need out of your career? You do not need to have everything decided at the start; begin by identifying initial priorities, boundaries, and a direction. These will provide a base framework that can be expanded upon or changed over time. Career advancement is an evolving process that should give you the opportunity to try things and change direction if needed.

Consider where you would like to see yourself in your career in the next 5 years. What functions do you see yourself serving? Examples could include:

- Leading the epidemiology department's community health assessments.
- Conducting epidemiological surveillance activities using advanced informatics techniques.

Where would you like to see yourself in your career in 5 years?

Step 2:

Create a plan for advancement

Assess what competencies and abilities you currently have and what ones you will need to achieve your goals. It is helpful to assess yourself against the AECs and the skills you may need to advance to the next tier when creating a career advancement portfolio.

Tier 1: Foundational

- Individuals with these skills are those who are completing academic programs or are early in their public health career still gaining training or applied experience on the job.
- These individuals require supervision when performing most tasks.
- Their responsibilities include describing factors affecting community health, including application of a health equity science perspective; identifying epidemiologic data and surveillance system needs; collecting surveillance data; identifying the roles and resources provided by epidemiologists and other public health professionals; and assisting in collaborations with internal and external program resources.

Tier 2: Intermediate

- Individuals with these skills are those who administer epidemiology programs and projects often independently.
- These individuals may require supervision while managing larger or more complex programs or projects and other tasks.
- Their responsibilities include conducting epidemiologic investigations including application of a health equity science perspective; communicating epidemiologic findings to diverse audiences; defining public health actions and interventions; collaborating with others to perform epidemiologic activities; and applying data to support public health policies, services, and programs.

Typically, as individuals advance from one tier to the next, they require less supervision in performing their job duties, gain skills in communicating at an executive level, become more comfortable advocating for programs, policies, and interventions, and become more capable of leading projects or programs and their affiliated staff.

When planning, consider knowledge, skills, and abilities gained from experiences beyond traditional job duties; these might include freelance roles, volunteering, side projects, hobbies, and personal commitments with friends and family. How might these be applied or developed to expand your existing skills? Consider focusing on developing skills relating to ownership of projects and tasks, working independently, and collaborating with others.

When completing the following table, be sure to identify specific AECs competencies and subcompetencies that align with your career goals and that you can work towards.

Based on the example career advancement goals described in Step 1 above, these may be competencies and subcompetencies such as:

- **T2: 1.2.1.**
 - *Assesses the impact of specific factors that affect the health of a community (e.g., determining expected number of cases, outcomes, disease burden, prevalence of risk behaviors).*
- **T2: 1.4.4.**
 - *Collaborates with informaticians to identify and implement data needs, automation processes, and surveillance systems.*
- **T2: 1.5.1.**
 - *Conducts community health status assessments involving the affected community to investigate factors affecting the health of the community.*
- **Competency 2.3.**
 - *Applies public health informatics in using epidemiologic data, information, and knowledge (e.g., data collection, processing, analysis, and dissemination).*
- **Competency 7.5.**
 - *Advocates for policies and public health actions that improve community health and resilience.*

The CSTE 2023 AECs Report can be found [here](#) for reference.

Tier 1: Foundational



Tier 2: Intermediate

In what areas does the employee need to demonstrate growth to progress to the next tier?

What existing professional and personal knowledge, skills, and abilities can be applied to your career advancement?

What changes are needed in technical core knowledge, skills, and abilities?

What changes are needed in leadership and management knowledge, skills, and abilities?

To what extent does there need to be a change in responsibilities (supervision of projects or individuals)?

Step 3:

Gain new skills

Once you have identified the skills you want to develop, begin seeking opportunities to gain them. This could include:

- identifying a mentor inside and/or outside of your organization.
- taking additional training courses.
- earning a new credential or degree.
- participating in a fellowship program.
- volunteering in your community.
- gaining new experiences within your organization. Examples of new experiences might include lateral movements, career shadowing, or completing stretch projects.
- networking inside and outside of your organization. Ways to network might include joining professional organizations (e.g., CSTE), going to conferences, and connecting on professional social media websites.

Your plan to gain new skills should be drafted with “SMART” goals wherever possible. A SMART goal is a goal that is: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound. Using SMART goals can help you make deliberate steps necessary to develop your competencies and advance your career.

How do you plan to gain these new skills?

Be sure to document all of these activities and the skills that you have developed from them in your career portfolio. Map out how these new competencies align with your career goals and skills associated with the new position you may be seeking. If you have involved your manager or human resources (HR) department in your career advancement planning, they might be able to assist you in ways such as:

- identifying opportunities and funding sources within the organization.
- assigning new projects.
- identifying potential mentors.

Step 4:

Advance towards your career goals

Once you have developed the skills necessary to advance in your career, consider seeking out new opportunities. These can be within your organization or at other organizations. Ensure that you can demonstrate how you have grown and developed new competencies to your organization or to a new employer. Familiarize yourself with your career advancement portfolio and how each of the new experiences, training, and projects you have completed align with the knowledge, skills, and abilities they are looking for; be prepared to answer competency-based interview questions relating to these concepts. Career advancement portfolios should be used in an iterative process which can be refined and adjusted as individuals advance in their careers.

References:

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