

Purpose:

Create a career advancement portfolio outlining career growth from the Practiced Tier to the Advanced Tier utilizing the Applied Epidemiology Competencies (AECs) to gain skills in executive level leadership and management.

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:

- Serving as the state epidemiologist for the state.
- Supervising the entire epidemiology department at the organization.

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.

Note: As you progress in your career, advancement may not involve an actual promotion. Rather, advancement may involve a lateral movement into another department, or gaining additional or different duties and responsibilities. It is critically important to identify what types of progression or advancement would be fulfilling to you as you create a plan for achieving your goals.

Tier 3: Practiced

- Individuals with these skills are those with subject matter expertise or who manage epidemiology programs and resources which may include finances and personnel.
- These individuals perform their job duties independently and may supervise others on a project-basis or all the time.
- Their responsibilities include systems thinking; development of surveillance systems; interpreting the results of epidemiologic investigations and surveillance including application of a health equity science perspective; evaluating the suitability of data collection, databases, and program objectives; developing communication strategies to present data, key findings, and interventions to professional audiences and the public; assigning resources to epidemiology activities and programs; promoting evidence-based decision making using epidemiology data; and evaluating the impact of activity toward community health goals.

Tier 4: Advanced

- Individuals with these skills are those who typically hold senior positions within organizations, demonstrate leadership, and are visionaries.

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- These individuals require no supervision for their job duties but may supervise and mentor others.
- Their responsibilities include communicating epidemiologic program needs to internal and external collaborators; analyzing programs, staffing needs, and policies relating to epidemiology; administering financial and personnel resources; evaluating database generation and surveillance systems; advocating for health equity, a diverse workforce, and program needs; facilitating relationships with collaborators; informing development of policies and laws; justifying program resources; and engaging in organizational strategic planning.

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, any personal commitments with friends and family, and through your networking and professional relationships. How these may be applied or developed to expand your existing skills? Consider focusing on developing skills relating to management of programs and organizational resources, advanced communication and leadership, and advocating for program and systems changes.

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:

- **T4: 1.9.2.** Consults directly with collaborators to identify and prioritize public health action based on data analysis.
- **T4: 2.3.1.** Evaluates data models to support public health decision-making.
- **T4: 3.4.1.** Advocates for the dissemination of accurate and evidence-based epidemiologic findings, methodology, and principles to affected individuals, communities, organizations, the public or professional audiences.
- **T4: 4.1.1.** Advocates for community health priorities demonstrating principles of DEIA and cultural humility.
- **Competency 5.4.** Secures extramural funding (e.g., preparing proposals, grant applications, vendor contracts, and requests for proposals).
- **Competency 6.4.** Manages workforce development.
- **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 3: Practiced



Tier 4: Advanced

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:

- connecting with an executive coach.
- serving as mentor inside and/or outside of your organization.
- taking additional training courses relating to executive management, communication, and business development.
- earning a new credential or degree.
- leading budget or grant development and program fiscal operations.
- volunteering in your community.
- gaining new experiences within your organization. Examples of new experiences might include lateral movements, career shadowing, or completing stretch projects.
- demonstrating thought-leadership at professional conferences, media interviews, and on professional social media.
- serving in leadership roles inside and outside of your organization. Ways to serve might include participation in committees, professional organizations (e.g., CSTE), or community organizations.

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 within the organization.
- assigning new duties and responsibilities.
- identifying ways to demonstrate your executive leadership skills.

Note: There may be a limited number of senior positions available at your organization. At this career advancement stage, it is possible that you will be in competition with your manager for such roles. Ways to avoid conflict or difficulties might include discussing your goals and desired job duties with different senior leaders in the organization, identifying the potential for additional senior positions in the organization, or changing in your duties and responsibilities so that they do not necessarily overlap with those of your manager.

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. Expand your professional circle and develop relationships with other individuals, especially those in roles at your level or above at other organizations. These connections can provide ongoing support and exploration of meaningful professional opportunities. 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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