Training to Improve Public Health Capacity:
Identifying the Key Competencies

Dr. Brent Moloughney
Lecturer, Department of Public Health Sciences,
University of Toronto

Outline

- What are competencies?
- Why do we care?
- Initiatives elsewhere
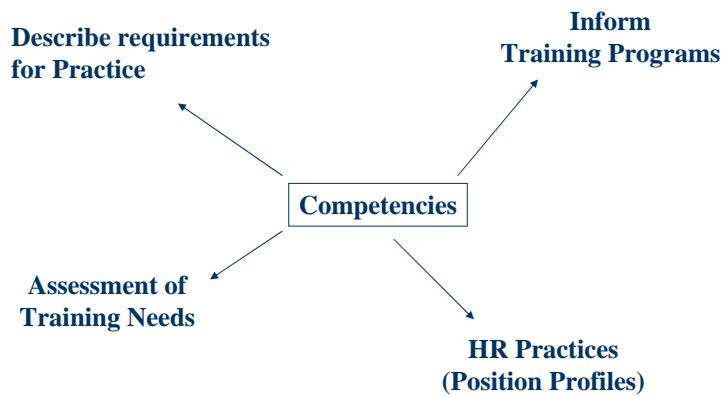- Identifying a draft set of core competencies
- Future

Competencies?

◆ Knowledge, skills and abilities demonstrated by organizational or system members that are critical to the effective and efficient function of an organization or system.

(U.S. Council on Linkages Between
Academia and Public Health Practice)

Why Need Competencies?

Describe requirements for Practice

Inform Training Programs

Competencies

Assessment of Training Needs

HR Practices (Position Profiles)

Competencies-based approach to workforce development…

- Key recommendation of international environmental scan of workforce development initiatives (Nevis Consulting)
- Recurring theme in regional consultations across Canada on Public Health education (early 2004)
- Later reflected as central theme in *Pan-Canadian Framework for Public Health Human Resource Planning*

Quick Taxonomy

- **<u>Core</u>**: set of competencies shared by all PH practitioners
- **<u>Technical</u>**: competencies not common to all practitioners
- **<u>Discipline-specific</u>**: *set* of core and technical competencies that are used to define a particular discipline

Public Health Competencies - International

- U.S.
  - Core, Program-specific, Discipline-specific
- U.K.
  - Core – linked to "occupational standards"; Discipline-specific: Primary Care Trust Public Health Directors
- Australia
  - Discipline-specific (MPH, Public Health Officer)

Development of Public Health Workforce *Core* Competencies

- F/P/T Joint Task Group on Public Health Human Resources
- Set of cross-cutting skills, knowledge and abilities necessary for the broad practice of public health.
  - Transcend the boundaries of individual disciplines
    - Reflect common knowledge, skills and abilities of public health practitioners
    - Independent of program/topic
  - Potential for further characterization:
    - Depth (i.e. proficiency)
    - Relationship to role in organization (front-line, supervisory, management, consultant/expert)

Development Principles

- *Drafting* a set of competencies – need for feedback
- Wish for competencies to be based on the core system functions:
  - Population health assessment
  - Health surveillance
  - Disease and injury prevention
  - Health promotion
  - Health protection

Overview of Process

Core Functions

Core Elements
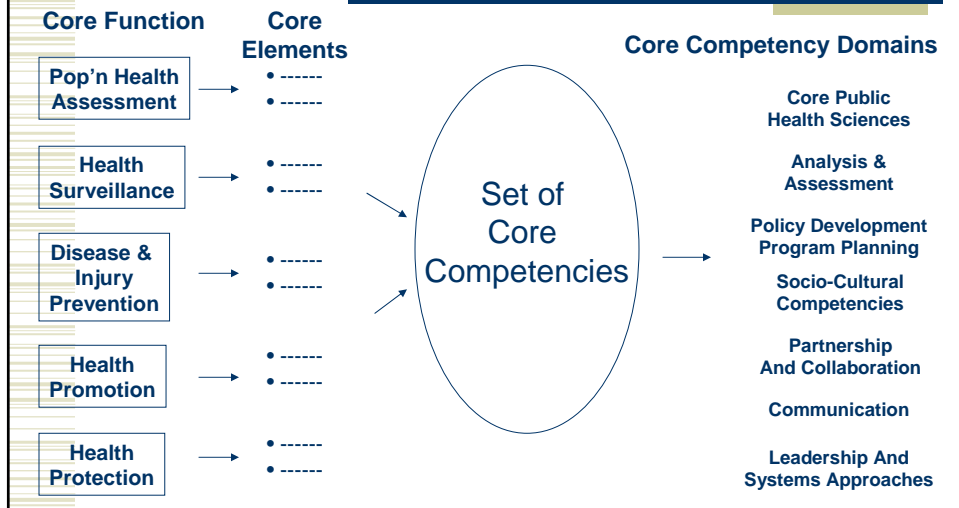
Existing Competency Sets

Core Competencies

Process (cont'd)

- Core elements:
  - Smaller, more concrete items
  - Feedback from June 2004 CPHA Conference
- Competency statements:
  - Either draft or start with existing from elsewhere (2 from UK and 2 from US)
  - Mapped to core elements

Mapping Existing Statements to the Core Elements

- Different competency sets have greater emphasis in some areas than others
- Many competencies not unique to a particular function, but cross several (e.g. policy development, program planning, etc.) – grouping of competencies by core function not typically useful

Creation of Draft Core Competency Set

Core Function

Pop'n Health Assessment →

Health Surveillance →

Disease & Injury Prevention →

Health Promotion →

Health Protection →

Core Elements

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Set of Core Competencies →

Core Competency Domains

Core Public Health Sciences

Analysis & Assessment

Policy Development Program Planning

Socio-Cultural Competencies

Partnership And Collaboration
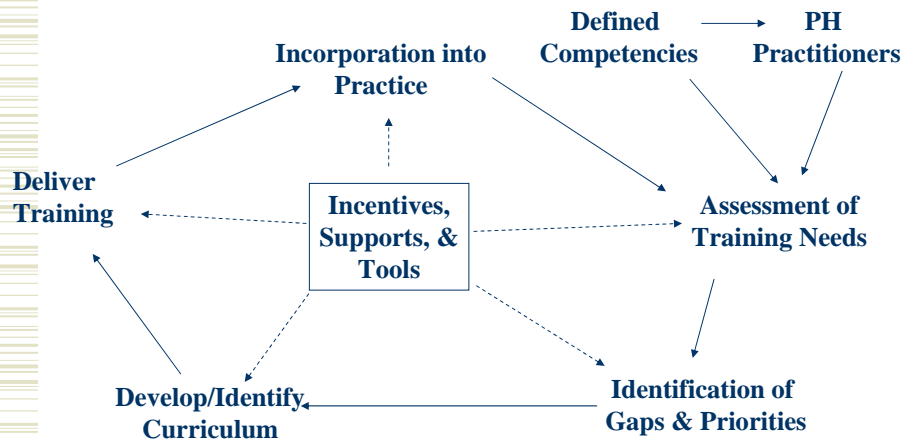
Communication

Leadership And Systems Approaches

Draft Core Competency Set

- Initial draft has 62 items in 7 domains
- PHAC has been supporting their use (but also occurring independently):
  - Development of discipline-specific competency sets (PHNs, PHIs, Epis, Health promoters)
  - Development of curriculum for new MPH programs
  - Drafting of position profiles
  - Workshops with front-line staff
  - Working group using feedback from above to improve clarity and consistency

Future

- Competencies are a tool to assist workforce development - not an end in themselves
- Competency sets evolve over time and will need to be revisited periodically
- Need ongoing leadership to support their use
- Over time, see competencies supporting the many steps in training

Competencies & PH Training

Defined Competencies → PH Practitioners

Incorporation into Practice

Deliver Training

Incentives, Supports, & Tools

Assessment of Training Needs

Develop/Identify Curriculum

Identification of Gaps & Priorities

Web Link

- Public Health Agency of Canada – Public Health Practice
  - Core Competencies for Public Health
    - http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/php-psp/core_competencies_for_ph_e.html