

Public Health Career Pathways in Kentucky

2026 Kentucky Overdose Prevention Summit

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Objectives

-  Explain how Kentucky is utilizing funding from the Public Health Infrastructure Grant (PHIG) to develop and implement workforce development (WFD) initiatives and programs for the state and local public health workforce.
-  Describe how local, state and federal organizations are working together to recruit, hire, retain, sustain and train a competent and response-ready public health workforce through different public health career pathways.
-  Describe the education, training and professional development opportunities available for the state and local public health workforce.
-  Identify the best practices that contributed to the development and success of Kentucky's state and local workforce development (WFD) programs

Question: How can Public Health Career Pathways be incorporated into YOUR Harm Reduction Program?

Public Health Infrastructure Grant (PHIG) Overview

- 🛡️ CDC's Public Health Infrastructure Grant (PHIG) is a groundbreaking investment supporting critical public health infrastructure needs across the United States.
- 🛡️ One hundred and seven health departments received funding through this 5-year grant (12/1/2022 - 11/30/2027)
- 🛡️ PHIG gives health departments the flexibility to direct funds towards specific organizational and community needs that strengthen public health outcomes.
- 🛡️ **Kentucky's PHIG Recipients:**
 - Kentucky Department for Public Health (KDPH)
 - Louisville Metro Department for Public Health and Wellness (LMPHW)

Three Foundational Pillars of PHIG

- **Strategy A1: Workforce**
 - Skilled workforce including recruitment, retention and training opportunities.
- **Strategy A2: Foundational Capabilities**
 - Foundational capabilities needed to deliver effective public health services, such as disease surveillance, community partnerships and emergency preparedness.
- **Strategy A3: Data Modernization**
 - Modern technologies to improve data collection and analysis for faster, more efficient public health decision-making.

KDPH – Strategy A1: Workforce

- **KDPH established the Public Health Workforce Readiness Branch in November 2025**
 - *Previously known as the Center for Foundational Health – Established January 2022*
- **Goal:** Recruit, hire, retain, sustain and train a competent and response-ready public health workforce for Kentucky through *Public Health Career Pathways*:
 - High School Students
 - College and University Students
 - Public Health Workforce
- **Staffing:** Nine Employees + 1-3 Student Interns

Strategy A1: Workforce – Key Activities

- **Recruit/hire new public health staff:** Expand recruitment efforts, create new positions, improve hiring incentives and create new hiring mechanisms.
- **Retain public health staff:** Strengthen retention incentives, create promotional opportunities, and utilize other hiring mechanisms.
- **Sustain the public health workforce:** Strengthen workplace well-being programs to address their mental, emotional and physical well-being.
- **Train new and existing public health staff:** Improve the quality and scope of training and professional development opportunities for all employees.

Partnerships

Organizations

1. Area Health Education Centers
2. Cabinet for Health and Family Services
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
4. *Kentucky Department for Public Health
5. Kentucky Health Departments Association
6. Kentucky Health Occupations Students of America
7. Kentucky Public Health Association
8. *Louisville Metro Public Health and Wellness Department
9. Region IV Public Health Training Center

Academic Institutions

1. Bellarmine University
2. Eastern Kentucky University
3. Kentucky Community and Technical College System
4. Kentucky State University
5. Midway University
6. Murray State University
7. Northern Kentucky University
8. Simmons College of Kentucky
9. Thomas More University
10. University of Kentucky
11. University of Louisville
12. University of Pikeville
13. Western Kentucky University

*Recipients of CDC's Public Health Infrastructure Grant (PHIG)

PH WFD and Infrastructure Advisory Committee

- **Purpose:** Provide guidance to recruit, hire, train and retain a public health workforce that can support current and future public health programs.
- **Chair:** Rebecca Gillis, MPH, CHES, RS, Director, Division of Public Health Protection and Safety (PHPS)
- **Vice Chair:** Deniece Bell, Ed.D., M.S., Administrative Director, PHPS
- **Secretary:** Erin McIntosh, MPH, Administrative Specialist Senior, PHPS
- **Membership – Senior Leaders**
 - Kentucky Department for Public Health (Commissioner's Office and Seven Divisions)
 - Kentucky Health Departments Association
 - Cabinet for Health and Family Services' Office of Human Resources and Management

Public Health Workforce Readiness Subcommittee

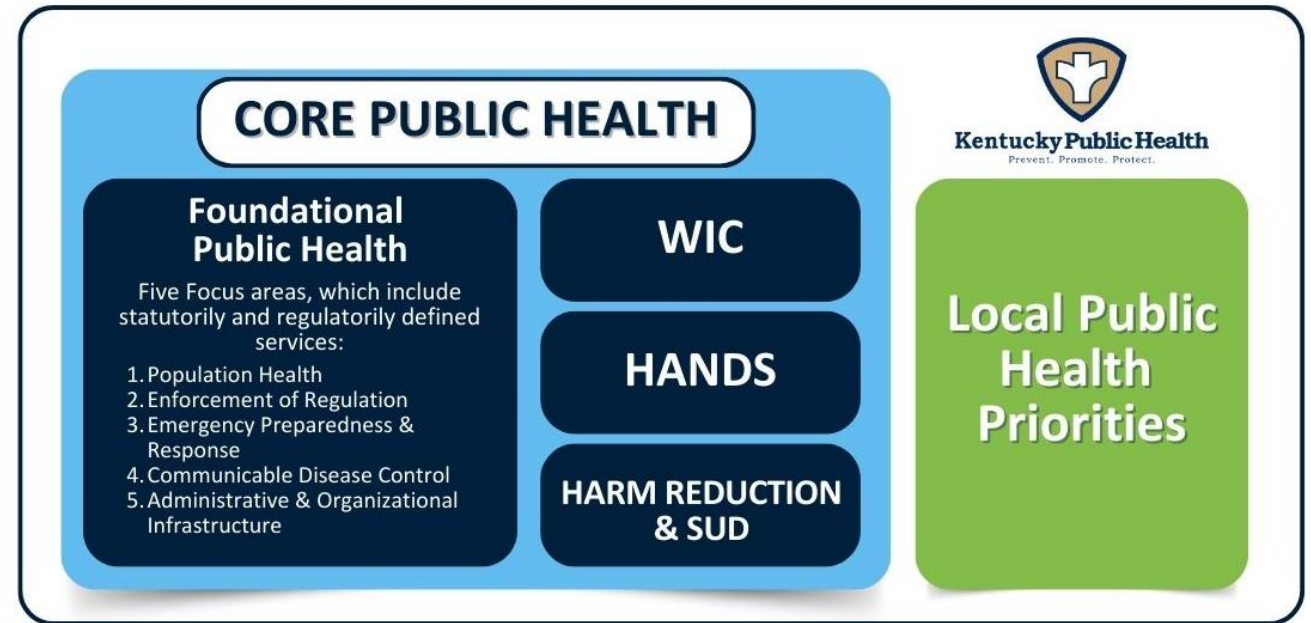
- **Intent:** Reinforce and expand the public health workforce by recruiting, hiring, training and retaining the workforce in alignment with KDPH's Strategic Plan and the PHIG.
- **Chairperson:** James House, MEP, Workforce Director for the Public Health Infrastructure Grant (PHIG)
- **Secretary:** Erin McIntosh, MPH, Administrative Specialist Senior, PHPS
- **Membership – Program Leaders:**
 - Kentucky Academic Institutions
 - Kentucky Department for Public Health
 - Kentucky Health Departments Association
 - Kentucky Public Health Association
- **Workgroups**
 - Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting
 - Community Partnerships
 - Marketing and Communications
 - Student Engagement
 - Training and Development

KDPH PHIG Workforce Programs and Pathways

- **Kentucky Public Health Exploration Program (KY-PHEP):** Inform high school students, parents and educators about public health career opportunities.
- **Student Internship Program:** Enhance the future of the public health workforce through education, training and hands-on experiences for college and university students.
- **Employee Learning and Development (ELD) Program:** Recruit, train and sustain the state public health workforce through education and training in partnership with universities and professional organizations.
- **Local Health Department Workforce Readiness Program:** Provide support to KHDA on Local Health Department (LHD) workforce development initiatives.
- **Program Foundation (PGF) 6000:** Provide funds to LHDs to Support workforce capacity building efforts and meet public health transformation regulations

Kentucky Public Health Training Needs

- Accessibility Training
- Budget and Financial Management
- Data Training
- Grant Writing Skills
- Leadership Development (KY-PHELI)
- Microsoft Applications
- Policy Engagement and Regulations
- Succession Planning
- Supervisor Development
- Sustainment of Federal Funding
- Systems and Strategic Thinking
- Telling Our Story

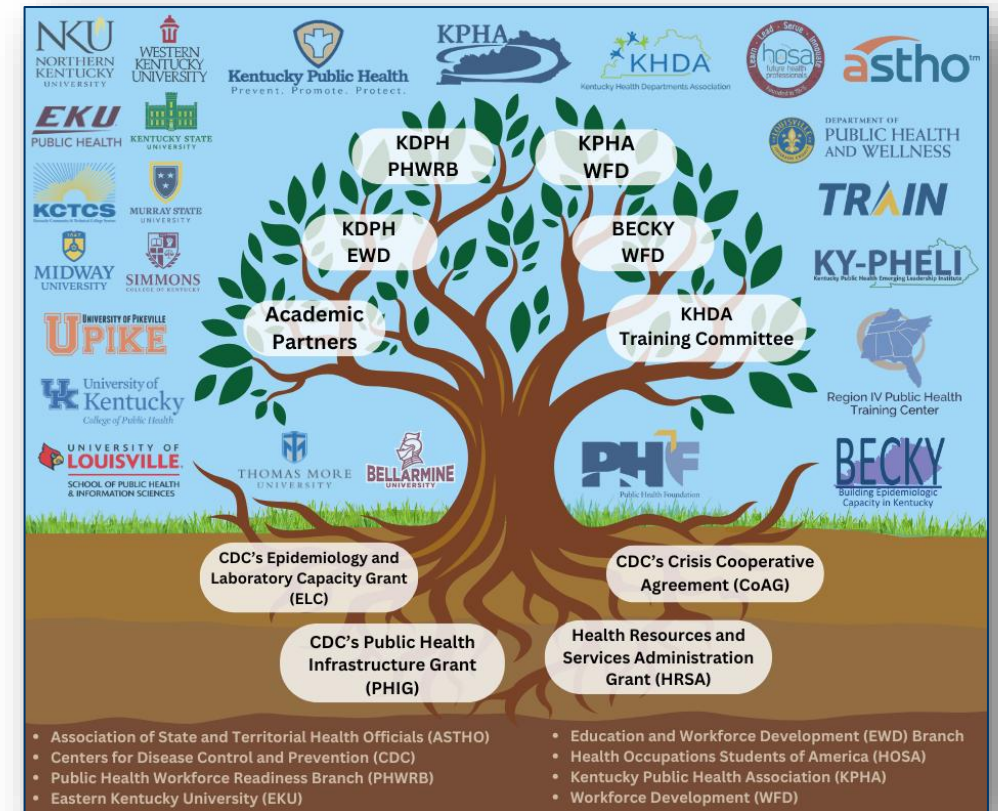


Public Health Transformation
Public Health Program Categorization
(*[KRS 211.185](#))

*Legislative Research Commission - Definitions for KRS 211.185 to 211.187

Best Practices

- **Committees/Workgroups:** Establishing workforce development committees and workgroups and engaging senior leadership and program leaders.
- **Guidance Documents:** Development of policies and guidelines to support program development and evaluation.
- **Partnerships:** Establishing and sustaining local, state, regional and federal partnerships to develop and implement PHIG WFD programs.
- **Surveys:** Developing, administering and evaluating surveys/assessments to obtain feedback on the WFD programs and pathways.
- **Technical Assistance:** Requesting and receiving Technical Assistance from our national partners for a variety of initiatives.



Kentucky PHIG Partnerships

Thank you.

James R. House, B.S., MEP

Health Program Administrator / Workforce Director – Public Health Infrastructure Grant

Kentucky Department for Public Health

Division of Public Health Protection and Safety

Public Health Workforce Readiness Branch

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Kentucky Public Health

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AND FAMILY SERVICES