

It's time to attract new public health workers with evidence-based job descriptions and eye-catching job postings

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Health departments have a historic opportunity to bolster their workforce due to new funding but often do not have accurate or updated

job descriptions or short, attention-grabbing job postings to use as marketing tools for recruitment. New research by Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health will help lead to evidence-based job descriptions and postings that health departments can now use.

The study is the first attempt to compile existing occupation-specific job task analyses, lists of competencies, and certifications across multiple job types within governmental public health that can allow comparisons of skills, competencies, and job tasks between different public health occupations. The findings are published online in the *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice*.

"Our aim was to review job descriptions and postings to ensure they would serve as attractive recruitment marketing tools that follow [best practices](#) and avoid implicit bias in the language used," said Heather Krasna, Ph.D., EdM, associate dean, Career and Professional Development, Columbia Mailman School. "Clear job postings with specific, concrete job requirements are more likely to generate targeted, qualified applicants and can be an important part of attracting a diverse candidate pool."

Utilizing \$3 billion from the American Rescue Plan funding for [workforce development](#) in the public health workforce to mount a large-scale recruitment effort—especially one large enough to begin to replenish the depleted governmental public health workforce—new and creative methods could help attract job candidates.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the public health workforce had experienced challenges with attracting and retaining workers, partly due to competition from other sectors and perhaps due to complexities caused by civil service hiring, lower salaries, and slow hiring processes.

Employers need internally facing job descriptions, detailed documents

that provide guidance to new hires and can serve as a rubric for performance reviews to effectively recruit new talent, noted the researchers. "But they also need job postings that are shorter, externally facing documents and optimized for Internet search engines," observed Krasna.

To create the job descriptions, Krasna and colleagues conducted a literature review, interviewed public health leaders and recruitment specialists, reviewed existing resources, searched the gray literature for existing job task analyses, and reviewed and synthesized hundreds of recent job postings using both current job boards and a large-scale database of job postings.

They also utilized the 2014 National Board of Public Health Examiners' job task analysis data, information from the US Department of Labor's O*Net Online resource, and existing occupation-specific job task analyses or certification information. They synthesized the information to create position descriptions for 24 jobs common in governmental public health settings.

To ensure the descriptions were accurate, they then gathered feedback from current public health professionals in each field and finally engaged a recruitment marketing expert to change the job descriptions into advertisements.

"Although job titles may not presently be well standardized, we believe that gathering data on job descriptions could also help the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics to better standardize and track public [health](#) occupations," said Krasna.

More information: Heather Krasna et al, Recruiting New Talent for Public Health Jobs With Evidence-Based Job Descriptions and Attractive Job Postings, *Journal of Public Health Management and*

Practice (2023). [DOI: 10.1097/PHH.0000000000001776](https://doi.org/10.1097/PHH.0000000000001776)

Provided by Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health

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