DOMAIN 8 PROGRAM PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

Activity Guide

ACTIVITY 8.1

JOB TASK 8.1: LEVERAGE AND PURSUE FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Funding Strategy Lab

Purpose: Apply job task 8.1 by analyzing funding opportunities and assessing how they shape program priorities and design.

Instructor Context

In state, Tribal, local, and territorial (STLT) health departments, funding opportunities (e.g., grants, cooperative agreements) often drive program direction. Staff must assess fit, feasibility, and sustainability before pursuing funding.

Instructions

Scenario:
Provide a short mock funding opportunity announcement (FOA) summary (e.g., public health data modernization, chronic disease prevention).

Example:
Funding Opportunity Summary:
Your STLT health department is considering applying for a 3-year cooperative agreement titled:

"Advancing Public Health Data Modernization and Interoperability"
Funding Amount: Up to $750,000 per year

Required Focus Areas:

- *Improve electronic data exchange between public health and healthcare partners.*
- *Enhance data quality, timelines, and interoperability across surveillance and reporting systems.*
- *Strengthen workforce capacity in public health informatics, data governance, and analytics.*
    - *Develop sustainable processes for integrating and using data to support program planning and evaluation.*

Reporting Requirements: Quarterly progress reports and annual performance measures demonstrating improvements in data quality, system interoperability, and workforce capacity.

Restrictions: Funds may not be used for ongoing operational costs unrelated to the project or for replacing existing enterprise information technology systems.

Special Note: Applicants must demonstrate how proposed activities align with the health department's strategic data modernization goals and describe a plan for sustaining improvements after the funding period ends.

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Student role: Students are members of a governmental public health program planning team reviewing a funding opportunity announcement

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Students will:

- Identify the funder's priorities
- Describe how the health department could align existing programs and activities with the funding opportunity
- Identify potential implementation constraints (e.g., staffing, IT infrastructure, workforce capacity)
- Develop a short "pitch" explaining why the department should pursue the funding

Debrief questions:

- How does funding influence program direction?
- What trade-offs might occur when pursuing funding?
- What capacity is needed to manage and sustain the award?

ACTIVITY 8.2

JOB TASK 8.2: CULTIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

Partnership Mapping Exercise

Purpose: Apply job task 8.2 by identifying and structuring partnerships that support public health response.

Instructor Context

Public health programs rely on networks of internal and external partners. Effective partnership mapping helps clarify roles, coordination, and system capacity.

Instructions

Scenario:
Provide a public health issue (e.g., heat emergency planning)

Example:
Your county has experienced a record-breaking summer with multiple days above 100°F. Emergency departments report increased heat-related illness, particularly among older adults, outdoor workers, and people experiencing homelessness.

The local health director asks your team to coordinate a multi-sector response to reduce heat-related illness and deaths.

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Student role: Students are part of a governmental public health coordination team developing a multi-sector response strategy.

Students will:
- Identify internal partners
- Identify external partners
- Identify community stakeholders
- Classify relationships as informational, coordinated, or formalized

Debrief questions:
- Which partnerships are essential vs. supportive?
- Where does authority reside within partnerships?
- How do partnerships strengthen system resilience?

ACTIVITY 8.3

JOB TASK 8.3: CULTIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

Partnership Mapping Exercise

Purpose: Apply job task 8.3 by translating strategic priorities into actionable program initiatives.

Instructor Context

Strategic priorities must be operationalized into clear objectives, implementation steps, and evaluation measures. This process requires balancing ambition with available resources.

Instructions

Scenario:
Provide a strategic priority (e.g., increasing childhood immunization rates).

Example:
Your STLT health department has identified a priority goal for its next 3-year strategic plan: "Increase childhood immunization coverage among children ages 0-5 from 82% to 90% by 2028."

Leadership wants an initiative proposal that includes objectives, partners, staffing needs, and a realistic implementation plan.

Student role: Students are part of a governmental public health strategic planning team developing an implementation proposal.

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Students will:
- Develop 2-3 measurable objectives
- Identify key implementation steps
- Identify responsible units or partners
- Consider timeline and sequencing
- Identify evaluation indicators

Debrief questions:
- What makes an objective feasible and measurable?
- How does implementation differ from planning?
- What barriers might arise during implementation?

ACTIVITY 8.4

JOB TASK 8.4: APPLY EVALUATION AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PRINCIPLES

After-Action Review Simulation

Purpose: Apply job task 8.4 by using evaluation to identify improvements following a public health response.

Instructor Context

After-action reviews are structured discussions conducted after an event, exercise, or response to assess performance, identify strengths and areas for improvement, and capture lessons learned. These processes are intended to support continuous learning and system improvement.

Instructions

Scenario:
Present a brief emergency scenario summary (e.g., vaccination clinic with operational challenges).

Example:
Your STLT health department held a weekend mass vaccination clinic in response to a pertussis outbreak. Over 600 residents attended.

However, several problems were reported:
- *Wait times exceeded 2 hours for many families*
- *Some residents left without being vaccinated*
- *Staff ran out of consent forms and had to improvise*
- *Community partners complained they did not receive clear instructions*
- *Data entry was delayed for several days after the event*

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Leadership requests an after-action review and improvement recommendations.

Student role: Students are part of a governmental public health evaluation and quality improvement team conducting an after-action review.

Students will:
- Identify what worked well
- Identify what did not work
- Identify data needed for evaluation
- Propose improvement steps

Debrief questions:
- How is evaluation different from assigning blame?
- What barriers exist to honest evaluation?
- How does quality improvement strengthen future response?

ACTIVITY 8.5

JOB TASK 8.5: DEVELOP, IMPLEMENT, AND EVALUATE RESPONSE TO EMERGENT SITUATIONS

Tabletop Emergency Discussion

Purpose: Apply job task 8.5 by practicing coordinated decision-making during a public health emergency.

Instructor Context

Public health emergencies require rapid coordination across agencies, clear decision-making, and use of legal authority. Responses often evolve as new information emerges.

Instructions

Scenario:
Facilitate a staged emergency scenario (e.g., measles outbreak with escalating complexity).

Example:
A local hospital reports a confirmed case of measles in an unvaccinated child. The child attended school for two days while infectious. The family traveled to a public festival over the weekend. The local health director requests an immediate response plan.

Who needs to be notified first?

What information is needed immediately?

What actions should occur in the next 24 hours?

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Scenario Update 1: Expanded Exposure
Three additional suspected cases are reported from two different schools in the same district. One case involves a vaccinated child with mild symptoms.

Operational Questions: Who leads coordination across schools? What is the role of the state health department? How do you manage communication with multiple school administrators? What surveillance systems are activated?

Scenario Update 2: Media Attention
A local news outlet reports: "County Health Officials Fail to Prevent Measles Spread." Parents begin calling the health department demanding immediate school closures.

Operational Questions: Who is authorized to close schools? What legal authority applies? How do you balance evidence and public pressure? Who drafts public messaging?

Scenario Update 3: Resource Constraints
Two epidemiology staff are out sick. Contact tracing demand exceeds capacity. State assistance is limited.

Operational Questions: What surge staffing mechanisms exist? Can non-epi staff be cross-trained? What activities are prioritized? What funding mechanisms support surge response?

Scenario Update 4: Policy Conflict
A school board member publicly questions exclusion policies for unvaccinated students and threatens legal action.

Operational Questions: What statutes support exclusion? Who engages governing bodies? How do you protect public health authority while maintaining relationships?

Scenario Update 5: After-Action Phase
Outbreak subsides after 6 weeks.

Operational Questions: What planning systems worked? Where did alignment fail? What QI measures should be implemented? What long-term policy improvements are needed?

Student role: Students are part of a governmental public health incident response and coordination team.

At each stage, students will:
- Identify who leads response activities
- Identify key decisions
- Identify relevant legal authority
- Identify communication needs

Debrief questions:
- How did planning influence response?
- Where did coordination become challenging?
- What systems were necessary to support response?

DOMAIN 8 PROGRAM PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

ACTIVITY 8.6

JOB TASK 8.6: ENSURE ALIGNMENT ACROSS PLANNING DOCUMENTS

Planning Alignment Scenario

Purpose: Apply job task 8.6 by assessing whether a public health plan is realistic given workforce capacity and operational systems.

Instructor Context

Health departments often set ambitious priorities, but those priorities must be supported by workforce capacity and operational systems. When these elements are not aligned, plans may not be feasible. This activity helps students evaluate whether a plan can realistically be implemented.

Instructions

Scenario:
A county health department has set the following goal: Launch a county-wide mobile vaccination program within three months to increase access in underserved communities.

Additional information:
- The department currently has two nurses available for field work
- No staff have experience running mobile clinics
- Vehicles are limited and shared across programs
- No formal partnerships are in place with community organizations

Student role: Students are part of a governmental public health leadership team assessing operational feasibility and workforce capacity.

Students will:
- Identify one strength of the plan
- Identify two challenges or gaps that may affect implementation
- Suggest two changes to improve alignment between the goal and available capacity

Encourage students to consider:
- Workforce capacity and skills
- Operational systems (logistics, equipment)
- Partnerships and community access
- Timeline feasibility

Debrief questions:
- What made this plan realistic or unrealistic?
- How do workforce and resources influence planning decisions?
- What happens when plans are not aligned with capacity?

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ACTIVITY 8.7

JOB TASK 8.7: ENGAGE IN EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND CONTINGENCY PLANNING

Preparedness Stress Test

Purpose: Apply job task 8.7 by evaluating how preparedness systems function under stress and identifying areas for improvement within a multi-agency emergency response environment.

Instructor Context

Preparedness plans guide response activities, but real-world events often test system limits and interdependencies. Stress testing helps identify gaps in capacity, coordination, authority, and resources, particularly where public health must operate in coordination with emergency management and other partners.

Instructions

Scenario:
Present a complex emergency scenario with multiple simultaneous stressors (e.g., heat emergency, power outage, wildfire, staffing shortages).

Example:

Emergency Preparedness Scenario:
Your county experiences a 7-day extreme heat emergency . Emergency Management has activated response operations, and multiple agencies are engaged. At the same time:

- *A major power outage affects multiple neighborhoods*
- *Cooling centers are overcrowded*
- *EMS call volume increases significantly*
- *A nearby wildfire triggers air quality alerts*
- *Several staff members are out sick*

Leadership asks: "Can our preparedness system handle this? Where will it break?"

Scenario Update 1: Cooling Center Failure
One cooling center loses power and must close unexpectedly. Transportation services are limited.

Operational Questions: Who coordinates alternative sites, and who has decision authority? What redundancy plans exist across agencies and partners? How is the public notified, and through which communication channels?

Scenario Update 2: Budget Limitations
Emergency funds are nearly exhausted. Overtime costs are rising. Finance requires documentation for reimbursement.

Operational Questions: What funding streams are available, and who controls their use? What documentation systems support reimbursement? How do funding restrictions influence operational decisions and priorities?

Scenario Update 3: Communities Disproportionately Affected
Data show higher mortality among older adults in low-income housing without air conditioning.

Operational Questions: Which partners must be engaged beyond public health? How does the health department address structural inequities? What longer-term planning adjustments are needed to address structural vulnerabilities?

Scenario Update 4: Staff Fatigue and Burnout
Staff report exhaustion and morale concerns. Several request time off.

Operational Questions: What workforce contingency plans exist? How does cross-training support resilience? How does preparedness planning incorporate staff sustainability?

Scenario Update 5: Simultaneous Secondary Emergency
A water main break affects a hospital during the heat emergency.

Operational Questions: Who activates incident command or escalates coordination? How are priorities triaged across competing incidents? How does public health coordinate with emergency management and healthcare partners? Which communication pathways are stressed?

Student role: Students are part of a governmental public health preparedness and response planning team supporting multi-agency emergency operations.

Students will:
- Identify capacity limits
- Identify backup roles and systems
- Identify communication risks
- Identify resource bottlenecks
- Identify funding and operational constraints

Debrief questions:
- What assumptions were built into the preparedness plan?
- Where did vulnerabilities appear across systems or partners?
- Where did public health rely on other agencies' capacity?
- How should contingency plans evolve?

Alignment with CEPH MPH Foundational Competencies

Domain 8 Job Task	Related CEPH MPH Foundational Competencies
8.1 Leverage and pursue funding opportunities to support and improve public health systems and outcomes	**Competency 10:** Explain basic principles and tools of budget and resource management.
8.2 Cultivate partnerships to further the mission of public health	**Competency 13:** Propose strategies to identify relevant communities and individuals and build coalitions and partnerships for influencing public health outcomes.
8.3 Plan, develop, and implement strategic initiatives of the governmental public health department	**Competency 9:** Design a population-based policy, program, project, or intervention.
8.4 Apply evaluation and quality improvement principles	**Competency 11:** Select methods to evaluate public health programs.
8.5 Develop, implement, and evaluate responses to emergent situations, public health emergencies, and/or planned events	**Competency 9:** Design a population-based policy, program, project, or intervention. **Competency 11:** Select methods to evaluate public health programs.
8.6 Ensure alignment when developing and implementing planning documents	*No direct CEPH MPH Foundational Competency alignment identified.*
8.7 Engage in the organization's emergency preparedness, response activities, and contingency plans	*No direct CEPH MPH Foundational Competency alignment identified.*