

NACCHO's Local Public Health Finance Community of Practice: November 2024 Summary

In November 2024, NACCHO held a quarterly meeting with members of the Local Public Health Finance Community of Practice that focused on Training Development for Local Public Health Finance and ongoing challenges. In this meeting, participants were asked to complete a survey to help us better understand the workforce development & training challenges and successes across local health departments (LHDs). Participants were also separated into breakout groups to discuss specific tools, professional development opportunities, or training methods that they find particularly effective for both new and existing staff.

Out of 57 participants, 21 completed the survey and 42 participated in the breakout mural. The survey results are summarized below. The breakout room discussions were summarized using the collaborative note-taking platform, Mural. These notes were reviewed and captured on Tables 1 and 2. Below is a high-level information summary.

Meeting Summary

This meeting included:

- Summary of local public health finance challenges at the policy, community, and organizational levels that the Community of Practice highlighted over the last year
- Discussion of current challenges with workforce development and training
- [Survey](#) and breakout session on workforce development and training
- Sharing of resources, such as TRAIN, NACCHO and PHLN
- Exploration of ongoing, new and emerging challenges in public health finance

Survey Results

Critical Training Opportunities:

Responses highlighted the need for training on financial accounting systems, budget management, performance management, and strategic financial planning. Emphasis was also placed on foundational training for new hires and advanced budgeting skills for existing staff.

Training Needed:

- **Budget and Financial Management:** Budget preparation, financial analysis, and expense reporting.
- **Grants and Contracts Management:** Best practices in managing grants, compliance, and alternative funding sources.
- **Organizational and Public Sector Finance:** Understanding financial practices, state/federal regulations, and public-private sector differences.
- **Onboarding and Cross-Training:** Enhanced onboarding processes and on-the-job cross-training.

Emerging Trends and Skills:

Anticipated trends include AI integration for automation, Medicaid reimbursement processes, funding hub models, and sustainability practices like using indirect cost rates. Participants also foresee a growing need for training in these areas within the next 3-5 years.

Emerging Trends:

- **Technology and Automation:** AI integration, cloud-based systems, automation in grant management, and new software training.
- **Financial Strategies:** Budget reduction strategies, alternative funding streams, sustainability practices, and creative financing methods like blending and braiding programs.
- **Grants and Compliance:** Grant management, compliance, and consistent reporting platforms.
- **Analytical and Strategic Thinking:** Problem-solving, strategic thinking, policy analysis, and using data-driven storytelling.

Effective Tools and Strategies:

Successful strategies mentioned include creating Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), utilizing available training programs, and gaining an understanding of agency-specific budget roles. Positive impacts noted were improved onboarding processes and better role clarity among staff.

Tools & Strategies:

- **Training Methods:** In-person training, online courses, cross-training, and peer-to-peer learning.
- **Resource Development:** Creating and updating SOPs, PowerPoint presentations, and tailored training materials.
- **Professional Development:** Leadership academies, billers' symposiums, and public speaking skill development.
- **Collaborative Learning:** Problem-solving through team discussions, connecting with the public health finance community, and participating in conferences.
- **Organizational Tools:** Utilizing HR management software for training records and hybrid work support.
- **Practical Application:** Applying training through real work projects and incorporating feedback after learning sessions.

Breakout Discussion Responses from November 2024 Mural

Activity 1: Workforce Development and Training

How do you assess and address gaps in your team's training needs? Are there specific tools, professional development opportunities, or training methods that you find particularly effective for both new and existing staff?	What emerging skills or trends do you see as critical for the future, and if you could create an e-learning course for your team, what topics would you prioritize?	What ongoing questions or concerns do you have that relate to this topic?
• Hired a training coordinator for the department – developed videos, job aids and conducted staff needs assessments • Establish fiscal/financial procedures for shared understanding of rules and requirements • Cross training • Developed a workforce development plan with national guidance • Provide national resources for novel updates that will impact agencies • Have a career development plan	• Understanding evolving & new funding sources, requirements, and constraints • Need best practices related to computer/electronic literacy (etc., excel) • Skills and trainings related to Ai to understand the full capabilities of AI • Grant management	• Grant Management, reporting, tracking and claiming

Learn more about NACCHO's public health finance work at <https://www.naccho.org/programs/public-health-infrastructure/public-health-finance>.

Activity 2: Exploring Public Health Finance Topic Areas

In Activity 2, participants were asked to give a “thumbs up” to any previously identified topics that remain relevant or pressing for their organizations. Along with their votes, participants elaborated on their selections by explaining why these topics continue to be priorities and what specific aspects they would like to learn more about. These five topics have been a focus of exploration by the Public Health Finance Community of Practice since March 2022.

Topic Area	“Thumbs Up”	For those that you “thumbs up,” what continues to make it a priority topic? What would you like to learn more about?
Funding	10	supplanting
		Consistent and efficient systems for finding, collecting, assessing and applying for funding needs in community.
		Employee retention due to lack of funding
		Funding impacts staffing levels, retention, attrition across the board
Staffing	9	Hiring challenges – retention, finding quality applicants and providing the skills
		Employee retention, and hiring
		Recruitment challenges due to other geographic areas offering higher salaries
		Fill vacant positions
		Due to changes in government retirement timelines in CA, employees start and leave employment quicker. No longer longevity.
Systems and Technology	5	Grant Development - strategizing spend down and Priorities.
		There continues to be budget constraints which requires more strategy to prioritize limited resources
Workforce Development and Training	5	Consistency in role specific training with agency overall training.
Strategy and Planning	4	How to systematically THINK strategically with community needs, ER and ongoing requirements.

The second question in Activity 2 asked participants about new priorities or challenges that have recently emerged, particularly after COVID-19, with responses highlighting the need to understand the requirements of the post-COVID public health landscape and the importance of staying connected with others facing similar public health circumstances.