

# The Public Health Workforce Imperative: Five Priorities for Investing in California's Local Health Departments

The COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated the devastating impact of inequities on California communities, and demonstrated the need to invest in a public health workforce that can advance policy, systems, and end environmental strategies to address health equity and the determinants of health. Local and state health departments, policymakers and legislators, policy and advocacy groups, and community groups can use this summary to prioritize investments in their public health workforce.

## 1. Fund a public health workforce and programs to address the root causes of community disease.

- Move from categorical funding for body parts and diseases to the underlying issues impacting health, including explicit funding for climate and health.
- Provide training on strategies to address root causes of health.

## 2. Equip the public health workforce to address institutionalized racism and promote health equity.

- Address past and current impacts of systemic racism on health and develop institutional strategies to correct inequities.
- Provide dedicated funding and programming for health equity and racial justice.

## 3. Train the public health workforce to enhance collaboration with interdisciplinary partners, local communities, and community organizations.

- Make working on policy issues with other sectors a core, funded function of public health.
- Strengthen reciprocal trust with community residents and organizations to collaborate on long-term health issues.

## 4. Develop a workforce pipeline to implement updated public health competencies, practices, tools, and skills.

- Develop and support a workforce that reflects the community, can more effectively communicate with the public, and can address long-term health challenges and solutions.
- Staff a workforce that is both prepared for emergency response and can continue work on long-term issues during emergencies.

## 5. Equip the data workforce to develop and enhance data capacity, and communicate data to support evolving public health practices.

- Improve real time data access in a secure way.
- Build epidemiology capacity to handle disease reporting and meaningfully assess health and progress toward health equity.

Health, equity, climate, and the economy are intertwined, and they are all fundamental to healthy and vibrant communities. Investing in a robust and resilient public health infrastructure now will prepare local health departments to address connected crises through both prevention and response.

Produced by the California Chronic Disease Prevention Leadership Project in 2021. To access the full brief and sources, please visit: <https://chronicdiseaseleadershipproject.com>. Funding support provided by The California Endowment.

