

Public Health Institutes of the World



National Public Health Institutes Core Functions & Attributes

A national public health institute (NPHI) is a government agency, or closely networked group of agencies, that provides science-based leadership, expertise, and coordination for a country's public health activities. An NPHI is defined by its Core Functions and Core Attributes.

CORE NPHI FUNCTIONS These functions help countries organize and conduct their public health services. They are based on the Essential Public Health Functions framework, which has been in use for more than a decade. Of the Core Functions, three are very important for NPHIs: Core Functions 1, 2, and 10.

1 Evaluation and analysis of health status

Collect data to understand the health status of the population, set priorities, and suggest interventions.

- Gather or have access to data on vital statistics, potential threats to health, risk factors for disease and injury, and access to and use of personal health services.
- Use the data to guide policies and programs.

2 Public health surveillance, problem investigation, and control of risks and threats to public health

Collect data on an ongoing basis to monitor for public health problems, and, when problems are identified, take action to control them.

- Conduct ongoing monitoring for outbreaks and other public health problems
- Make sure that samples can be tested for organisms or chemicals that cause public health problems
- Investigate outbreaks or other public health problems, and make sure that interventions are put in place to address them

3 Prevention programs and health promotion

Take action to create the conditions that promote health in the population.

- Inform and educate people about how to improve their health
- Support legislation and regulations to promote health
- Support environmental changes to promote health

4 Social participation in health

Strengthen the power of the community to play an active role in public health.

- Involve the community in developing and designing programs to promote health
- Provide assistance and information to organizations that work to promote health

5 Planning and management

Develop and implement a strategic plan, policies, and programs for the NPHI, as well as systems to ensure efficient operations.

- Have a clear vision and mission statement
- Conduct periodic strategic planning, using data to identify priorities and set measurable goals
- Employ staff who are trained in the systems needed for efficient functioning of an NPHI

6 Regulation and enforcement

Ensure that regulations and rules that support public health are passed and enforced.

- Provide data to help regulators make evidence-based decisions
- Evaluate the impact of regulations and rules on public health

7 Evaluation and promotion of equitable access to necessary health services

In close collaboration with government and nongovernment agencies:

- Monitor access to health care, including access for vulnerable populations
- Identify barriers to care and strategies to overcome barriers

8 Human resource development and training

Help develop and retain a public health workforce that is adequate for national needs.

- Monitor the capacity and needs of staff
- Provide training and continuing education
- Provide fulfilling opportunities and other incentives to encourage staff to remain in the public health workforce

9 Quality assurance in personal and population-based health services

Work with the health care system to improve health services.

- Conduct surveillance for healthcare-related infections
- Collect data on or make recommendations about patient safety
- Conduct evaluations or review data to assess the quality of services

10 Public health research

Conduct research on high-priority issues.

- Characterize the country's most important health problems
- Provide other data important to decision-making
- Evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Make sure that research findings are translated into decisions, policies, and programs

11 Reduction of the impact of emergencies and disasters on health

Conduct planning for emergencies, and also be part of government-wide planning efforts.

- Determine in advance what services the NPHI will provide in an emergency
- Provide materials and training to ensure smooth functioning during an emergency
- Develop agreements with organizations that will be involved in a response ■

CORE NPHI ATTRIBUTES These qualities and characteristics define an NPHI's infrastructure and operations.

1 National scope of influence

- The NPHI develops policies and interventions that affect the country as a whole and address the country's important health problems.
- The NPHI delivers programs throughout the country, either through direct action by the NPHI or through relationships with sub-national levels of the public health system.

2 National recognition

- The NPHI is a public institution, operating as part of the government or with the concurrence of the government.
- The Minister of Health and other government officials view the NPHI as a critical resource for developing policies, priorities, and programs.
- The NPHI is known by the public and valued for its contributions to promoting health.

3 Limitations on political influence

- The NPHI's priorities are driven largely by science and data rather than political influence.
- NPHI leaders are selected based on professional, scientific, and management expertise and experience.

4 Scientific basis for programs and policies

- NPHI staff use the best possible data and knowledge to set priorities and develop and evaluate policies and programs.
- The NPHI is the main source of technical and scientific information for the Ministry of Health, lawmakers, and other parts of government.
- The NPHI advocates for scientific and other evidence to inform decision-making at all levels of government.

5 Focus on the country's major public health problems

- The NPHI, either through its work or through linkages with other organizations, ensures that all critical public health problems in the country are being addressed, including infectious diseases, chronic diseases, injuries and violence, and environmental and occupational health.
- The NPHI is a dynamic organization that adapts to meet short- and long-term challenges.

6 Adequate human and financial resources

- The NPHI has a dedicated and largely predictable budget that is adequate to carry out the Core Functions.
- The NPHI maintains a skilled, multidisciplinary workforce.
- The NPHI has systems to evaluate the performance of staff and provides staff with training and continuing education.
- The NPHI has protocols and standards to ensure worker safety.
- NPHI leaders have scientific and management skills and expertise.

7 Adequate infrastructure support

- The NPHI provides an environment in which people can work productively.
- The NPHI has reliable phone and email service, and the staff has access to computers, commonly used software, and the scientific literature.
- The NPHI has access to laboratories that use accepted laboratory practices.

8 Linkages and networks

- The NPHI coordinates activities with other national organizations and organizations at the sub-national level.
- The NPHI participates in regional and global networks.

9 Accountability

- The NPHI is accountable to the public.
- The NPHI provides public access to its strategic plan and information about the use of funds and the impact of the NPHI's work. ■