

Date: May 20, 2016

To: Chair and Members of the Personnel and Finance Committee

From: Janel Heinrich, Director

Subject: Approval to hire Public Health Planner – Technical Assistance/Evaluation

County Ordinance 29, 52(16) requires the Personnel and Finance Committee, along with the County Executive, to approve filling positions that are new or have been vacant longer than six months. I write to request approval to fill 1.0 FTE Public Health Planner – Technical Assistance/Evaluation, P11. The 2016 Public Health budget includes this position with a projected hire date of summer 2016. We have reclassified positions #2689, #2837 and #1401 to create this new position. We have exceeded our vacancy savings goals for 2016.

[Wisconsin State Statute, Chapter 251.05](#) mandates local public health departments to conduct activities leading to community health improvement planning. Additional rules governing mandated community health assessment activities are found in [Wisconsin Department of Health Services Administrative Rules Chapter DHS 140.04](#). An important function in public health improvement is program evaluation, or the systematic application of measurement strategies and reporting to ensure program goals are met and ongoing improvements are made to achieve impact. The mission of the Policy, Planning and Evaluation (PPE) Division is to support these functions and the overall work of Public Health Madison & Dane County. Personnel in PPE conduct public health data analysis and tracking, policy development, program guidance, and research evidence-based information to support and promote health equity. This unit performs activities including epidemiologic analysis, economic analysis, social and health policy analysis, program evaluation, and community capacity building.

What is the nature of the work or what is the essential function of the position?

One role of PPE is to support staff in City and County agencies, as well as assist community partners, to improve decision making in public policy, improving short-term and long-term health outcomes and reduce racial and ethnic health disparities in Dane County. The PPE division also conducts/supports program evaluation. Program evaluation is a systematic and objective assessment of the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, and impact of a program or intervention. It is critical to understanding whether or not a program is meeting its stated goals. The results of an evaluation are often used to define priorities, strengthen program activities, and allocate resources. PPE evaluation activities include conducting/supporting evaluations of PHMDC programs and initiatives, assisting all PHMDC programs in identifying short, intermediate and long term outcomes through the development of logic models, reviewing program data collection instruments, development of evaluation plans for grants, and working with external evaluators.

What are some examples of complex public health challenges that would benefit from a Public Health Planner skilled in Evaluation Technical Assistance?

- Design evaluation protocols to track effectiveness of strategies to boost food security among specific populations, including low-income working families and older adults
- Identify measurable goals and evaluation measures for collaborative efforts to reduce the harm of opiate addiction and overdose in Dane County
- Identify meaningful strategies to evaluate efforts to reduce the use of costly emergency and urgent care services among people with risk of falls, preventable complications from chronic disease, or acute dental pain
- Identify ways to measure the degree to which community service providers are improving care coordination in behavioral health
- Designing progress measures around efforts to reduce youth access to tobacco and nicotine products
- Selecting appropriate methods to measure the progress of comprehensive community initiatives to improve birth outcomes and reduce racial and ethnic disparities in child and adolescent health

Qualified candidates bring advanced academic training in statistics and applied research methods, including qualitative methods (e.g., interviewing, focus group facilitation, analyzing qualitative data). They also bring experience forging community partnerships among partners who may not have the staff expertise to access or analyze many kinds of local, state, and national data. They offer experience within the fields of public health, health care, and/or economic and community development, offering training and experience in program evaluation, evaluation technical assistance, group facilitation and interviewing, writing and oral communications, and health equity.

How has this function been fulfilled during the vacancy?

This is a new position and the justification statements above address this question.

What will the impact be on the department's function and mission if the position remains vacant?

County and City agency partners, health care systems and their affiliates, local community service providers regularly submit requests for assistance in designing initiatives with specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely goals. They often have no staff with experience or training in program evaluation—a critical practice required for all programs funded by private or public grants.

To support community efforts to address health inequities in Dane County, the local health department plays a central role in providing this technical support. Currently, the department cannot adequately address these requests given the few numbers of staff in the PPE Division. Requests from various city and county departments as well as other stakeholders (County Parks, County Board office, County Planning, Housing, Madison

Fire Department, and MMSD) are currently in the queue while we wait to return to staffing levels that provide us with the capacity to respond.

Additionally, PHMDC is preparing to seek accreditation which, if awarded, will boost the standing and, potentially, the funding of our local health department. In order to plan and execute the accreditation process, we need to have a variety of staff with different skills to support these efforts by managing and leading the mandated Community Health Assessment (CHA) and the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) processes. The CHA and the CHIP are the roadmaps which will guide our population health improvement efforts over the next 5 years. This position will also play a role in these efforts, focusing specifically on building effective evaluation into programs across the department.

Thank you for your help in filling this important position in PHMDC. Please let me know if you need any additional information.