

# For the digital transformation of Canada's public health workforce, we need integrated and systems-focused training approaches, options for specialized competencies and updates to digital capabilities of the public health systems.



Illustrations: Rayka Kumru

## Why is it important?

The public health workforce urgently needs new digital competencies to meet challenges resulting from the digital transformation. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted workforce competency limitations affecting equity, social justice, and ethical outcomes of digital public health interventions. To best support the updates to workforce competencies in the Canadian context, we need to understand public health practitioners' perspectives.

## What did we do?

To support updates to the Canadian public health curriculum, we explored how competency and training recommendations might be adapted in Canada. We conducted focus group discussions with public health practitioners that had experience implementing digital interventions for public health functions across various federal, provincial and regional public health organizations across Canada.

## What did we find?

### Canadian public health practitioners

- Acknowledge a mismatch between their digital competencies and public expectations of public health services.
- Suggest the need for simultaneously bolstering digital capabilities of its public health systems alongside workforce digital competency.

### Preferred approaches for training

- Integrating considerations for digital technologies within existing curricula.
- Providing opportunities for basic digital literacy especially given the age diversity of the workforce.
- Tiering competencies with opportunities for specialized digital competencies (e.g., big data analytics), all within applied transdisciplinary training contexts.

Themes identified about digital competencies

Public health systems must evolve to support developing new digital competencies

Building basic digital competencies with options for specialization where necessary

Strengthening the basics before extending towards more advanced digital competencies

