



# Arnold School of Public Health

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

## APPLIED PRACTICE EXPERIENCE

The applied practice experience (APE) is an opportunity for students to demonstrate public health competencies within a public health practice organization. All students must demonstrate at least 5 competencies during their APE, 3 of which will be foundational and 2 (or more) will be selected by the student. Students will demonstrate competency attainment using a portfolio approach in which they work with public health-related practice organizations to develop at least two products that will be mutually beneficial to the student and organization. Examples of work products include but are not limited to project plans, grant proposals, training manuals or lesson plans, surveys, memos, videos, podcasts, presentations, spreadsheets, websites, dashboards, photos (with accompanying explanatory text), evaluation reports, needs assessments, interview guides, infographics, logic models, quality improvement plans, community health assessments, SWOT analyses or other digital artifacts of learning.

Each APE involves 4 primary parties. The parties and their responsibilities are outlined below.

### 1) MPH student

- a. Take ownership of APE
- b. Identify preferred practice organization site
- c. Ensure memorandum of agreement (MOA) is in place before beginning fieldwork hours at site
- d. Identify work products
- e. Develop APE proposal
- f. Receive feedback and approval on APE proposal from preceptor, advisor, and Office of Public Health Practice
- g. Develop work products
- h. Upload relevant APE materials into APEX
- i. Communicate across key players throughout the experience
- j. Complete the APE student evaluation
- k. Maintain and build on the relationship with the practice organization to open the door for future students to complete their APE
- l. Organize and schedule final APE presentation
- m. Complete final presentation
- n. Submit final work products and APE proposal into APEX upon completing the experience

**2) Preceptor**

- a. Allow student to get involved in current public health initiatives happening in the practice organization
- b. Assist in identifying potential work products to complete
- c. Provide feedback on students' APE proposal
- d. Provide mentorship to MPH student throughout the process
- e. Orient MPH student to the public health practice organization
- f. Involve student in relevant committee meetings and workspace activities
- g. Provide timely feedback on MPH student performance
- h. Facilitate informational interviews to members in the organization as needed
- i. Work with the Office of Public Health Practice to establish a MOA if needed
- j. Communicate across key players throughout the experience
- k. Complete APE preceptor evaluation
- l. Attend student's final presentation

**3) Faculty APE Advisor**

- a. Oversee each APE to ensure that all accreditation standards are met
- b. Provide mentorship and professional guidance to the student throughout the experience
- c. Provide feedback and contribute professional expertise on student APE proposal and work products
- d. Assess the degree of competency demonstration in work products
- e. Communicate across key players throughout the experience
- f. Assist in adjusting the selection of student work products and competencies as needed
- g. Attend student's final presentation
- h. Complete APE faculty experience advisor evaluation
- i. Approve final proposal and work products and experience in APEX

**4) Office of Public Health Practice:**

- a. Assist student with identifying practice site
- b. Maintain APEX database
- c. Support student throughout APE process
- d. Support faculty APE advisors as needed
- e. Support preceptor as needed
- f. Manage evaluation process
- g. Establish an MOA with each practice site
- h. Communicate across key players throughout the experience
- i. Attend students' final presentation

## FINDING AN ORGANIZATION

The process of finding an organization to complete the APE will look unique for each student but largely falls under two strategies: 1) The Gardening Approach and 2) The Orchard Approach. The Gardening Approach involves cultivating an APE by identifying current public health initiatives and organizations that the student is interested in and then leveraging the connections of ASPH faculty and the Office of Public Health Practice to facilitate introductions to create an APE. The Orchard approach involves “picking” an APE from [already existing internship programs](#). While most students opt for The Gardening Approach, there is no one correct way to identify an APE.

To identify an APE site, students should reflect on the following questions:

- *What public health problems am I passionate about?*
- *Which communities do I want to impact the most?*
- *What type of organization would I like to work for?*
- *What skills would I like to enhance as a practitioner?*
- *How does this experience fit into my career interests and goals?*
- *Where do I want to build my network?*
- *When am I planning on completing my experience?*

Students are strongly encouraged to schedule a meeting with the Office of Public Health Practice to discuss potential APE opportunities. To schedule a meeting with the Office of Public Health Practice, please use the following link: [Book time with the Office of Public Health Practice](#). Students should also [review the resources on the APE web page](#) and meet with their faculty APE experience advisors and graduate directors for additional guidance in identifying an APE.

Once the organization, preceptor, and faculty APE advisor are identified, students should collaborate with the 4 primary parties to identify projects at the organization that could fulfill the work product and public health competency requirement of the APE. Each student will develop an APE proposal that serves as the framework for the experience. The proposal must be agreed to by the preceptor and faculty APE advisor before the experience officially starts. This will take place through email exchanges or meetings. A copy of the proposal should be uploaded into [APEX](#), the data management system for the APE, before officially beginning contact hours. To log into APEX, use your university email and password. For detailed instructions, review the [APEX student instructions](#). Additionally, all completed work products and related APE documents should be uploaded into APEX before the APE is completed.

## TIMELINE

In the field of public health practice, partners are typically working outside the confines of the academic semester. Thus, it is important that students strive to meet organizations where they are at when completing experiences. With that being said, students typically complete APEs during Summer I or Spring II. Students should register for their respective departmental APE courses under their faculty experience advisor in the semester that they complete the experience. Each APE timeline is unique. What follows is a *general timeline* of the process.



<b>Applied Practice Experience Gantt Chart for Spring II APE</b>	<b>Year 2</b>									
<b>Description of activity</b>	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Identify current public health-related projects & initiatives at the organization										
Check the Practice Experience web page to see if a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) already exists. If no, email workforce Development Coordinator to set up MOU (must be in place before contact hours begins)										
Identify at least two work products that will be completed during the experience as well as at least 5 competencies (5 minimum) that will be demonstrated through the work products										
Write APE proposal with input from preceptor & faculty APE advisor										
Revise proposal based on feedback										
Upload revised proposal into APEX										
Begin fieldwork										
Complete Work products										
Upload completed work products to APEX										
Complete APE evaluation										
Present APE										

Applied Practice Experience Timeline for Summer I APE		Full Summer Session May 6 - July 25					
	Jan – May	6 Week Session I (3S1) May 6-June 13					
		Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
Attend presentations of current students completing the practice experience							
Begin forming idea of what you would like your APE to look like/be at							
Request an APE consultation with the Office of Public Health Practice to discuss career paths/ APE opportunities							
Leverage faculty and staff connections to request informational interviews with preceptors and organizations you may be interested in completing your APE at							
Begin reviewing APE competencies and consider which they might want to demonstrate during APE							
Reflect on interests, career aspirations, guest speakers from class that were interesting, leverage current networks for opportunities							
Identify faculty APE advisor							
Identify potential practice settings							
Identify potential preceptors within practice setting							

Identify current public health-related projects & initiatives at the organization							
Check the Practice Experience web page to see if a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) already exists. If no, email workforce Development Coordinator to set up MOU (must be in place before contact hours begins)							
Identify at least two work products that will be completed during the experience as well as at least 5 competencies (5 minimum) that will be demonstrated through the work products							
Write APE proposal with input from preceptor & faculty APE advisor							
Revise proposal based on feedback							
Upload revised proposal into APEX							
Begin fieldwork							
Complete Work products							
Upload completed work products to APEX							
Complete APE evaluation							
Present APE							

## APE APPENDIX

**APE Proposal:** Each student will develop an APE proposal that outlines where the student will be completing their APE, what work products will be generated, what foundational and concentration specific competencies will be demonstrated, what the timeline of the experience will be, and all other relevant information to the student's APE. Each proposal must receive feedback and approval from the preceptor, faculty experience, advisor, and the Office of Public Health Applied Practice

**Applied Practice EXperience (APEX):** APEX is the data management system that houses all APE related materials. Students must upload their APE site information, APE proposals, work products and all other related materials to APEX.

**Concentration Competencies:** These are competencies that are unique to each individual department that highlight the specialties of each concentration (e.g., ENHS, EPID, HPEB, HSPM, PAPH)

**Faculty APE Advisor:** Faculty member from student's department who will oversee each APE to ensure that all accreditation standards are met, provide mentorship and professional guidance to the student throughout the experience and contribute professional expertise on student APE proposal and work products

**Foundational Competencies:** These are competencies outlined by the Council on Education and Public Health (CEPH) that all MPH programs must be based on. The competencies are informed by the traditional public health core knowledge areas, (biostatistics, epidemiology, social and behavioral sciences, health services administration and environmental health sciences), as well as cross-cutting and emerging public health areas.

**Memorandum of Agreement (MOA):** An MOA should be established between the ASPH and practice site before the student begins the fieldwork of their APE. An existing list of sites that have an MOA can be found [here](#). This list is also updated and maintained in APEX. If no MOA exists with the organization of the practice site, please contact [Brittany Sutton MPH](#) to establish one.

**Office of Public Health Practice:** Office that oversees the APE process via providing support to the students, faculty, and preceptors throughout the process. Is also responsible for maintaining the APEX system, establishing MOAs, and conducting the evaluation.

**Preceptor:** Public health practitioner who serves as the student's primary supervisor and mentor during a student's time at the organization

**Work Products:** Deliverables that will be created during the APE in which competencies will be demonstrated and assessed