



Appendix A. Directions for the ASTDD State/Territorial Oral Health Program Competencies Assessment Process

Purpose and Background

ASTDD developed *Competencies for State/Territorial Oral Health Programs* in 2010 to accompany the *ASTDD Guidelines for State and Territorial Oral Health Programs* and updated them in 2022 to align with other public health competencies, new state/territorial and national focus areas, and 2021 updates to the [ASTDD Guidelines](#). While the *Guidelines* reflect roles and activities for State/Territorial Oral Health Programs (S/TOHP), the *Competencies* represent skills that might be needed to successfully achieve the activities and roles. The [2022 Competencies](#) are categorized under eight general Domains. Each Competency includes a table of five Skill Levels starting from Zero (no skills), Level 1, the most basic, and increasing in complexity to Level 4. Although programs can work to attain Level 4 skills in all competencies, most programs will be able to achieve significant program successes without reaching this ideal. In addition, 16 Guiding Principles represent Competencies that are crosscutting.

Competency Assessment Tools are available for use by S/TOHP to determine what skills current team members perceive they have that contribute to program success, what additional skills they have, and what skills the program needs for program improvement. In addition, we recommend that the team complete the [ASTDD Guidelines Program Assessment Tool](#) as a companion document.

The value of doing Individual Assessments and a Program Assessment using the Competencies includes:

- Individuals are given an opportunity to analyze their own skills and to identify which are strengths for the program and which skills they would like to improve; this could serve as the basis for a professional development plan.
- Individuals may have skills that are not recognized or currently being used in their job responsibilities but could be used in the future to enhance the program or used to help them transition into other job duties or positions.
- An analysis of all team member skills can be used to identify:
 - significant gaps in skills that will require additional training or additional expertise
 - duplication of skills, which is valuable for some activities but could be confusing and repetitive if too many people are doing the same tasks, especially at a basic level
 - the most appropriate work assignments or a realignment of responsibilities to increase effectiveness and efficiency
 - opportunities for team building or the need for small workgroups to accomplish tasks.
- The *Guidelines Assessment* and [Abbreviated Program Competencies Assessment](#) can be used with supervisors, other health officials, coalitions, or legislators to:
 - determine current and desired program performance on the [10 Essential Public Health Services to Promote Oral Health \(10 EPHS-OH\)](#)
 - show the breadth of skills needed for a successful S/TOHP
 - highlight where there are strengths that contribute to overall program or health agency successes

- show gaps between current functioning and desired levels and where additional expertise or resources are needed
- establish priorities or serve as the basis for strategic planning or quality improvement efforts.

Assessment Tools

1. The [Guidelines Program Assessment Tool \(Appendix E\)](#) should be completed during a group discussion to arrive at consensus or average scores for each of the 10 EPHS-OH
2. The [Abbreviated Program Competencies Assessment Tool \(Appendix B\)](#) allows a quick program assessment using only the Competency Domains and the Guiding Principles. Programs can then decide which areas are priorities for a more detailed assessment using the other forms.
3. The [Individual Competencies Assessment Tool \(Appendix C\)](#) should be completed by all program team members and any external consultants that are important members of the team, e.g., evaluators, epidemiologists, communication specialists. If staff are part-time, or if consultants or staff only focus on one or more particular areas and it is unlikely they will be asked to perform skills across the domains, then it should be determined which domains or competencies they should complete. The tool assesses current and desired skill levels, relevance to current job responsibilities, and a summary of strengths and areas for improvement as well as potential facilitators and barriers.
4. The [Summary Program Competencies Assessment Tool \(Appendix D\)](#) compiles scores from the Individual Assessments to create a visual overview of team member skills available to the program or gaps in skills, and allows for discussion of desired levels for the program, skills that are not being used effectively, external expertise available, top strengths, priority areas for improvement, need for additional expertise as well as enablers, potential barriers to change, and next steps.

Recommended Process for Using the Assessment Tools

Programs will need to determine time available for completion of forms and discussion, which individual team members or consultants will complete the assessment process, who will collect and summarize the individual forms, who will facilitate the discussions, who will write a summary report with recommendations, and who will complete the [Action Plan Template](#). **Prior to the team members completing any of the tools, the program director or whoever will be the facilitator should review with the team the purpose of the assessment process, the tools involved and expectations for using the results. An ASTDD consultant may be available to assist in the process. Contact Chris Wood at cwood@astdd.org if you would like to learn more about the assistance available.**

Step 1. Team members as a group should schedule about an hour for discussion and completion of the [Guidelines Program Assessment Tool \(Appendix E\)](#). The rating scales for the current and desired program level range from 1-5 and there is a column for brief comments. The rest of the document includes space to summarize Top Program Strengths, Priority Areas for Improvement, and Suggested Actions for Improvement.

Step 2. Team members can complete the [Abbreviated Program Competencies Assessment \(Appendix B\)](#) individually and then come together for a discussion comparing their perceptions, or the entire assessment form can be completed as part of a group process. Rating scales are the same as in the Guidelines Assessment Tool. Discussion should result in a summary of current Program Strengths and Priority Areas for Improvement as well

as Possible Enablers, Potential Barriers, and Next Steps. This allows prioritization of areas for more detailed assessment using the other tools. The Summary part of the form should include overall perceptions for both sections and be used later in a discussion of next steps. The person leading the discussion should email the completed form to all team members and anyone facilitating further discussions.

Step 3. Directions for Completing the [Individual Competencies Assessment Tool \(Appendix C\)](#)

- Everyone will need access to a complete copy of the *Competencies for State/Territorial Oral Health Programs* document that includes the tables of examples of all four Skill Levels for each Competency to assess their own skills as well as an electric copy of Appendix C.
- On the electric copy, each person rates his/her own skill level for each Competency as zero (0) or 1, 2, 3 or 4 depending on the descriptions listed in the Skill Level table of the full *Competencies* document. The descriptions are only examples of specific skills for each level. Before starting this task, the team needs to decide if the ratings SHOULD OR SHOULD NOT be interpreted as just the level of skill you are using in your current job position or the level you feel confident you can generally perform. This will make a difference if some people have skills that are not being used effectively. Record the number of your rating in the second column labeled Current Level—use only whole numbers, not .5.
- In the third column, record if you feel this Competency is of Low (L), Medium (M) or High (H) relevance to your current job responsibilities.
- In the fourth column, note what skill level you would like to have for this Competency whether it is for your current position or one in the future. Record any clarifying comments in the Comments column.
- Next, review your responses to all the Competencies and select the skills you feel are particular strengths; record them on the Summary page of the tool.
- Now select a few Competencies that you most want to improve and record them on the Summary page.
- Also indicate any enablers or potential barriers to increasing your skills in the Competencies.
- Print the completed tool for your use and email it to the designated person who will transfer the numeric ratings into the Summary Program Competencies Assessment Tool (Appendix D).

Step 4. Summary Program Competencies Assessment Tool (Appendix D). Record the names of the team members and their initials. If any team members have the same initials, use a 1 or 2 designation at the end. Make sure you have received each person's completed assessment tool electronically. Transfer all the individual Current Competency ratings onto the Current Individual Levels column using their initials. Email electronically or provide copies of the individual forms and the *Program Competencies Assessment Tool* containing the individual assessment scores to the person who will be facilitating Step 5. Also email the summary form to each person participating in the assessment.

Step 5. Directions for Completing the Rest of the Assessment Process

Prior to the day of the onsite session. If using an ASTDD facilitator or someone outside the S/TOHP, provide them with documents or links to documents at least 2 weeks prior to the onsite session that will help them get to know the staff and the program. This may include:

- Organizational chart of the S/TOHP
- Short resumes or biosketches and scopes of work
- State/Territorial Oral Health Improvement Plan

- Any other relevant S/TOHP reports and webpages
- List of important partners/stakeholders, coalitions, or advisory groups.

Onsite session. Assemble all members of the team for a 2-4 hour meeting, depending on how many team members are participating, and ask them to bring printed copies of the completed *Summary Program Competencies Assessment* form as well as their own *Individual Competencies Assessment* form and the completed *Appendix B* and *Appendix E*.

- Begin with a short discussion of reactions to completing the forms and determining ratings and program priorities. Were the examples of the various skill levels helpful? Was it difficult to assess skill levels?
- The facilitator should use the *Summary Program Competencies Assessment* to highlight for each Domain the clusters/patterns of skills, e.g., areas where many team members show moderate to high level skills, areas where many indicate low level skills, areas that reflect a good distribution of skills across the competency. Identify if the project team already possesses the desired level for each domain that was noted in the Abbreviated Program Competencies Assessment. This might be used later to discuss complementary vs substitutionary skills or identify the need for additional training or tapping into other consultants or health agency staff with those skills.
- If the project team does not possess the current desired level, discuss if external expertise is available to the program and if it is 1) adequate, 2) accessible, given any funding or other limitations you might have, and 3) if it is readily available when you need it. Record Yes (and who) or No in the External Expertise column and any notes in the Comments column.
- Have each team member look back at their *Individual Competencies Assessment* form and discuss what they perceive to be their strengths and priority areas for improvement. Also note where they may have skills that are not being used in their current position. Ask what they like most and least about their current job responsibilities.
- The rest of the discussion should focus on Next Steps, creating a plan for program improvement as well as how to celebrate and market strengths, and how to recognize individual strengths and create professional development opportunities (also see *Appendix G Action Plan Template*) Possible suggestions might include:
 - realigning current job responsibilities to make the most of current team member skills
 - creating/filling some positions to promote current staff
 - creating individual professional development plans and allocating time and resources for individual or group training
 - identifying outside expertise you might be able to use
 - identifying the need for additional staff and writing job descriptions based on the Competencies that are needed for the program
 - developing interview questions for job applicants based on the Competencies
 - estimating what additional budgetary or other resources are needed for program maintenance or improvements
 - making decisions about program or personnel due to budget reductions, without compromising program priorities or core functions
 - creating timelines that are phased according to priorities
 - using the tools as part of a strategic planning process to build program capacity
 - creating contingency plans in case of staff illness, budget reductions, policy changes, etc.

ASTDD has created [Appendix H. Professional Development Resources for State/Territorial Oral Health Programs](#) with links to ASTDD and other resources as suggestions for possible professional development opportunities. S/TOHP can add your own local resources to this list for your use.

After the Session. Based on the ratings and discussion, a report can be developed summarizing the team members participating, the process, topics of discussion, findings, and recommendations. The report can be developed by the program's dental director or by the outside facilitator if used. The report can be shared with the whole staff for any revisions, and then shared with health agency administrators or selected partners. Suggestions to improve the forms or process can also be shared with ASTDD. A [Competency Assessment Evaluation Form \(Appendix F\)](#) is available for all participants to provide feedback electronically on the Assessment process and its usefulness. Results can be compiled by the program director or facilitator.

Funded by CDC Cooperative Agreement 5 NU58DP006573-04-00 to ASTDD