



Year Five Survey Shows Consistent Satisfaction With Career Pathways' Internships, Fellowships And Mentorships

Since 2021 the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have collaborated on the Career Pathways in Public Health Laboratory Science Initiative through the Enhancing Public Health Laboratory Capabilities and Increase Capacity cooperative agreement (Co-Ag).

The program, which includes both internships and fellowships, aims to increase the public health laboratory workforce through hands-on programs for participants, support for early career and experienced professionals and opportunities for networking and leadership development. The fellowship and internship programs are evaluated rigorously by APHL through its Quality Systems and Analytics (QSA) team.

The post-experience surveys, which are distributed to fellows, interns, and mentors upon completion of the program, continue to show that the program is highly satisfactory and successful. The Year Five survey, (July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025) found 96 percent of fellow respondents, 97 percent of intern respondents and 99 percent of mentor respondents would recommend the program to potential candidates.

Fellowship satisfaction increased from Year Four to Year Five. Notably, 98 percent of fellow respondents reported that they were able to network with public health laboratory leadership (up from 93 percent in Year Four). Similarly, the percentage of respondents who would recommend the program to other candidates increased from 93 percent to 96 percent.

A third of fellow respondents from the Year Five post-experience survey participated in a Fellowship Immersion

Key Survey Insights

Fellowships

| Indicator | Year 5 (July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025) |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Fellows who were able to network with public health laboratory leadership. | 98% (93 out of 95) |
| Fellows that would recommend the program to other potential candidates. | 96% (91 out of 95) |

Mentors

| Indicator | Year 5 (July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025) |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Fellowship host laboratories that would recommend the fellowship program to others. | 99% (117 out of 118) |
| Internship host laboratories that would recommend the internship program to others. | 100% (51 out of 51) |

Fellowship Alumni

| Indicator | Year 5 (July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025) |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Average number of months for a fellow to find a career position. | |
| Less than one month | 73% 30 out of 41 |
| Two to six months | 20% 8 out of 41 |
| More than six | 7% 3 out of 41 |
| Percent of fellows that were employed within their host lab or other governmental PHL within six months. | 45% (39 out of 86) |

Internships

| Indicator | Year 5 (July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025) |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Interns who were able to network with public health laboratory leadership. | 99% (86 out of 87) |
| Interns that would recommend the program to other potential candidates. | 97% (83 out of 86) |

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Experience, which allows fellows to visit another laboratory for up to two weeks. That opportunity was well received with participants describing the experience with words such as “great,” “incredible,” “valuable,” “helpful,” and “insightful.”

Immersion activities helped fellows see the bigger picture in understanding connections between public health agencies, diagnostic laboratories and surveillance activities working side-by-side with the continuum of care. Survey results show that fellows were also given technical training, skill development and networking opportunities.

Across surveys, recurring themes emerged: fellows and interns consistently reported increased confidence.

Mentorship remained one of the most valuable parts of the experience, with both fellows and interns highlighting supportive

mentors and leadership teams, while lauding laboratory environments that encouraged learning and confidence-building.

While the experience gained through the fellowship and internship program is significant, the ultimate goal of Career Pathways is to strengthen the public health laboratory workforce, which in that regard, the program is finding measurable success.

Employment Outcomes

Post-experience surveys show the response rate and the number of fellows who accepted a laboratory position are improving.

The first fellow alumni survey was distributed in February of 2024, approximately one year after the completion of their program, and highlights the successful placement of fellows into laboratory positions.

The recent survey shows that fellowship alumni are finding employment. Nearly three quarters of fellows were able to find a career position within one month and 92 percent of fellowship graduates were employed at the time of the survey.

Internships

Data from the internship post-experience survey shows that intern respondents are consistently having positive experiences as well. Furthermore, approximately 10 percent of intern respondents have accepted laboratory positions, 55 percent of which are at a public health laboratory.

Interns emphasized in the post-experience survey the importance of practical, hands-on work including performing experiments, testing

Fellowship and Internship Survey Highlights

- Gained practical skills and hands-on experience
- Strengthened career readiness and confidence
- Clarified or inspired career direction
- Developed professional networks and relationships
- Built leadership, independence, and project ownership
- Gained a foundation for further education

samples, and gaining real-world exposure beyond the classroom.

The survey cited growth in the interns’ laboratory skills, communication, independence and problem-solving skills. Respondents recognized the value in developing both technical and transferable skills.

Intern respondents repeatedly praised mentors and the welcoming laboratory environment that encouraged learning and confidence.

The Career Pathways Initiative continues to provide meaningful opportunities for fellows, interns and mentors. The data shows continued satisfaction with participants and laboratories. The combination of both personal and professional growth was noted by both fellows and interns respondents. In addition, the employment of fellows and interns suggest Career Pathways is fulfilling its goal by supplying candidates to fill vacancies at public health laboratories.



Courtney Gauchel, a fellow at the Eilbeck Laboratory at the University of Utah, presented research at the Ignite Speech at the APHL Newborn Screening Symposium 2024 in Omaha, Nebraska. You can watch her Ignite presentation [here](#).

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