

Okay, great. Hello, everyone. Welcome. My name is Laura Vinson.

I am the Apex course faculty and also the director of the MPH program.

Welcome today to the applied practice experience.

Apex for short is how you will often hear it referred to, a student orientation.

Today you'll hear from both myself and mostly you'll hear from Julia Quigley, who I will hand it over to her to just quickly introduce and then pop it back to me. Awesome.

Thanks, Laura. Hi, everyone. My name is Julia Quigley. I feel like I've had the opportunity to connect with a lot of you, but if you haven't had a chance to meet with me one-on-one or just seen some emails for me in the past, my name's Julia. I am the Apex Manager, so I will be your primary source of support and your point of contact before, during, and after the Apex. So happy to be here today. Thank you all so much for being on and excited to kick off the next cohort of the Apex. Thanks, Julia.

So the purpose of today is really to orient you overall to the purpose of the apex, the structure of the course, and Julia will walk us through and serve as that primary liaison in your planning stages for your Apex. This is a prerequisite for you to engage and participate in the student orientation for the fall 2026 semester for you to engage in the summer presentation that we are hosting today. And these sessions are held every semester.

So students who are planning to complete Apex in a future semester, you can keep an eye on your email to get the date of the next semester's orientation schedule and make note of that accordingly.

So, Julia, I'll hand it over to you. We are recording this session for students to go ahead and either watch again or watch the recording if you were unable to join live.

So welcome and really look forward to you completing your apex when it's the right semester for your plan of study.

Awesome. Thanks, Laura. Okay, so let's jump right in. I'm going to say it one more time just so we have everybody on the same page here, but it's really important that you sign in for today's session.

So if you haven't already, or if you just jumped on, please, please be sure to complete the Google form I just put in the chat. The Google form is how you will receive credit for this, get added to our student roster for the fall, and how we will verify that you have completed this orientation.

Now, for those of you who are watching the recording, you can engage in the same way. There will be a link and a QR code provided to you that will be in the slides. So please make sure when you are watching this, you know, with a recording in the future that you sign in, that is how you will receive credit and how we will verify that you attended today's call. Now, if you're watching this in the future and you cannot access the QR code or the link for some reason, you can send me an email with the following information, your name, concentration, your enrollment type, and the intended semester for the apex.

So just at FYI for those who are going to be watching this in the future since we know it's hard for students to attend sessions like these live.

But for those who are here today and who signed in, you know, we get to see the results, but we would like to see who we've got with us on the call today.

So really quick, I am going to put a poll and launch it to the group here.

We would like to know a little bit about all of you. So the first question is what is your concentration? The second one is where do you live. And then the third one is a quick temperature check about the apex. You know, a lot of you are new to this conversation.

You're only just beginning to think about your apex.

So we want to know, where are you at in that planning process? How are you feeling?

So I'll give it just a minute for folks to take the survey.

And we recognize that this won't be entirely representative of the cohort. This will just kind of be a snapshot, really, of who's with us today.

So just a couple more. Hey, I am going, we don't quite have everyone more about 70. Oh, okay, cool. We're just about 80, almost 90%. So I'm going to end the poll really quick. And I'm going to share the results with all of you. So if you're curious or if you're watching this in the future, here's a little snapshot of who we've got. We have all concentrations, all concentration, oh my gosh, all concentrations representative besides maternal and child health. That will probably change in the future. But, you know, right now on today's call, that's what we've got pretty evenly split among all. of them with a couple of public health admin and policy taking out the lead here.

I always love this question.

Where do you live? We've got kind of a almost even split between Omaha in Nebraska, but not quite in Omaha, and those who are outside of Nebraska, which is always so fun that our students come from far and wide to be on this call today. And then finally, when you feel about the apex, you are, when you think about the apex, you're feeling, we've got about half at excited.

Let's do this. We've got 18 percent, about 18 percent at apprehensive. I don't know about this.

And a little bit more, 36 percent saying overwhelmed, wow, this is going to be a lot. So thanks for that feedback.

We're going to be very interested at how you're feeling at the end of today's call when we give you an overview about the apex and what you can expect during your planning process. Before I move on, I just want to take a quick check because I haven't heard from anyone yet. Can you all hear me and see me okay? I'm sorry I should have done this right at the beginning of the call.

Good. Good. Okay. Fabulous. Thank you all. Okay, so let's jump into some of the what. So this is a really fun resource. If you're curious, one of the biggest questions we get from students are, who do I partner with for the Apex? Oh my God.

Sorry, I'm going to mute really quick. Somebody is off mute.

Got it. You got them. Thanks, Laura. So one of the biggest questions we get for folks and students who are taking the Apex is, you know, I get what it is, but I really don't get how to do it or who I'm going to partner with. If you're curious about who students have partnered with in the past, we have this really fun resource.

It's called the Apex Map. And you can find it on the website. If you go to the main page, you scroll all the way down to the bottom, you can get a insight to some of the partners that we've had in the past.

Just a fun resource to see we've had Apex partners from coast to coast and several other continents outside of the United States.

So pretty cool. Okay, so let's talk a little bit about what the Apex is. The Apex is a little bit unique in that it is not necessarily a core course, but it is a course that every single student will take regardless of their concentration.

And the main purpose of the apex is to augment your academic coursework.

So that's to build on and put the skills into practice that you've been learning through the courses you've been taking towards your MPH.

It's to meet community needs, which is really important. The apex is all about engaging with external partners, engaging in community, and really getting that experience in community engagement.

And it's to provide students with an opportunity to integrate and apply at least five foundational public health competencies.

So these three pieces really make up what the apex is and why students complete it.

It's all grounded in the five foundational public health competencies, which you may be familiar with because those were the competencies that were also touched upon in your literal foundations course, which is a prerequisite for the apex. So some of these might sound a little bit familiar to you as we talk about them more. Another purpose of the apex is to understand the skills of a public health professional in practice. So not only to just read about what public health professionals do or hear about it, but to actually live it yourself and walk in the shoes of a public health professional, learning directly from them as a co-educator in your experience, which of course is the role of the preceptor and the apex. Like I said, it's a course requirement of every apex or every public health student. It's a three-credit hour course. And its core purpose is to collaborate with one partner organization for a duration of 100 hours. So, you know, you've heard of a practicum before.

They vary in their hours, you know, across the board.

If you're getting an MBA, an MSW, or whatever, the apex, we have 100 hours of practical hours for our practicum.

But our recommendation is you engage in 40 hours of real-time engagement.

And this doesn't mean you have to be in person face to face with your partner organization.

But our recommendation for 40 hours of real-time engagement is substantive, meaningful work with your preceptor, not just independent, asynchronous work, but work that is truly collaborative and helps you understand the mission of the organization and the communities that they work with.

This is achieved through forming and shaping your activities.

We'll talk about something called a learning contract, and we have a learning contract template that really helps you do this. So if this concept feels a little abstract to you right now, it might not feel that way by the end of the call. But if you have any questions, you know, please let me know. And all of this is in the name of producing two tangible products for the partner organization.

So those 100 hours will produce many, many products, but we just need to see two of those and we'll talk about what goes into a good product later on in this conversation.

So that is a what the apex is and why we have it as part of your coursework.

Like I said, the apex is grounded in the foundational public health competencies of which you of a student will choose five. They have to be from different domains. And if you're like, what the heck is a domain? These are the domain areas. Like I said, you might have seen them before in your foundations course, but the apex is all about helping you grow in five foundational competencies that align with your activities. And we'll talk about a little bit more about what that looks like, but just to give you a scope, because you'll be looking at these to determine which ones to choose later on in your planning process. But those can be found on the website.

We have a link for you. And oh, yeah, yes, domains are the bold headings on the link once you open that page.

It's pretty, it's pretty intuitive once you get there. Okay.

So one of the bigger main questions we have from students is how do you get registered for the apex?

Because very similar to the capstone, but unlike all the courses you've taken up into this point, there's not a lot of pre-work that goes into them. But for the apex, there are prerequisites that must be met for registration. And I'll say this over and over again. The apex is different from other courses in that you do not register until, later in the planning process. For us, that will happen around late July or early August. So even though registration is open, you have to complete all of the prerequisites in order to get registered for the course. And we have a way to track them. We have a really formal process for how we organize and help you complete all the prerequisites.

But just know, you can't register until all of these are complete. So let's walk through them really quickly.

The first prerequisite check, you're done.

Just by nature of being here is attendance at the apex orientation session. that's everybody here today.

So you can consider that prerequisite complete.

The second one is being in good academic standing.

And the third one is completion of at least six credit hours plus the foundations course.

Now six credit hours, no matter what, has to be done before you enroll in the apex. But if you haven't taken the foundations course, you can take it alongside the apex. Say you're taking it in the fall. You can take the apex and the foundations course concurrently. But you have to have at least six credit hours done before you can take it. enroll in the Apex.

So that's prerequisite number three. Pre-requisite number four is the completion of an affiliation agreement.

That is not something you as the student really has to worry about. And an affiliation agreement is the academic agreement between you and your partner organization that allows you to get academic credit for the work you complete.

We have, I mean, hundreds of affiliation agreements in place right now.

So a lot of the partners that you work with might have one in place with us. We have information on how to where to get that, you know, how to know if you need one. But that is one of the core prerequisites. And really my only suggestion here is that once you identify a partner, you just check with me and I can get you the information, me and Kelly Peterson, who does affiliation agreements for

the college. But you just check with us and we'll tell you where to go from there. So that's prerequisite number four.

Prerequisite number five is completion of some professionalism modules that we have for all of you located in something called the Apex Canvas planning course, which we'll talk about a little bit later.

And number six is the approval of the Apex Learning Contract, which I previewed a little bit before. So all of these culminate in registration for the Apex.

Once all of these are done, you can register. So once the prerequisites are met, you can track them, but we all track them as well. You can request a registration number from me if I don't get one to you first between July 28th and August 11th. So that's when registration begins for the apex. It's different because it's outside of the academic registration cycle you get from Hillary Peschick.

Registration for the apex begins July 28th. So if you want to write that date down, you can, but there will be a lot of reminders about when registration will actually begin. So if you think about it, you've got a little over two months to get all of those prerequisites completed to register, which is ample time to get your apex up and going.

Okay. So one thing we have for the apex, because I know you might be feeling that's a lot of stuff to keep track of.

We actually have a formal planning course. It is a non-credit. It's a zero credit hour free course.

And after you attend the orientation session, you'll be added into that course next week. And what it does is it walks you through the entire preparation process for the apex week by week, step by step.

So what we're doing today at the orientation is running you through that planning process, but the course will do it in a very formal way with due dates. It'll say, you know, it's July 28th, registration begins.

You'll be able to access everything you need for the learning contract.

There'll be partner information there. So this is really complimentary to the conversation we're having today.

So if any of the information we're sharing with you feels a little disjointed, don't worry, all of it is captured in the Apex Planning course.

This is a new course. We actually just piloted it last semester and it was fabulous. Super awesome resource.

So I'm happy that we'll be able to use it again this semester for all of you. But like I said, I manually enroll all students and that will happen next week. So you don't have to worry about registering for it or signing up. You will be signed up by nature of attending the orientation session today.

So I'll get that taken care of. But just keep an eye on your email because that's where you will find access to the course and where you'll get your invitation. So I guess that is an important thing to say for this as well.

Julia? Yeah. I popped off of mute just so that I can add a comment about the planning course.

So in, in the past, the way that we have supported students is by sending, basically creating an email list of a cohort of students that we knew that were in the planning cycle.

And we were tracking all of those students individually and sending those periodic reminders and updates of what you should be working on.

So this planning course is a space for you that has all of that information available to you at once that you can work through a little bit more on a self-paced basis.

So yes, there are deadlines, but there is also flexibility with that.

The deadlines that we have set for you in that space, in that planning space, are really meant to optimize your experience in the process and help push you along in a timely manner to make sure that you're including all the content that you need, you're getting all the feedback that you need in a reasonable amount of time.

So again, I just, I guess, wanted to add a bit of context about this space.

It's not something extra that's new.

It's more so something that has been done in the past that is now streamlined to create a better and more streamlined experience for you.

So back to you, Julia. Thanks. Thanks, Laura. And the orientation recording will also be housed on the Apex Planning course if you want to rewatch any of the information you shared today as well.

So let's talk about getting started. Step one of planning an Apex and the biggest question mark that students have is how to identify a partner organization.

Some of you might already have a partner in mind.

Some of you may not know at all where to get started. So we're going to share some tips and tricks on how to find a partner for your applied practice experience. And there's a couple of ways that you can do it. So the first thing we'll talk about is how to identify a partner. What kind of organization makes a good partner for the apex? The nice thing is that that definition is very broad.

An apex partner can be any organization engaging in public health work.

This can be everything from nonprofits to for-profits. to local health departments, governmental public health. This can be we've had students work with departments of transportation. We've had students work with kind of some of these non-traditional partners because so much of life is public health. So so many organizations qualify as good partners for the applied practice experience. An important caveat is that if you would like to work with a university-affiliated setting, so say something like UNMC or another medical college or something like that, it has to be with an entity in the college that does external partner-facing work, work with the community. So that's why things like research projects don't really fit for the Apex, but if you're working with a university-affiliated entity that does a community engagement work, that totally works for the Apex. If you're not sure and you're a student who wants to work with a university-affiliated setting, you can always reach out to me and seek clarity to see if it's a good fit. And the activities you engage in for the apex with your partner organization must be mutually beneficial to the partner organization and you as a student.

So that mutual reciprocity is really important. And we'll talk you through how you can engage with your partners to make sure your activities do hit on that idea of mutual reciprocity and mutual benefit, meaning you're learning as much as the partner is learning from each other and getting from each other in the partnership. A preceptor, so that's a partner.

That's how you identify organization at large.

And how you can choose a preceptor from your organization is a representative who holds at least a bachelor's degree with five years of experience in public health or a related field.

That is a standard that's set by our accrediting body. So if you do have questions, let me know.

But a good rule of thumb is this bare minimum criteria, an organizational representative who holds at least a bachelor's degree with five years of experience in public health or a related field.

The role of the preceptor is really to be a co-educator throughout the experience. You'll work really closely with them to complete your activities, and they will offer support to you alongside Laura and I throughout your applied practice experience. So that's kind of the framework for what makes a good partner for your apex.

That's still a little bit abstract. So let's talk about different ways that you can identify a partner organization for yourself personally.

The first thing to think about is the fit and the type of organization you'd like to work with. Some students like to build on their concentration area, you know, to work with an organization who might do things like emergency preparedness or environmental occupational health and safety, you know, maternal and child health focused work. So you can start your brainstorming process by thinking about what kinds of organizations might be a good fit for you. Do you want to work in a nonprofit someday? Do you want to work in governmental public health? Some of those questions will help at least start to steer you in the right direction of who you'd like to work for for your apex.

So some of the brainstorming strategies we have are to tap your personal network. Are there folks that you volunteered with before, that you met at a networking event, that are part of your current organization's partner network that you've always wanted to have experience working with?

Things like those folks in your personal network make really strong candidates for an Apex partner.

Another strategy is thinking about your long-term goals, like I said before, is there someone you want to work with in the future? Is there some organization or some experience you can get now that will help you in the future? One example is we have a dual degree DO MPH program as part of our college, and those students have to take the Apex. So a lot of them love to work with local health departments or other entities to engage with hospital systems to do things like a community health needs assessment.

So as practitioners, they have a good idea of how that process works within the community they'll be working with in the future. So that's how a lot, some of those students have leveraged their long-term goals, but certainly there are tons of ways that you can do that when thinking about your career goals with the apex.

Another strategy is simply to search your local community websites. In the past, I've had students who are like, hey, you know, I just moved to this city in Kansas And I really want to work with our, I want to get involved with our local health department network. I want to work with our county health department because even if I don't work with them in the future, I want to have a good relationship because public health where I come from is a small community. And to be able to network and to know these people will be invaluable as I progress in my public health career. So that's something you could think of. You could cold email your local public health department and say, hey, I'm a student. I'm doing my applied practice experience or my practicum and I'd like to get

involved. Sometimes these entities even have internship opportunities or different opportunities to get involved that could be used for your apex. So you could just search what's going on in your local community. That's another brainstorming strategy. Here's some examples. You know, the United Way, local food banks, American Red Cross, different health education centers, things like that. All make great partners for your applied practice experience. Another, our local and state health departments, we have relationships with a lot of local and state health departments, yes, in Nebraska, but also nationally. So if you're curious, if you want to work with a local or state health department in your area, but you're not sure how to get in touch with them, you can absolutely reach out to me or you can look at that Apex partner map that I showed you a couple slides ago. That will tell you if we've had any partners with that state or local health department in the past. So those are always awesome people to work with. And then our list of current student opportunities. And this says the Apex website, but these will actually be in the Canvas planning course. And what the current student opportunities are, are partners that we have worked with offline or who we have talked with individually one-on-one, who we've put together student opportunities for the Apex 4 previously. So they're kind of like pre-designed opportunities that students can engage in for their applied practice experience.

They aren't exhaustive. They still require you to reach out to the organization.

Say you're interested in meet with them to learn more about what they'd like you to work on. But for example, you know, we might have a local health department who reaches out to us and says, hey, we are having a measles outbreak in our community. And we would really like a student to help us create an emergency preparedness plan for a theoretical measles outbreak.

Do you have a student who would like to work with us? Can you advertise this opportunity to your students and those are the types of experience that we have housed on our Apex planning canvas course. And Laura, I saw you went offline, so I'll let you pop in.

So I actually wanted to bring up that all of the content that you're hearing is incredibly important for you to reflect on very intentionally when you're in the planning phase.

So all of this content, I would strongly encourage you to revisit this slide, rewatch the, you know, two, three minutes of the recording that's, that's giving you these suggestions and this strategy and approach. That's all I wanted to add. Thanks, Laura.

So if you are, if you're, if you have gone through all these brainstorming strategies and you're really still feeling lost, you can always reach out to me, you can schedule a time to meet with me and we can do some of this brainstorming together to help identify a partner that works for your apex. So just know that I'm a resource. If you're a resource, if you you're feeling lost or if you need help brainstorming a partner as well.

One thing that can be difficult, though, as a student and we totally recognize is that you're new to the apex and how it works and what's the ask of a preceptor, what's the ask of a partner organization. So Laura and I have put together a one-page document that when you're reaching out to a new partner, you can share with them. And it talks a little bit about what the apex is, what the preceptor role is, things like that. So you don't have to explain what the apex is, even though you haven't taken the course yet. So just know that this is a tool we have that will help support your outreach, and it can be found on the apex planning course if you want to use that to distribute to people that you've been talking with. So those are a bunch of different ways that you can use to identify a partner organization. And I would just like to give a little snapshot of some of the partners we have for our current cohort, the summer apex. So you can see the summer apex is our biggest cohort. We have so many students this semester. So this is just a small piece of the types of organization students

are working with. But I liked it because it gives you such a great idea of the variety of organizations that work for an apex. So over here, we've got some of your more classic health departments. We've got Panhandle Public Health, Douglas County. Those are here in Nebraska. Access period and at ease USA are nonprofits. We've got some state health departments, the Utah Department of Health, the Nebraska Department of Health. We've got some Iowa partners with Pottawatomie County. We even have a construction distribution organization, Caterpillar. We've got some health systems, Great Plains Health and Oshner Medical. We also have Mercy Stones Corner, which is a hospital in Missouri. So you can see just the variety of organizations that students have chosen to work with for the Apex. And these are a mix of partners we've had for many years and brand new partners that students have brought just by nature of tapping their own network. So if you need some brainstorming, I'm such an example person that this lists like these always help me to identify, you know, who do I want to work with in my local community? Two special considerations that go into choosing a partner organization is one, students who are employed with their partner that they'd like to work with. It is possible, absolutely. If you want to use your current employer as your apex partner, there are two things that need to be met in order to do so. first is that your apex activities have to be beyond your scope of employment. So for example, let's say we have a student who works in the epidemiology center for their local health department and they really want to get, they want to get experience working with the opioid or the overdose prevention department. That would work because they are working with a department or office different from their own or a health topic different from their own. And then the second important criteria is that your preceptor cannot be. be your direct employment supervisor. So they can't be someone you report to on a day-to-day or, you know, even less frequent basis. They need to be someone outside of your current supervisory structure, which will most likely be the case if you're working with a department outside of your own. You know, someone in overdose might not be the same supervisor for epidemiology and vice versa. So those are two important caveats if you'd like to use your current employer as your apex partner.

The second is if you're a dual degree student, we have a variety of dual degree programs and each of them have different ways that students can use the apex, whether for their dual degree or how that works. So reach out to Laura and I to check in about how to leverage the apex for your specific dual degree.

And if you signed into today's session, you saw there was a question about dual degrees. So we wanted to collect some of that information early so we can help support you the best we can. But to answer questions up front, I would definitely say reach out to Laura and I, if you're a dual degree student, and you have some questions.

So, time for a little recap.

The first thing we talked about was how to complete the six prerequisites.

And the first one is done. You attended the apex orientation that's happening right now today. The next thing we talked about was brainstorming ideas about your apex partnership.

Who do you want to work with? What skills do you want to grow?

Who would be a good partner for your apex? Once you've made some decisions about that, say you've got four partners you'd like to work with. Our next step would be to reach out to those folks and say, hey, I'm so-and-so.

I'm a practicum student at UMC. I would love to partner with you all for my apex, but can I learn a little bit more about your organization and your priorities? Can we meet? That's totally okay to reach out to a couple different organizations and have some introductory conversations with them.

In fact, a couple of semesters ago, I had a student who just moved to, this is a

similar example, to Kansas, a city in Kansas. And she was a maternal and child health student and her goal for the apex was to grow her network. She knew she wanted to work in the MCH space for her apex or for her career and she wanted to leverage her apex to do so. So she reached out to four or five different organizations who did that work just to meet with them, learn more about what they did. If they could support her with her apex, that's great. If they couldn't, no harm, no foul. And through that, she actually built so much interest in working so many of these organizations wanted to work with her that she actually had multiple of these partners come together and put a project together for her that all organizations benefited from. So it was such an awesome network building apex. And, you know, of course, we don't expect that out of all students, but this is just to say that no matter who you meet with, it's all in the name of growing your network, whether you move forward with them or don't. And we have a caveat below, but Laura, I saw you come off mute, so I'll hand it over to you. Yeah, and the caveat touches on this a little bit, but an important piece of context with the recommendation that, in example that Julia just shared about meeting with multiple partners, is also that when you're meeting with them or when you're contacting them, you're not saying that you want to partner. You're not making that commitment yet. You're actually framing this as an informational interview to better understand the type of opportunities that they have to assess fit.

This goes back to that previous slide that Julia talked about being mindful of your approach and assessing the fit.

So making sure that you are not reaching out and saying, I want to partner with you specifically, but rather saying, I want to learn more to assess if there is a mutual benefit and an appropriate fit for us to partner.

That really is a key difference. in your approach in really important transparent communication that we want to make sure the partnerships are set up with that in mind transparently in the beginning. Back to you. Thanks for letting me jump in. Yeah. And that is why it's also important to share your skills, your experience, and your interests with partners because they might be looking for a student that's really heavy in a certain area. And it's okay if you don't have skills that fit that area, but it's important to have that transparent communication up front to ensure the best partnership for both of you. So, you know, let's say you do meet with a couple of partner organizations. We always recommend, even if you don't move forward with them or even if they say, hey, you know, it was great to meet you, but we just don't have capacity to host a student at this time. That's totally fine.

We always recommend once you have solidified a partner and there's mutual interests and you decide to move forward. Sending everybody who you met with or talked with a quick thank you just helps keep your relationship positive because you never know who you're going to be working with in the future.

All that is to say, once you have a partner solidified, you've gone through the brainstorming, you've met with some organization, you've assessed fit, you've sent your thank you notes, you are now ready to move on to the, really the second biggest phase of the planning process, which is solidifying and drafting your Apex Learning contract.

So the Apex Learning Contract is your personal roadmap for your experience with your partner, and it captures these four things right here.

It's how you'll select your five competencies. It's where you'll put your five activities in your 100 hours, and it's where you will detail your two products. We have a template that we request all students use that is found in the Apex Planning course that walks you through and has prompts and instructions on how to complete all of these. But the purpose of the Apex is to define a clear scope of work that you and your partner have mutually agreed upon. It's also a tool to help you understand what goes into the activities your partner has requested. you to complete or that are a high priority for them for you to work on. It

helps you ask questions about why this is a priority. Who does this serve, you know, all of these different kinds of questions that I'll outline in the next slide. But the apex, the purpose of the apex learning contract is to capture your scope of work and hit on these four areas that are a requirement of the apex. So here are some frequently asked questions we get about the learning contract. Where do you find it? Of course, the template is in the apex planning course. It's really easy for you to use. It's in a Word document.

We require all students to use this because it hits on all of those required elements. Another question we get a lot is, well, okay, how do I begin to draft my Apex Learning contract? And the first thing and the best thing you can do is have conversations about with your partner organization about their priority activities.

You can get to that information through asking them the following. We call them W questions. You know, why is this activity a priority?

What need does this activity address? Who does it serve? You know, what steps are involved? So it's, it's the big picture of the activity, but it's also those nitty gritty, you know, what do I need to do? What is step one in completing this activity?

When you're drafting those, how do you know that they're correct? Here are some recommendations.

They align with your partner's priorities.

They align with five distinct public health competencies, and they answer the core W questions listed above.

So say once you have that all drafted, another question we get is how do I get feedback? on my learning contract.

And later, much later in the planning process about, I would say around mid-July, I host a bunch of learning contract review meeting sessions where students jump online into a Zoom.

You share your draft and we walk through it together. There are some benefits to this. You know, you get some feedback in real time. I help, you know, ask some additional questions or I help seek clarity, those kinds of things. So those meetings are super helpful. And of course, you'll be able to sign up for them through the Apex Planning course. It'll all be there for you.

So just some cues about the learning contract that we frequently get.

So now we're going to walk through a couple of different examples on strong learning contract activities versus weak learning contract activities. And this might seem familiar to you. This was an example I gave earlier about a measles exercise that actually was an apex activity was an apex partner.

A student partnered with a rural health department in Washington State where they were experiencing an uptick in measles outbreaks and they needed support on creating emergency preparedness protocols.

And they wanted this student to do a tabletop exercise to help bring community partners together and get this thing figured out. So this is an example of an apex learning contract activity.

Use some room for improvement, right?

So it's the, it doesn't, it's just the creation of a tabletop exercise. It doesn't say the topic. It doesn't talk about why this needs to be created.

The simple description is student will draft a mock tabletop exercise for the

health department.

I mean, it's straightforward, but it doesn't really answer any of those questions that we talked about in the last slide. You know, why? What topic is this? You don't even know it's measles from this description.

And some of the resources you need aren't that clear either.

Local level data about what? Contact information. Who's?

A Microsoft Word, that's fine.

Absolutely. That's a good resource. But, you know, that doesn't offer enough information that will help you understand how to get the activity done, if that makes sense. In contrast, here's what the actual activity was submitted by the student. So this is a measles tabletop exercise development. That's the title of the activity. And I won't read through all of it. You can do that in your own time. But some of the strengths I wanted to pull out is the second sentence here. I will assist with creating the scenario for the exercise, including, oops, did that just go away? Laura, can you still see my screen? Um, it did go away.

I can see the screen, but it's the PowerPoint now.

Oh, okay. It's not the presenter view. I'm going to just, uh, re-share that. Oh, there goes. No, it's fixed now. Um, okay. So I'm going to, uh, pull that back up. Not sharing yet for me.

Oh, hold me one second here. There we go.

Um, okay. Back up. Looks like it's loading, but it's not. Now it's up.

Okay, fabulous. So what I was pointing out is that second sentence, I will assist with creating the scenario for the exercise. designing participant roles and preparing materials for the exercise.

So bam, that's the activity. Those are the steps involved.

Some of the W questions she answered down here with the increasing presence of measles in the state and our county and our country identifying gaps in the response plans before they are needed, supports preparedness. Right. So she's talking about why this is a priority for the partner organization.

And then here is some way more detailed resources that she used to complete this tabletop exercise.

Communication protocols, collect. background and epidemiological data, which I'll give you a, we'll look at this more closely later, but this was actually her first two activities, was collecting background information and existing epidemiae.

You know, look at past tabletop exercises, other toolkits as a model, you know, participant list, descriptions, all that kind of stuff. So if I go back and forth between the two, you can really see how robust this second description is.

Like it really gets into the meat of the the activity.

And because this was such a core activity in her apex, as you can tell, this level of information was so helpful to get everybody on the same page. And it helped her be able to complete it because she knew everything she needed to do.

So here's another example. This one is with a local health department who was putting on a youth sports program and wanted to improve their youth sports program overall.

So here's the activity, survey collection.

This activity involves collecting survey responses from community members using a previously established survey. And then the resources are a survey monkey tool. So, you know, it's straightforward, yes, you get what the activity is, but there's a lot of questions. You don't even know it's for the sports program, right? Like there's just, sure, you're going to need the survey monkey tool, but what about contact resources? Like, you know, what are the community partners that use this? How are you going to get this out to parents whose kids participate in these activities? A lot of questions. So here's what the activity eventually became. Survey response collection, the title was fine. But you can see, as you can see, this had a lot more background information. So this is with the Lincoln Lancaster Community Health Improvement Plan. This was an area of need identified within that plan. That's why they wanted to focus on youth sports. Surveys will be distributed to parents and caregivers of children in the community who have faced challenge with sports program participation. They even noted that they don't need to develop the survey because the health department had already developed it and collected a few more, but to get useful results, they needed this student to really help roll it out in the community. So here, in their resources, survey instruments, access to contact lists, knowledge about previous partnerships, all that good stuff. So when you toggle back and forth between the two, you can really see why the second activity was a good fit for the learning contract.

So just a few examples.

So now those are a few like very zoomed in examples.

I want to zoom out and talk about a good example of an apex as a whole. Like, yep, you can kind of see what those apex projects looked like as a whole, right? Like, you can imagine all the things that went into the measles exercise. You can imagine all the different types of things that went into the youth sports program after that survey was collected, but we'll walk through just a couple more examples to give you a holistic view of the apex and what goes into a good apex project.

So this one was a Another example with a local health department who they wanted the student to work with their community health improvement work group and review their community health needs assessment annual report.

And they wanted the student specifically to develop tools based on the findings of the community health needs assessment, right? And two of their priority areas were around mental health and mental health resources, right?

So that's what the student did. Their products, this is just a quick summary of some of their activities and how their products came to be. Another example is with a nonprofit organization who did a lot of advocacy and legislative work. This was all around dementia and doing advocacy around brain health. And so this student's two products were a policy brief around the dementia registry and then an infographic for caregivers about COVID-19 for those who are caring with dementia to be able to be a resource to them. So let's go back to that measles example, that measles example with the local health department. Here's a little more, here's a bit of an idea of some of the other activities that student did. And these are actually in order of how they completed them during this semester. So the first one was to familiarize themselves with the background knowledge about measles, how it works, how it spreads. Right. That information is super helpful. You need to know about the disease you're working on. The second one was to grow an understanding of how the organization function. What is the jurisdiction the local health department oversees? What is its authoritative power? You know, what are some of the organization? of the things that by law, the organization has the ability to do, right?

That's really important in an emergency preparedness situation.

Their third activity was engaging stakeholders, right?

Because this student could not do a tabletop exercise alone.

When a local health department engages, you know, emergency preparedness things, they're talking about bringing everybody to the table because so many different organizations play a part in a protocol like this.

Then after they engaged the community stakeholders. They brought everyone together. They shared what they were doing. Their next big to do was to actually develop the tabletop exercise and start to get feedback about it from stakeholders.

Funny enough, this student did have to revise their learning contract because when they started to engage community members, it exploded.

Everybody wanted involved. They were super interested in this tabletop exercise.

She had so many partners that she had to spend a significant amount of time doing stakeholder and community engagement, and she actually ended up only doing a draft tabletop exercise because she couldn't, she didn't have the capacity to and the time to finalize something because there was so much interest, which was awesome, right? It was so helpful for the health department that everyone wanted to come together and participate. Then her last activity was to create communication materials to support the exercise, spread the and to create infographics about measles spread within their community. So one question I wanted to ask of all of you is you can see how many different types of products could be created from this scope of work. But what do you think her two products ended up being based on this scope of work? Any ideas? You can put it in the chat or you can say it out loud, Laura, and full transparency, I don't have the chat up anymore. So if you do get anybody, let me know. Yep. Somebody responded, communication materials. Good.

Yep. Those communication materials for sure. Any other ideas? Another prompt that we have for you.

No one else has submitted something, but another prompt for you. Do you think that it was a final deliverable or something that could be a draft version or what sort of level of finality do you think existed for this? Someone else just shared the tabletop exercise would be another product. Yep.

Great. So I think funny enough, all of you got at with the two core products that were part of this apex, it was a draft measles tabletop exercise, included those things like participant roles and stuff like that.

And the other big deliverable was an infographic about measles spread.

But certainly she could have used some of the communication materials she put out to stakeholders.

We wanted to share this example because you will be able to, through your apex, choose a lot of different products. that theoretically could come from your scope of work. But a good way to narrow those down is to ask your partner organization, what will be most valuable to you as a, and what will you be able to actually use as an organization after my time with you is done? So those are just some of the best practices that go into creating a learning contract, creating your activities, and identifying products. We want to end. I have, oh, yeah. Sorry, I have two quick comments here before we move on. So in the example that Julia gave in this slide, a key takeaway that we also want to share with you is that the products do not have to be some sort of final report or deliverable that is all encompassing of the work and the scope of one activity that you did. It should really be something just as you heard Julia say that is a tangible and useful. to the organization. So we have in our Apex Learning

Contract template and as well as in other places and resources that we share with you, an example of a variety of products or a list, rather, of a variety of products to think about. So really brainstormed the spectrum of what a product could be. And again, think about that usefulness. The other comment that I want to make is that, Several slides ago when Julia was first going through, I think it was example one and two, we're really asking you to keep asking the right questions to get down into the layers of why, why this activity and how.

How can I be able to take the information that this partner organization and preceptor has told me is a priority and how can I actually do it the next day theoretically.

So we want you to synthesize the information that you have started to ask questions about to understand the scope of what it is you're doing and you're documenting that in your Apex learning contract.

So again, just wanted to emphasize a few key points there. Thanks, Laura.

So that really wraps up the planning portion of your Apex. After you've met with a partner, you've brainstormed ideas, you've talked. talked through your apex learning contract, you've put a draft together, all of that stuff really encompasses the biggest lift of the planning of your apex. So once all of that is done, you will register and there will be a formal course that you will enroll in that goes alongside the apex and the activities you've included in your learning contract. So we like to look at those as parallel paths.

One is your 100-hour scope of partnership. And then the other are those supplemental assignments, things like reflections or some different assignments that help you really map the experience you are having to principles of partnership and public health practice. So they're very complimentary.

They run alongside each other.

And we'll give you just a quick glimpse into the course because that is something that will begin with this fall semester on August 24th.

So yeah, supplemental to the 100 hours, it's the Canvas course space.

We have three course meetings to help bring the cohort together. And then there are some course assignments that you'll complete as you move through your apex hours. Some of them are associated with the hours themselves. For example, when you get to 50 and 100, all that good stuff.

The next little thing we'd like to talk about are some additional resources, one of which is this timeline.

This timeline will bring you through the planning process from start to finish.

So as you can see, we have June 10th and walking you through from today's orientation to when you should be exploring with partners. So you've got about a month to do that. Then you have a couple weeks to start drafting your learning contract. I will have meetings up until July 21st. Then your learning contract is due. Then your registration opens. All of these dates will be in the planning course as well. But this is a really helpful timeline to kind of keep you on track because, like Laura said, this is self-paced in that you can complete all of this stuff early. if you're ready to, but you cannot complete it past these dates.

So, for example, the 21st is the hard and fast date for the Apex Learning Contract draft. If you don't have it done by July 21st, you will not have time to register for the course.

So these dates are meant to keep you on track, but of course you can always get things done before then. And in fact, many of you will. Many of you will get

things done before this.

So that's a helpful resource if you need it. If you have any accommodations, this is another frequently asked question. We get because the apex isn't like a more traditional course that you've taken up to this point.

There are accommodations that are available for students that you can have as part of the apex. We just encourage you to kind of follow the protocols you've done for other courses, which is to reach out to the Accessibility Services Center and they will help you put together a plan, all that good stuff. So there's the contact information if you need it.

A final resource is that we do have two funded opportunities available to students for their apex.

More information about these will go out, but they all include a \$3,500 stipend and an increase of hours.

So instead of doing 100 hours, you do 175. There are some other qualifications like the type of partner you're working with and the type of scope of work you have. But for now, you know, we're not really in that phase of planning. So when you get there, we will send out more information about the funded opportunities if you're interested in that stuff. But just a little teaser of that for now.

And finally, if you need any support during this process, please do not hesitate to contact Laura or I. We are always a resource to help you at any point in the planning, no matter what sort of questions you have. Some additional resources will be reviewing the planning course. You can rewatch the orientation video. And then when you get into the course, there are some good next steps, which are a series of Apex coaching videos that break down the process of planning and help walk you through how to brainstorm and more in depth or how to do a learning contract more in depth. There's lots of awesome things there. But still, that doesn't mean you can't reach out to us if you have questions at any time. All right.

So that was a lot of information. Laura, I had to close my window when I re-shared. So I don't know if you would mind bringing up this poll. But that was a lot of information. It was a lot of information.

And we won't leave you without this information as a follow-up. You'll get the recording. You'll get the slides. But we want to do one more temperature check now that you have a better idea of what exactly goes into planning an apex, right?

Step by step. All that's of stuff. So we'd like to take a little bit of a temperature check.

Are you excited? Are you feeling apprehensive? Are you feeling a little bit overwhelmed? Which is completely understandable at this point of the process because I always like to say this is how I used to feel on syllabus day at the very beginning of a semester. You know, you're standing at the bottom of the mountain and you're like, oh my God, I'm supposed to get all the way up there. But we walk you through how to do that through resources, working with us, all those things.

But we still like to get an idea of how you're feeling after the session today.

So we've got a few more. Okay, I'm in the poll. We actually have kind of an even split. We've got 42% of students who are excited who want to do this. We have 8% at apprehensive. I don't know about that. And we have 50% at overwhelmed. Wow, this is going to be a lot. That's okay. And that's probably a natural way to feel after the orientation session, right? Because you don't have a lot of the questions that go into your apex answered. But if you start the planning course and two weeks, from now, you are still feeling overwhelmed.

Please take a pause and reach out to Laura and I. The planning process is not meant to be overwhelming the way we chunk it out step by step. Totally understand how it feels overwhelming right now. But if you get two or three weeks into the planning process and you're still feeling in over your head, we do not want you feeling that way. Please reach out to us so we can offer you support, help you figure out the things that are sticking points for you because we are here for you throughout the planning process. If you have questions, these are our emails. But if you have any questions right now, we have a couple of minutes. So if you want to stay after and ask that of Laura and I, please feel free to do so. Otherwise, we're so excited to have you as part of the cohort for the fall semester. And this will be not the last time you hear from Laura or I. We will be sending you lots of emails and information as the time goes on. And we are here to support you throughout the planning process. So thank you all so much for being here today. And Laura, do you have any final remarks? Oh, just again, look forward to supporting you through the planning process and for any of the students who had expressed the thought of overwhelmed, happy to stay on the call specifically and talk through any of your key questions. But as Julia said, give yourself at least one more week and rewatch the orientation video from today and then assess how you're feeling about what's next. thanks everybody thanks so much everyone we look forward to seeing you again soon thank you um can i just ask a quick question oh yeah absolutely awesome thank you um thank you for the presentation again