

Mission Essential Function Toolkit

for Local Health Departments

October 2026



Department of Health
Division of Public
Health Infrastructure

Mission Essential Function (MEF) Categorization Guide



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PERSONNEL

Does the position perform critical, life-saving functions? These are the most essential functions that must continue without *any* interruption to protect life, health, and safety.

Yes

MEF Category 1:

Essential functions that must continue without any interruption to protect life, health, and safety

Ex. disease surveillance & outbreak response, emergency preparedness, clean water and food safety oversight, food and nutrition programming (e.g. WIC), Early Intervention, and public health communications

No

How long could the functions performed by the position be paused during a public health emergency to avoid long-term harm?

The functions directly support MEF Category 1 functions and should be restored within hours to days if disrupted.

MEF Category 2:

Essential supporting functions that should be restored within hours to days if disrupted

Ex. fiscal/grant management, laboratory services, vector control and environmental health monitoring, cancer screening programs, maternal mortality programs, and public health workforce safety

The functions can be paused for a short period but must be restored in a timely manner to prevent long-term harm.

MEF Category 3:

Functions that can be paused for a short period but must be restored in a timely manner to prevent long-term harm

Ex. chronic disease prevention & management programs (e.g., diabetes, heart disease, smoking cessation), non-urgent inspections, non-urgent services related to maternal, child, & family health, mental health, & substance use disorder

The functions can be paused without immediate harm.

MEF Category 4:

Valuable functions and long-term programs that contribute to improved health outcomes over time but can be deferred during a public health emergency without immediate harm

Ex. workforce development & training programs, health equity initiatives, public health research & policy development, and non-emergency related community education

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**NON-PERSONNEL
INVESTMENTS**

Is the investment used or required to perform critical, lifesaving functions (i.e. the most essential functions that must continue without any interruption to protect life, health, and safety)?

Yes

MEF Category 1:

Investments used to perform critical life-saving functions- those that must continue without any interruption to protect life, health, and safety

Ex. disease surveillance & outbreak response, emergency preparedness, clean water and food safety oversight, food and nutrition programming (e.g. WIC), Early Intervention, and public health communications

No

Consider the functions supported by or performed using the investment. How long could these functions be paused during a public health emergency to avoid long-term harm?

The functions directly support MEF Category 1 functions and should be restored within hours to days if disrupted.

MEF Category 2:

Investments used to perform essential supporting functions- those that should be restored within hours to days if disrupted

Ex. fiscal/grant management, laboratory services, vector control and environmental health monitoring, cancer screening programs, maternal mortality programs, and public health workforce safety

The functions can be paused for a short period but must be restored in a timely manner to prevent long-term harm.

MEF Category 3:

Investments used to perform functions that can be paused for a short period but must be restored in a timely manner to prevent long-term harm

Ex. chronic disease prevention & management programs (e.g., diabetes, heart disease, smoking cessation), non-urgent inspections, non-urgent services related to maternal, child, & family health, mental health, & substance use disorder

The functions can be paused without immediate harm.

MEF Category 4:

Investments used to conduct valuable functions and long-term programs that contribute to improved health outcomes over time but can be deferred during a public health emergency without immediate harm

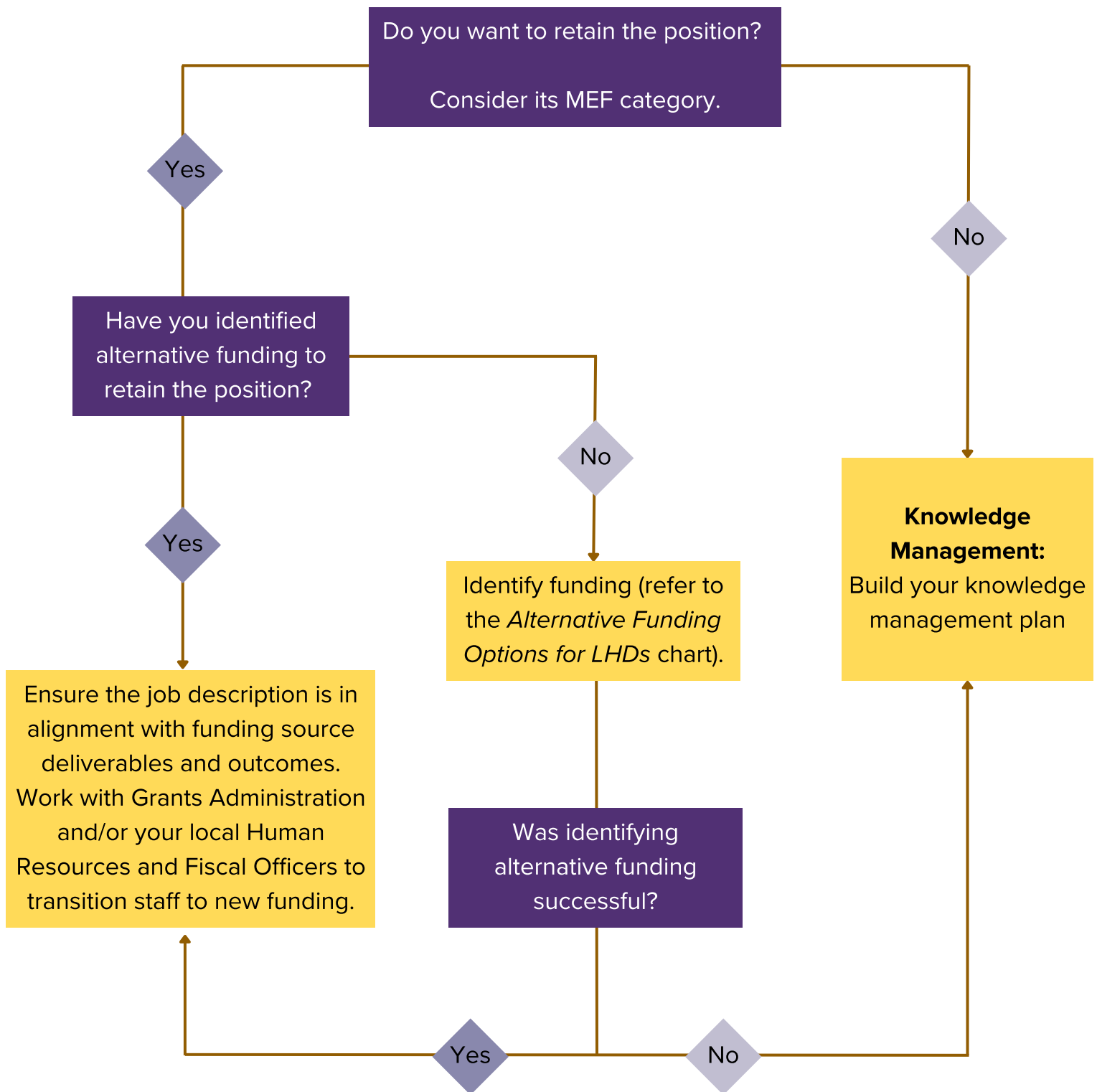
Ex. workforce development & training programs, health equity initiatives, public health research & policy development, and non-emergency related community education

Sustainability Decision Tree



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Sustainability Decision Tree



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**NON-PERSONNEL
INVESTMENTS**

Do you want to sustain the investment?

Consider the following:

- What is the MEF category of the investment?
- Did a solution exist before this investment? (i.e. was the investment an upgrade from a previous resource?)

Yes

No

Have you identified alternative funding to sustain the investment?

Yes

No

Identify funding (refer to the *Alternative Funding Options for LHDs* chart).

Was identifying alternative funding successful?

Yes

No

As relevant, update the contract terms of the investment (including start and end dates, points of contact, etc.). Work with Grants Administration and/or your local Fiscal Officers to transition the investment to new funding.

Change Management:
Build your change management plan

Alternative Funding Options for LHDs



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For positions and investments you would like to sustain, you will need to identify alternative funding. Some suggestions and considerations for identifying alternative funding are outlined below.

	Health Department Budget*	Other Grant
Considerations	• Is the investment MEF Category 1? • Do the functions of the investment need to continue in order for department operations to be maintained? • Is the work tied to a mandate, legislation, public health code, etc.?	• Are the functions of the investment aligned with grant deliverables? • Do the functions of the investment support activities allowable on the grant? • Could your department partner with other LHDs or organizations to apply for the grant?
Recommended Information	• Description of investment • For personnel: annual salary, fringe, and travel budget • For non-personnel investments: breakdown of cost and associated fees • MEF category; strong justification for the selected MEF category • Strong justification for the investment, including examples of impact on services and/or the community	• Description of investment (update as necessary to align with grant goals and deliverables) • For personnel: annual salary, fringe, and travel budget; percent effort/amount requested under the grant • For non-personnel investments: breakdown of cost and associated fees; amount requested under the grant • Strong justification demonstrating how the investment supports grant deliverables and objectives
Suggested Next Steps	Develop justification and discuss inclusion in future budget requests	• Consider pass-through funding opportunities from NYSDOH • Search Grants.gov and other sources (ex. NACCHO) for available funding opportunities • Develop application materials and proposal for inclusion in the grant

*Reminder: Maximize Article 6 funding

Consider if the position/investment aligns with Article 6-eligible programs and would qualify for State Aid reimbursement

Mission Essential Function (MEF) Worksheet



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Use this worksheet alongside the **Sustainability Decision Tree** to determine and record next steps for your investments.

Investment:

MEF Category:

Document the justification for the MEF category assignment.

Do you want to sustain the investment?

- ☐ **Yes** *Provide the strategic justification for sustaining the investment below, then proceed to the next page.*
- ☐ **No** *Review the knowledge/change management resources and document your transition plans below.*

Document the alternative funding sources considered for the investment and the rationale for their viability below, referencing the *Alternative Funding Options for LHDs* chart.

Was alternative funding successfully identified?

☐ **Yes; funding source:**

Work with Grants Administration and/or your local Human Resources and Fiscal Officers to transition the investment to new funding.

☐ **No** *Review the knowledge/change management resources and document your transition plans below.*