# VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH INTERNSHIP ACADEMY

**Pooja Muthuraj (Cohort 3, 2025)**
VDH Central Office: Population Health & Prevention
Mentors: Stephanie Dunkel, Rachel Stradling

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## About Pooja
- William & Mary '25, BBA Business Analytics & Public Policy
- Master's of Science in Business Analytics candidate (W&M '26)
- Passionate about PH & data!

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## PROJECT 1: POPULATION HEALTH & PREVENTION GRANTS DATA

### Issue/gap identified
- Office of the Commissioner (OCOM) need for "single source of truth" on various layers of grant data
- Constantly changing communications & program needs
- Need for multiple users to regularly access and update grants data while preserving data integrity
- Database needs to be intuitive to understand/update for various users
- Data stored differently across repositories
- Need to join "people" and "programs" information into one interface

### Outputs
- Consolidated grants listing, verifying data integrity across various sources
- Worked with Office of Information Management (OIM) to determine workflow to ensure user updates, so data will sync
- Identified differences in grant listings between systems, created system (Project IDs, Parent IDs, etc.) to organize data
- Pending output: working with OIM to develop Tableau dashboard to visualize grant updates & associated people/program information
- "Part 1" deliverable presentation to VDH senior leadership team

### Takeaways
- Best practices when collecting & storing data to maintain integrity
- Working with multi-step data workflows
- Learning how backend and front-end data sources need to interact; designing data front-end that allows for customization to various/changing comms needs
- Navigating changing data & data that supports changing needs/comms purposes & audiences of VDH (grantors, SHHR, General Assembly, etc.)
- Supporting data life cycle
- Understanding what data exists where, how data might need to be stored differently for different purposes
- How federal changes affect state-level PH functions

### Outcomes
- Integrated Excel consolidating information from multiple sources – worked with OIM, Office of Grants Administration (OGA) to link this to database pulling from Finance & Accounts (F&A)
- Tableau dashboard & database in-progress

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## PROJECT 2: FOUNDATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES STAFFING

### Issue/gap identified
- Need for preliminary analysis of "foundational level" of PH capacity based on national standards/VA-specific need
- What is VDH's staffing capacity across key program areas, and how does it compare to national standards?
- Basis to advocate for resources to meet foundational program needs

### Outputs
- Identifying VDH foundational services based on Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB)'s FPHS framework; crosswalk state/federal mandates and LHD and Office director priorities
- Identifying models/engagement with SMEs to determine assumptions of future staffing capacity and foundational levels
- Creating repository of available data
- Presentation of current state & next step recommendations to Central Office leadership
- Staffing capacity analysis and "cost to foundational level" presented for 11 key staff categories
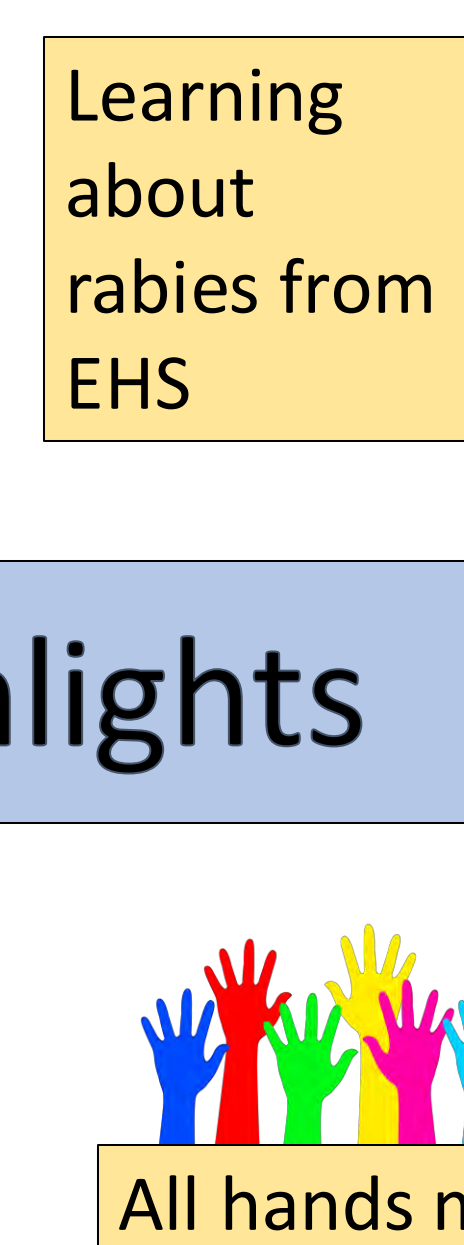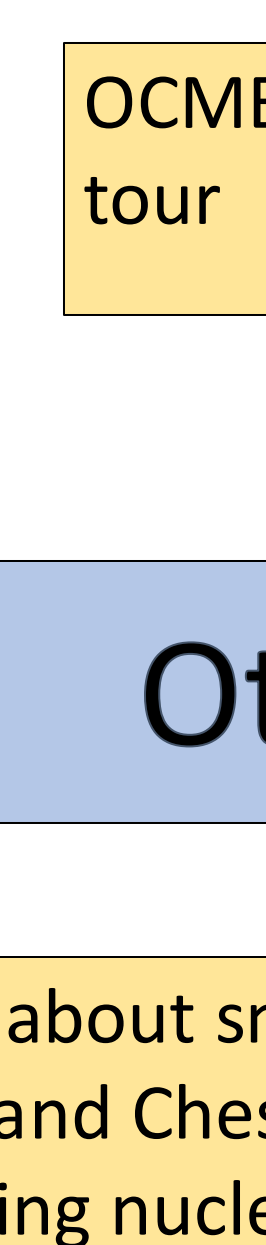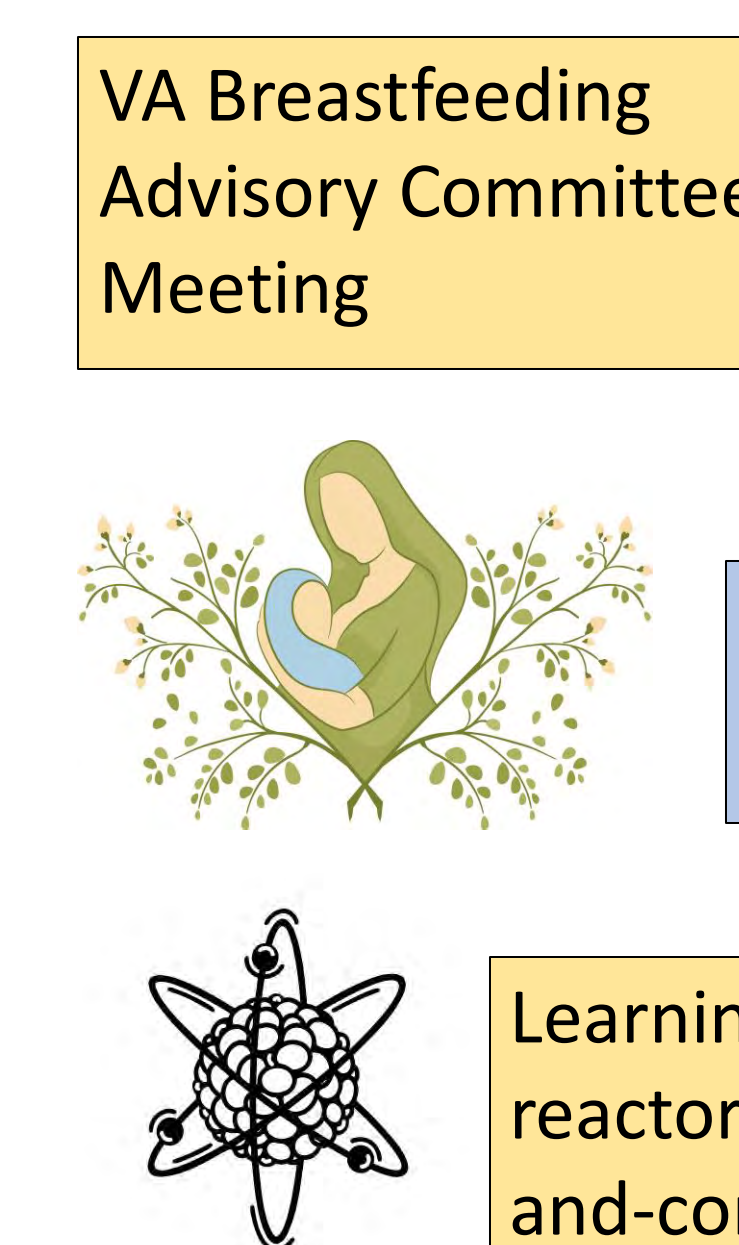
### Outcomes
- Inventory of available data & capacity analyses previously done throughout the agency
- Inventory of existing national and state standards for foundational staffing needs and program functions

### Takeaways
- Understanding the FPHS model & how its application to VA may differ from that of other states – different priorities of various stakeholders and views on FPHS
- Understanding VDH's functions & what PHP/CHS perform, on the ground and behind the scenes
- Understanding Office and LHD director priorities/what PH services are "foundational" at state and local level
- Understanding various data sources
- Understanding difficulty of quantifying "average" needs for programs like rabies – where there is no "average"
- Need to correspond our staffing capacity analysis with existing framework – PHAB framework – for comparison purposes
- Identifying correspondence between agency/LHD priorities and state/federal and grant mandates

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## Acknowledgments

Thank you to everyone who has taken me in with open arms: particularly Bridget Cochran & Jeff Stover, for coordinating this incredible program; my mentors, Stephanie Dunkel and Rachel Stradling, for your guidance & allowing me to experience/be a part of so many aspects of VDH's work; all the inspiring & welcoming people on the 13th floor; Viji Vadiv & Mike Sarkissian in OIM; Kaitlyn Gentille & Luke Davies; everyone I've run into on my data search; the Ops Planning Task Force; my fellow interns... and you, for taking the time to look at my poster! This section would be my whole poster, if possible; thanks to **everyone** who has shown me the ropes/answered my questions/let me be a fly on the wall as they did what they are so good at doing.

Food inspection ride-along (to understand EHS work in the field)

LHD directors' meeting, Charlottesville (learned more about CHS priorities & cross-district collaboration)

Orientation (REVIVE! Training, meeting other interns & VDH leaders, learning basics of VDH's work)

VA Breastfeeding Advisory Committee Meeting

OCME tour

Learning about rabies from EHS

Other Highlights

OVR tour

Learning about small nuclear reactors and Chesterfield's up-and-coming nuclear fusion plant

All hands meeting