

Regional multi-year planning trainings a success!

In a phone interview, training coordinators Julie Hladky, Division of Public Health (DPH) and Nancy Franz, UW-Extension, expressed satisfaction and relief with a job well done:

“You could see people’s shoulders relax as they realized that they could handle this. Planning is new to many, but there seemed to be a sense of comfort with what this big planning thing is. There was a lot of good conversation and good thinking.”

Hladky and Franz shared leadership in planning and implementing the day-long trainings in each region around the state during December and January. Many coalitions’ contract objectives require a multi-year action plan.

“There was a widespread, bubble-up request for training in multi-year action planning. We were able to create the concept, plan and deliver the training in a very short time given the input and commitment of many — amazing! This is an excellent showing of responsive training and technical assistance,” Hladky remarked.

The purpose of the training was to provide a consistent message and practical approach to multi-year planning to help achieve state tobacco goals. Participants took home a comprehensive manual filled with ready-to-use planning tools.

What about participation?

“Participation exceeded my expectations,” Hladky noted. “We had representation from nearly every coalition, and even more people than the coordinator. There were individuals from the local health department, such as the public health nurse. And in the southeastern region, several contract monitors came, as well as an outside facilitator who will work with one of the local coalitions. At the Madison training, a number of our state partners were present. These additional people all helped to strengthen the training.”

However, tobacco work, training and technical assistance are not without their challenges. Franz and Hladky had the following to offer in terms of challenges that need to be addressed. “We continue to realize how the context is so dynamic. Communicating is vital. We need consistent and up-to-date messages. At times, participants raised questions for which there are not yet answers. And that is difficult, because not everyone is comfortable with uncertainty. Also, coalitions are at different places in planning and coalition development.”

What steps come next?

“We need to equip our staffs with the time and resources to follow through and provide the ongoing support coalitions need. As part of this, we are developing a list of criteria to indicate what would be included in a quality plan. Then, a whole series of questions raised during the trainings need to be answered soon for coalitions.”

Hladky and Franz both emphasized the importance of “staying on the planning trail” — and not letting the current fiscal crisis derail the necessary planning process that has begun.