

# Building and Maintaining A Successful Planning Council

Randy Allgaier M.A., Director, San Francisco EMA  
HIV Health Services Planning Council

Steve Manley, Co-Chair, San Francisco EMA  
HIV Health Services Planning Council

# Workshop Objectives

- Development of structures and a support system that facilitate a culture of inclusiveness, equity and value throughout the council.
- Development of strategic outreach, recruitment and retention plans that ensure true diversity among the council (including council members who reflect the most severe need populations)
- Development of algorithms to prioritize Council training needs and creating curricula that are relevant and accessible to a diverse body of council members

# Council / Grantee Relations

- The relationship between the Council and the Grantee is critical in how the Council functions
- There are many models of council and grantee relationships that work well
- What makes these relationships work well is agreed upon roles, responsibilities and expectations
- One Suggestion- A Memorandum of Understanding between grantee and council that clearly outlines agreed upon roles, responsibilities and expectations

# Council Structure and Support System

- Assess the Council's Cultural Competency
- Assess the Power Dynamics in the Council's structure
- Assess the Council's organization in light of outcomes of cultural competency and power dynamic assessments
- Assess Council staff's mechanism for supporting a diverse council membership

# Different Cultures on the Council

- Gender, Race and Ethnicity are cultural dynamics that need to be addressed
- Other cultural dynamics also need to be addressed: educational background, income level, marginalized populations- including formerly incarcerated, substance users, homeless, service providers, consumers, etc.

# Power Dynamics

- A Planning Council, like other organizations, develops its own “culture” over time including power dynamics- both real and perceived.
- Is there real or perceived power resting with a few council members or committee(s) ?
- Are there council members who are feeling marginalized (either due to the behavior of the group or self marginalization)?
- Are there agreed upon expectations of the group and of the individuals?

# Communication Mechanism

- Functional, clear and direct communication is critical (no jargon, acronyms, etc.)
- A Variety of communication modalities may be needed in order to accommodate different cultures and communication styles
- Are Council members aware of the work of the committees and workgroups where they do not have regular engagement?

# Mutually agreed upon and understood expectations

- By-Laws that reflect the guiding principles of the council
- Policies and Procedures that are clear, concise and are followed equitably
- Statement of “Rules of Respectful Engagement” or “Meeting Ground Rules”
- Policies, rules etc. should strive to be mechanisms that ensure members have the tools to be successful and that the Council is a place of equity and mutual respect. (Not viewed as punitive).



# Accountability should be built in to the Council's structure and culture

- Council members should understand their roles and responsibilities
- Council Co-Chairs and Committee Co-Chairs should facilitate meetings in a manner that ensures the value and equity of the voices of all members present.
- Council staff should understand their role in working with Council members that is respectful and values the needs and talents of each individual council member.

# Regular Assessments and Evaluations

- Meetings should regularly be evaluated and the feedback should be shared with presenters, chairs, and staff
- On a regular basis, council members should assess the process and organization of the council
- On a regular basis the council, in general, and the council co-chairs, in particular, should evaluate the Council staff
- Evaluations and Assessments should be taken seriously and the results should be incorporated in a way that clearly shows that feedback is heard and respected.

# Council Common Denominators

- Every Council member brings a valuable voice to the Council
- There is no Council member who knows everything
- Every Council member has a learning curve- even those who have been “working in the field” have much to learn
- Council members learn from data /information provided and from each other

# Goals of Outreach

- **COMMITTED MEMBERS-** Individuals who demonstrate a commitment to the work and understand the role of Council members. (What they can do, and what they cannot do)
- **DIVERSITY-** Individuals who reflect a diversity of backgrounds and experiences. The motivation for diversity should not be merely about HRSA requirements but a real commitment and desire to have varied experiences and points of view as part of the Council decision making process
- **BALANCE-** The Council should not just attempt to fulfill HRSA minimum requirements, but if possible achieve balance in ways that reflect a culture of equity and parity.

# Outreach Strategies

- An Outreach strategy to achieve the articulated goals is serious business and demand attention and planning that include staff, council leadership and council members.
- Understand the gaps in Planning Council membership and develop a strategy to outreach to the targeted constituencies
- No one outreach strategy will work with each constituency. Outreach must be multifaceted.

# Retention Strategies

- Once members are appointed to the Council, keeping them on the council and engaged is critical
- Orientation, On-Going Training and Mentorship
- Council Leadership and Council Staff should regularly check-in with council members
- Leadership development opportunities
- Council member appreciation activities
- Exit Interviews

# Orientation, Training and Mentoring are key to success

- Orientations for new members should have consistency but should also be adapted to the specific participants, current issues, etc.
- Training is an ongoing need for ALL council members
- Council staff should regularly assess training needs of members and develop curricula for both general and “micro” trainings on issues, skills building, etc.

# Council Staff has a critical role

- Policy and Planning Support
- Administrative Support
- Meeting Support
- Training Support
- Evaluation
- Volunteer Support





# Conclusions

- All Council members have a stake in the Council's success
- The Grantee has a stake in the Council's success
- Equity, Trust and Value are core principles for Councils
- Communication is key. Good communication can mitigate many problems
- Training is critical. Ongoing training that meets the specific needs for Council members (consumers, providers and government) will lead to an informed council that will make better decisions
- Evaluation is vital. Councils are not stagnant; their needs change. Therefore regular evaluations need to be done to ensure that the council is being responsive to the "current membership".