

Health Workforce Technical Assistance Center Webinar Series: Year 1 Overview

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Background

The primary objective of the Health Workforce Technical Assistance Center (HWTAC) is to support the efforts of the National Center for Health Workforce Analysis (NCHWA) by providing technical assistance to states and organizations engaged in health workforce planning. To achieve this goal, HWTAC undertakes a series of technical assistance initiatives each year. As one of its year 1 initiatives, HWTAC conducted a series of webinars on topics related to health workforce data collection, analysis and dissemination. This brief documents HWTAC's experience implementing this initiative and identifies key questions that should be addressed when planning webinars.

Planning Efforts

Key Questions:

What topics are of interest to your audience?

How far in advance should you schedule your webinars?

The first step in planning the webinar series was coming up with potential topics. HWTAC staff initially generated approximately 15 ideas for webinars that focused on health workforce research issues. Important to this planning phase was providing ample time to discuss potential topics. The process of discussing specific topics often lead to new ideas; many of the final webinar topics were not on our initial list.

Once topics were selected, HWTAC staff scheduled the first three webinars. The presenters for these webinars were affiliated

with HWTAC so it wasn't difficult to get them to agree to present. For subsequent webinars, it was determined to schedule them two months in advance in order to give presenters ample preparation time and to give HWTAC time to find alternate presenters if first choices were not available. Fortunately, during the first year of the webinar series, no one declined to present. Overall, individuals were pleased to have an opportunity to present their work to a national audience.

Implementation

Key Questions:

What software should you use?

Where should you host your webinars?

After arranging the initial webinar topics and presenters, HWTAC staff planned how to implement the webinars, including what software to use, how to structure the sessions, and where to host them. After considering various options for webinar software, the team decided to use WebEx Event Center. This seemed a logical choice because HWTAC has free access to the software through its affiliation with the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH). However, the decision to go with WebEx negatively affected the audio. New York's WebEx setup only allows webinars to broadcast audio by phone or computer, not both at the same time. As a result, staff had to choose one or the other, eventually deciding to use the phone option. The phone option generally provided better audio clarity and allowed for more privacy in offices, whereas computer speakers could be disruptive. The software decision also affected registration. HWTAC staff did not want to require registration in order

to make the webinars as accessible as possible. The WebEx software used by NYSDOH was a good choice in this regard, as it allows up to 1,000 attendees at an event. There was no need to prioritize attendants via registration since space was never a concern.

Another important structural aspect of the webinars was how to handle the question and answer sessions. Ultimately, it was decided to allow attendees to ask questions using the WebEx chat panel. Only HWTAC staff were allowed to see the questions. The questions were then screened by two staff members and given to the moderator of the event by projecting them onto a white board so the moderator could ask the presenter the questions.

Unexpectedly, a challenge of implementing the webinars was finding a good location for the three HWTAC team members (two screeners and a moderator) to set up for the event. The first webinar was hosted in a space which proved to be too small for the three team members to set up their equipment (e.g., projector, laptop and desktop PC) comfortably. As a result, the subsequent webinars were held in a conference room that had enough space for the three team members to spread out and be comfortable.

Lessons Learned

Key Questions:

How should you handle Q&A sessions?

How much time should you provide for questions and answers?

At the end of each webinar, attendees were directed to an evaluation survey. The survey provided valuable feedback from the audience and there were a few key items from the comments section. First, participants appreciated the time allotted for questions and answers (approximately 20 minutes per webinar). Audience members reported that they valued having time to ask questions about the presentation. Second, attendees also appreciated

it when concepts were coupled with concrete examples in a presentation. Attendees indicated that while it is useful to present a theoretical overview of a subject matter, it is also helpful to see how organizations have dealt with these issues in practice. Overall, participants of the webinars appreciated the information that was provided. More than 95% of webinar attendees would recommend the webinar they participated in to a colleague. Individuals also indicated that they would welcome more webinars on health workforce research topics in the future.

Year 1 Webinars

Opportunity for State Health Workforce Data Collection: Motivation, Barriers and Strategies

Presented February 12th, 2014 by Katie Gaul

Health Professions Regulation in the U.S.: What Are the Issues?

Presented March 12th, 2014 by Jean Moore and Elizabeth Carter

How Can We Transform the Workforce to Meet the Needs of a Transformed Health System?

Presented April 9th, 2014 by Erin Fraher

Data, Methods and Tips for Health Workforce Supply and Demand Modeling

Presented May 14th, 2014 by Tim Dall

Building a State Health Workforce Center: Lessons Learned in the Carolinas

Presented June 25th, 2014 by Linda Lacey

Community Health Planning: Theory and Practice

Presented July 30th, 2014 by Robert Martiniano and Lottie Jameson

All webinars are viewable on the HWTAC website at www.healthworkforceTA.org.

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