

Evaluating Public Health Training

What training is needed? Who needs it? What format?

How do we begin to understand the training needs of the public health workforce? As early as 1990 the Northwest Center for Public Health Practice (NWCPHP) asked our region this question.

The formal definition of a training needs assessment is the systematic identification of needs, defined as discrepancies between desired and actual skill level. It employs multiple methods of data collection, analysis, and prioritization. The process utilizes a prioritized needs list to develop solution strategies.

Below are a few of the training needs assessment projects from the past ten years:

- Emergency response and Bioterrorism became critical after September 11, 2001. During 2002 and 2003, NWCPHP hired Group Health Community Foundation to

work with state health departments in our partner states (Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Washington, and Wyoming) to develop an instrument to help the states assess their workforce training needs and develop an emergency preparedness training plan. Many of the training plans from these initial assessments are still in use.

- Montana Public Health Workforce Development Survey: NWCPHP conducted this online survey in October 2004 for the Montana Public Health Training Institute, a program of the Montana Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health and Safety Division.

- The Northwest Regional Public Health Workforce Development Assessment was completed in 2002. These assessments (Idaho, Montana, Oregon,

Washington, and Wyoming) were reviewed and analyzed to develop a broad picture of public health workforce issues, barriers, needs, and resources across the region.

- Workforce Development Project: 2000 Training Needs Assessment Update—Washington State. This final report provided a review and update of several training needs assessments. This report supported development of the 2001 Public Health Improvement Plan, which has workforce development as a major priority.

- In 2003, NWCPHP conducted an assessment of the knowledge and practice of the 10 Essential Services by environmental health practitioners in our six partner states.

- In 2009, NWCPHP prepared for a comprehensive regional training needs assessment implemented in the first quarter of 2010.



August 2009 Northwest Public Health Leadership Institute, two and half days of classes in Seattle.

Was this training successful?

NWCPHP conducts many public health trainings in many different formats, and we evaluate each one to make sure the workforce needs are being met and determine successful and less successful tools for future trainings.

In 2005, NWCPHP reviewed its evaluation instruments and developed a set of standardized questions and response options that could be used for all training evaluations. Previously, NWCPHP's faculty, staff, and partnering agencies routinely designed evaluations to meet the needs of specific training programs without a common framework. These uncoordinated evaluations resulted in numerous variations of survey questions and response options, as well as inconsistent

data collection and analysis processes.

NWCPHP undertook the training evaluation standardization project to streamline its evaluation efforts and develop a system that could aggregate data across similar types of training and compare findings from year to year. In addition to evaluating our own trainings, NWCPHP is routinely contracted by other organizations to help develop training evaluation.

We also post the basic templates we use for training evaluations on our Web site at www.nwcphp.org/evaluation for other organizations to customize for their training evaluation needs.

Training evaluation templates:

www.nwcphp.org