Authentic Engagement to Reframing Public Health Work in Indian Country

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MDH Minnesota Department of Health
OFFICE OF STATEWIDE HEALTH IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES

Why an Input Process?

- **Tobacco-Free Communities and SHIP Grants**
  - Initial calls to each grantee
- **What did we hear**
  - Designed for Community Health Boards
  - Reporting and grants support – western culture model

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Knowing What You Don't Know

- **Have we set grantees up for success or can we do better?**
- **Critical Decision Point - TFC grant renewals and SHIP 3 launch**
- **Secure an external, culturally competent, trusted contractor**
  - Selected by MDH and grantee review committee
- **Commitment to the process | 10 tribes 2 Urban**
  - 1-year pause – included scaled back work & commitment to participate and invest time in the process
  - Participation in advisory committee to advise MDH and contractor

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Scope of the Input Process

- Advisory committee – community connection, question development, recruiting participation
- Key informant interviews, DGIF, Surveys
- Focus of input – menu of strategies and MDH grant practices
- Recommendations to MDH

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What did we learn?

- All work with American Indians should be rooted in American Indian culture and that culture and community-building are assets in creating health.
- The importance of mutual understanding and equitable and respectful relationships.
- The need to promote healing from the effects of historical trauma and colonization through reclaiming cultural identity.
- The recognition of the strength and resilience of American Indian communities.
- The need for MDH and the American Indian Community to work together to develop strategies to address commercial tobacco use and obesity.

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What did we learn? "Culture is Prevention"

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Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council, Inc. 2015

What did we learn?

- MDH should develop programs that are culturally rooted, strategies need to be culturally appropriate and realistic for Indian communities. Culture is an asset. Culture is prevention.
- Traditional activities such as tobacco/medicine gardens, sweats, sun dances, and drums promote healing and build resilience in communities. Respect that communities have identified these activities as critical elements to promote health and welcome discussion about how these activities and others can be incorporated into our grants programs.

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What did we learn?

- Two year grants are very challenging administratively – prefer five year grants.
- Prefer one-point of contact at MDH. Being contacted by many technical assistance providers can be overwhelming.
- MDH was asked to spend more time in the communities and get to know them. Better understand the strengths and unique challenges of each community

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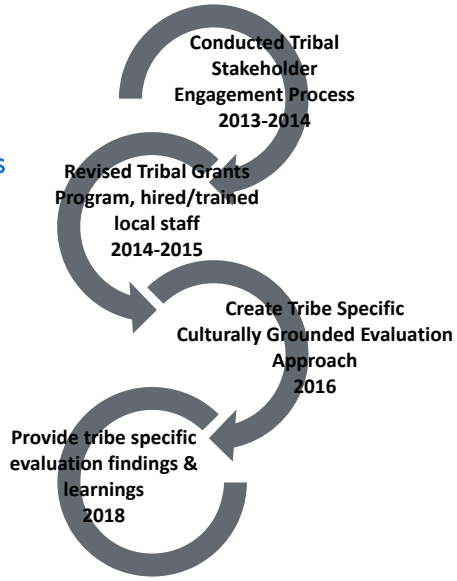
Minnesota Department of Health Tribal SHIP & Tribal Tobacco Grant Activities



"Two schools of thought exist, one for government and its institutions that is linear, the other for Indians, which is holistic and cyclical. A bridge for understanding between the two domains must be developed."

John Poupart

Former President of the American Indian Policy Center and Elder

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