

Consultant's Notes

NIEHS is engaging in a strategic planning process to set the Institute's scientific and governance direction for the next five years (2012–2017). This report captures the work done during one phase of the broader year-long strategic planning process: the 2011 NIEHS Strategic Planning Stakeholder Community Workshop, that was held 1pm July 12th through 1pm July 14th at the Sheraton Imperial Hotel, Research Triangle Park, North Carolina. Information pertaining to the broader strategic planning process can be found at <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/about/od/strategicplan/index.cfm>. The Stakeholder Community Workshop process included identifying key stakeholders to be invited, with invitations going to a mixture of scientists, public health policy, regulatory experts, management of scientific research, communication experts, and non-scientific staff. To make the most of the time and the expertise of the people at the meeting, the strategic planning core group chose to use Open Space Technology as the meeting method, and to engage Dalar International Consultancy, Inc. to assist in planning and facilitating the meeting.

Following a formal welcome by NIEHS Director Linda Birnbaum during which she expressed her desire for truly engaged participation, the meeting began with a blank agenda wall as per the Open Space Technology method. Within one hour, the 171 participants generated 124 topics and created a very full agenda wall. The topics were assigned to specific meeting spaces and times. Breakout discussion sessions were 75 minutes long, with two sessions on Day One and four on Day Two. The person who posted the topic took the responsibility of convening the breakout discussion and of filling out a report to capture the discussion highlights and recommendations. Note that recommendations that emerged might be those of even a single person in the group, and did not require consensus to be captured. As the meeting progressed, certain topics became redundant or were grouped together by the conveners. At the end of 1 ½ days of the meeting, 97 discussion groups had taken place and submitted reports.

The meeting format for the morning of July 14th was designed to achieve the goal of clustering the 97 reports in such a way that strategic themes emerged. After reading the 97 reports, participants were given five sticky dots for voting for the reports for which they had the greatest personal energy. The reports that received the most votes became priority topics around which participants clustered the remaining reports. Thirteen clusters were formed. A participant volunteered to convene a breakout discussion for each of these emergent clusters and to create a report including discussion highlights and identification of a "recommended strategic goal." Thirteen reports were submitted from these breakouts.

The 97 reports from the July 12th/13th portion of the workshop and the 13 reports from July 14th comprise valuable information for the strategic planning process of NIEHS. These reports are included in their entirety in this document, as they were input by the convener (or their designate) of the discussion. No changes or alterations were made to any report except those made by the convener at the time of the workshop.

In a process to obtain additional data, 12 recommended strategic goals were posted for voting and participants were given another 5 sticky dots to vote on the them. (Two of the recommended strategic goals related to exposure. Only one of them was posted for voting although there is a report for both). The results of the vote are noted right on the reports. The combined output of this Stakeholder Community Workshop will be of great value to NIEHS as it moves toward the next stage of the strategic planning process in October.

The consulting team is deeply appreciative to have been in service to NIEHS and to all participants at the Community Stakeholder Strategic Planning workshop.

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