

REPORT ON THE 2010-2011 ACTIVITIES OF THE INTERSECTIONAL COUNCIL

PREPARED FOR GOVERNING COUNCIL

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This year the Intersectional Council (ISC) of the American Public Health Association has continued work on the themes of component unit development and leadership enhancement. The ISC Steering Committee (ISC-SC), which meets monthly by phone conference and has a midyear meeting in June along with the Committee on Affiliates, has responded to the needs of these component groups: the sections, SPIGs and forums. Defining the role of the ISC-SC in relationship to the Executive Board and other leadership groups within APHA has been another task of the ISC-SC. A focus of the year's activities has been a multi-layer review of the newly developed forums and their impact on the overall organization.

For a fifth time, all sections were required to submit an end of the year section report. This process has now been simplified through use of an online questionnaire. The actual substance of these questions was modified this year to reflect the recent changes in APHA's strategic plan. Overall, sections have responded positively to this process; with major improvements in the area of communications, membership recruitment, and student involvement. This year's section report focus was on policy development and funding issues. A copy of this report is attached to this document.

The Steering Committee used these section reports as a tool to work with certain sections, which were not meeting established requirements. ISC-SC involvement with a specific section with a record of non-performance has allowed for successful reengagement of the section's leadership and a renewal of this section's overall planning.

In addition, work plans were required of each section this year as a basis for future evaluation and section reporting. Previously, submission of a work plan was a suggested activity; the Steering Committee decided to use this tool to encourage sections and SPIGs to set an agenda for their year's projects. Again, a web-based format has been prepared to provide ease in submission. Each group was asked to prepare a set of objectives for their work during this calendar year. The next round of section reports will recognize, in part, the work that each unit has done toward completing these specified projects. As a first attempt at identifying section and SPIG goals, this effort was successful, but illuminated needs for future infrastructure development and ISC-SC support of these units.

A primary focus of the Steering Committee was an evaluation of the six forums, which were developed after the recent evaluation of the APHA structure, to address the issues cutting across sections and SPIGS and encourage collaboration. Forum development required section sponsorship and had a three year lifespan, with a possibility of renewal. Only one of the six present forums, the Healthy Communities for Healthy Aging Forum, chose not to renew. However, other groups want to transition into other types of units, such a SPIG or caucus.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the forums, an ISC-SC sub-committee developed surveys of forum and section leadership as well as forum members and section leaders about the unit's functioning and impact. Overall, the responses were positive about the work done by the forums, but also showed a considerable lack of knowledge about these groups. The need for improved

communication between sections and forums, and forum leadership and their own membership was clear. Also issues about involvement of individuals who are not APHA members and the amount of work generated by these groups for the Component Affairs staff require further discussion by the Steering Committee and the overall ISC. A report to the Executive Board will be made at the late October meeting, which outlines the recommendations by the ISC-SC about the continuation of the present forums and limitation of new units at this time. Current evidence suggests that the APHA members find Forums to be valuable components. Therefore, all present Forums should be continued and supported for another year without the need to reapply. During this year, the ISC-SC will update the reapplication process to make the rules more explicit and add a requirement of a Forum update report. This report will be presented to the full ISC at this year's (2011) Annual Meeting.

The ISC-SC, working with the CoA, has continued making progress on the Leadership Map. The Leadership Map is a visual representation for the APHA website of one possible path through to leadership in APHA. But we know that there are a multitude of possible paths to leadership and that they wind through a variety of landscapes where members find their home. To illustrate this, Lisa Carlson has been leading the effort for the ISC-SC to collect Leadership Stories from a variety of APHA leaders. Many have been gracious enough to tell the stories of their own paths in APHA – where they got started, how they got involved, what they learned along the way, and how it impacted their lives and careers. These stories are being collated to be posted on the APHA website and the leadership site will have a soft launch by the Annual Meeting.

The use of the webinar format for the ISC midyear phone call was quite successful. The group met online with Sara Miller, the new Director of Membership, to discuss the findings of membership surveys. The effectiveness of the webinar tool for future training and for improved communication with ISC members has been discussed by Component Affairs staff and the ISC-SC. Budgetary concerns remain a limitation and will need to be reviewed.

The *Beginner's Guide* was updated for the Chair-elect meeting this summer and is now available on the Leadership Corner of the APHA website. The Chair-elect meeting itself was well attended, and brought the new leadership of APHA into the fold of association issues, such as membership model changes, budget issues, and goal-setting. This group has shown considerable energy in collaborating and moving forward on mutual concerns.

The ISC Steering Committee has reviewed the impact of its liaison role with each section. A matrix has been generated of the number of different connections between sections and other groups, such as Executive Board, Education Board, and Action Board. This matrix has been shared with the ISC and an attempt made to clarify the role of each group.

Over the past two years, the ISC-SC has reviewed the Policy and Procedures for the Intersectional Council and has revised them to meet the increasingly complex issues facing this group. The revised format will be presented to the ISC at their meeting this fall and then sent on to the Bylaws Committee for final approval.

The overall strategic planning issue for both the ISC and the ISC-SC remains; what is the role of these two groups as the Association moves forward with the new membership models? Questions, regarding membership participation in sections, Association support of section function and development, collaboration between sections, support of advocacy issues, and

funding, are pressing and require response. The Saturday morning ISC meeting at this year's Annual Meeting has been set aside as a time to address some of these issues.

Finally, the ISC Steering Committee is aware of the impact of the limitation of staff and Association resources on future development of all component units. The same three person staff is responsible for all 27 sections, 6 SPIGs, 6 forums, 18 Caucuses, and the Student Assembly. The Student Assembly, itself, is the largest component group with over 5,000 members; their projects require 45% of one of the three staff members' time. The caucuses, which are separate organizations within the APHA framework, met this summer to discuss collaborating with each other to represent their mutual needs to the overall organization. At present, the total of 58 units is considered the maximum number and can be revised when the new membership model is resolved. The Intersectional Council and its Steering Committee plan to work to clarify these concerns.

Submitted by Barbara Levin, 2010-2011 ISC-SC Chair

Executive Summary of 2010 Section Reports

Each year, the Intersectional Council (ISC) of the American Public Health Association (APHA) collects section reports as recommended by the Task Force on Association Improvement and Reorganization (TFAIR) for two reasons. They are: (1) to assess activities conducted by section and Special Primary Interest Groups (SPIG); (2) respond to problems/challenges identified by section and SPIG leaders

In 2011, the ISC will use the Section-SPIG reports in conjunction with the strategic plans submitted by the groups to craft a intersectional strategic plan that will identify strengths to build upon, opportunities for improvement, and an improvement plan.

Process

In January 2010, the ISC issued the request to submit the section workplans using the zoomerang online format. While many of the questions were similar, a few open-ended questions were added to the membership/leadership categories to elicit best practice information. Sections-SPIGs were given a month to complete the report. A couple of reminders were emailed, and ISC liaisons were asked to follow-up with non-responding sections/SPIGS.

Findings

Demographics

- Thirty of the 34 Section-SPIGS completed the section reports. This is an 88% response rate. (Of the four that did not respond, one is inactive, one historically unresponsive, for one the leader who was to respond had an unexpected emergency, and the reason for the fourth not responding is unclear.)
- Over 60% of the reports was completed by the chair and 33% by the immediate past chair.

Membership Engagement

- There are four strategies currently being used to engage members: (1) marketing and opportunities for communication to individual members e.g. newsletter participation, email blasts, listserv ; (2) Facilitating subject-related group activities e.g. working on policies, ongoing international collaboration with John Snow Society; (3) Facilitating social networking e.g. meet and greet at booth, socials at the Annual Meeting; (4) Providing incentives e.g. require annual meeting presenters to be SPIG members, provide student/community travel scholarships.
- Challenges with engaging members relate to: (1) Time constraints and competing demands in members' lives; (2) Large size (of section?) makes communication difficult; (3) Role clarification; (4) Interaction with APHA staff (maybe listed by one section or SPIG?); (5) Difficulty travelling to annual meeting due to lack of funds which may impact strengthening personal relationships
- Sections-SPIGS have addressed this challenge in several ways: (1) Not doing anything because they do not know what to do; (2) Increased communication e.g. more frequent emails or less frequent emails so as not to overwhelm members; (3) Intent to spend more time on role clarification of members; (4) Organizing social networking events at meetings; (5) Setting up small topic or task specific workgroups/committees

Member Recruitment

- Over 80% of the comments related to recruiting student members.

- Challenges with recruiting members seemed to around recruiting new leaders, or getting active membership committee
- Several sections-SPIGS did not know what the best practices were for new member recruitment. Of those who listed strategies: (1) writing articles in newsletters of other organizations emphasizing the benefits (e.g. chiropractic newspapers, podiatry); (2) identifying membership chair or bigger membership team; (3) Explaining benefits of membership focusing on transitional members; (4) Increased outreach to students was mentioned by several e.g. partnership with training/internship programs; (5) reaching to employers to explain importance (e.g. community health worker).

Leadership Identification, Orientation and Communication

- Members generally did not find it too difficult to identify leaders for leadership positions, and said the nomination slate was competitive and diverse. Only 20% (n=6) found identifying leaders difficult.
- Tools used to orient new leaders were the chair-elect inventory, the leadership corner on the website and personal communications.
- Most section-spigs had persons identified for specific leadership roles e.g. policy chair, action board representative and fewer had a governing council coordinator identified in the formal role.

Policy Activities

- Half of the responding sections-SPIGS (n=15) had proposed a policy in the previous year
- About 73% (n=22) designate chair/co-chair to oversee policy review, 57% identify specific section members to review process and 47% engage with authors of the policy paper.
- Of the 16 who were engaged in the policy process, 7 found the process easy, 7 found it difficult and 2 found it very difficult.
- No question on advocacy was included the section-SPIG report.

Student Involvement

- Majority of the section-spigs (83%, n=25) worked with a student from the student assembly, and 68% (n=19) sponsored at least one student-focused activity at the Annual Meeting, while fewer (55%, n=16) included article written by and for students in the newsletter.

Fundraising and Finances

- Only 38% (n=11) section-spigs developed a written budget plan for allocating funds, while the majority (62%, n=18) did not have a written plan.
- Majority (60%, n=18) sponsored fundraisers, with one section-spig raising \$15,000 (wow!)
- Most common methods used for raising funds were solicitation to outside organizations and solicitation letter to section-spig members.
- Majority (80%, n=24) were aware of APHA restrictions relating to entities from whom funding should not be solicited.

Assistance from ISC

Assistance from ISC is requested on a diverse array of issues. These include:

- Best practice strategies/research on member engagement, recruitment, budget, communications (web platform for leadership calls, illustrating benefits/impact)

- Process advice such as for policy, opportunities to participate in science board, legal continuing education credits, open access to all apha annual meeting materials
- Fund raising (or advice?) for student and member participation at annual meeting
- Managing administrative paperwork from APHA staff
- Better communication on advocacy issues e.g, school-based issues
- Relationship building within sections-spigs e.g. ineffective committee chairs that will not leave, and outside sections-spigs e.g. with affiliates

Overall self-assessment

- Generally sections-spigs rated themselves highly on scientific sections/annual meeting program, and less so on member engagement, recruitment and leadership development.

Discussion

If the intent of the 2010 section report was to get more information on membership engagement, recruitment and leadership development, the ISC did get a lot of specific information. Section-SPIGS within APHA are using several strategies to engage members, and do not know what works to recruit new members. Leadership identification is not too difficult for most, while leadership development and communications are a challenge. The need for improved interaction with APHA staff was identified in most questions and it is unclear if this comment was made by the same respondent. Members are involved with proposing policy to some extent, though it is unclear how involved they are with advocacy. At least one section has had phenomenal success with fund-raising.

It is difficult to understand how successful section-SPIG has been in their endeavors as no specific targets were set, nor a baseline identified.

There are some limitations to the section-spig reports. The questions referred to sections, and in some instances this made SPIGs leaders feel excluded. Also no questions on advocacy were asked in the reports

Suggested next steps will depend upon answers to these questions:

- (1) What will it take for the ISC to reach consensus on priorities, and then identify a tangible aim or goal with targets, measures and best practice activities that will help achieve the goal. .
- (2) What level of commitment, training, and communications are needed and by whom?
- (3) Do we have a level of trust for a strong collaboration across sections-spigs within APHA?
- (4) What are some limitations of working with section-spigs within APHA, and how can these limitations be addressed?