



Nevada State Health Division

The Plan that Sat on a Shelf

Charlene Herst became manager of the Tobacco Prevention and Education Program within the [Nevada State Health Division](#) in February 2002. Her first challenge was to tighten and clarify the overall operation, and by the fall of that year she knew that the program needed a new strategic plan.

The five-year plan in front of her, originally drawn up in 1999 (and revised in 2001), was "horrible," to use Herst's characteristically candid language. "It sat on a shelf and nobody used it."

From her perspective, the plan was one major reason why the tobacco prevention and education efforts in Nevada were "loose" and not as comprehensive or effective as they might be.

In October 2002, Herst contacted Nevada's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) project officer in Atlanta looking for some help. She said she wanted to conduct a strategic planning workshop, and she was looking for a facilitator who would help her craft a more effective plan and who wouldn't cost a fortune.

Her CDC project officer contacted TTAC and directed Herst to follow-up, which she did. TTAC connected Herst with Nancy Salas, a consultant with experience in both strategic planning and tobacco control. CDC agreed to cover Salas' facilitator's fee and the Nevada Tobacco Prevention and Education Program covered her actual costs.

Salas worked closely with Herst to set an agenda for a two-day planning session. Herst had good instincts—she had already developed a list of participants that was broad and inclusive—but Salas brought valuable experience derived from helping other states with similar issues work through this same process.

When the strategic planning sessions were held on November 14 and 15, 2002, Salas helped the participants understand the difference between goals and objectives, tactics and strategy (terms which are often confused by strategic planners), and she helped them apply this understanding to the specific challenges in Nevada.

"She kept us on task, asked a lot of good questions, and helped us stay focused," Herst says.

"When the two days were over, we had a good consensus," Herst recalls, and from this foundation her office was able to build a plan that was then distributed to all the meeting participants for review and comment.

Salas remained involved, adding her own constructive comments to continue to shape the new strategic plan. In March 2003, as Herst's office completed a final draft of the new strategic plan for the state, indications that the process was successful were already coming in.

Representatives of health districts in Clark County and Washoe County (who had attended the planning sessions) sent Herst copies of strategic plans for their respective regions. "Their plans had drawn heavily from the Nevada statewide plan," said Herst, which confirmed her belief that her program was finally on the right track.

"TTAC had the expertise we needed," says Herst, "and CDC provided the funding. It's a good example of how agencies can work together."