

Goal:

To develop a strategic plan to provide ALL WYOMING CITIZENS with access to high quality, affordable health insurance coverage

Objectives:

- **Establish a Health Care Coverage Task Force.**
- **Develop reliable and accurate estimates of the uninsured at a county level.**
- **Develop a better understanding of the health insurance needs of small employers through an in-depth employer survey.**
- **Collect and analyze focus group and in-depth interview data.**
- **Design private and public Wyoming-specific health coverage options.**
- **Prepare a final report to the Secretary of Health and Human Services that describes the Wyoming plan to provide access to the uninsured and that includes recommendations for Federal actions to support State efforts.**

SPG Task Force Role:

- Establish guiding principals to be used in considering options
- Provide direction for the private and public options to be researched
- Evaluate research conducted by UW
- Hear expert testimony as needed
- Obtain community input on issues and options
- Achieve consensus on a strategic plan to cover the uninsured
- Make recommendations to the federal government to be included in the final HRSA report

A Strategic Plan will be submitted to the Governor by the Task Force

Wyoming Department of Health Role:

- Provide project oversight as the HRSA Grantee
- Appoint the Task Force
- Serve as the Task Force SPG Link & Resource
- Administers and Monitors the UW contract

A final report will be submitted to HRSA by the WDH

UW - Data Collection & Analysis

Utilize available baseline data and conduct WY statewide and county level studies to provide a clearer picture of the uninsured in Wyoming.

* Household Survey 9/02-12/02
* Employer Survey (supplement to DOE survey) 11/02-2/03
* Focus Groups: 10/02-
* Key Informant Interviews: Spring, 2003

UW - Strategic Planning

Conduct research to evaluate private and public models which using literature reviews and economic impact models to include financing alternatives.

- Issue Papers
- Economic Impact Studies

UW- Administrative Support

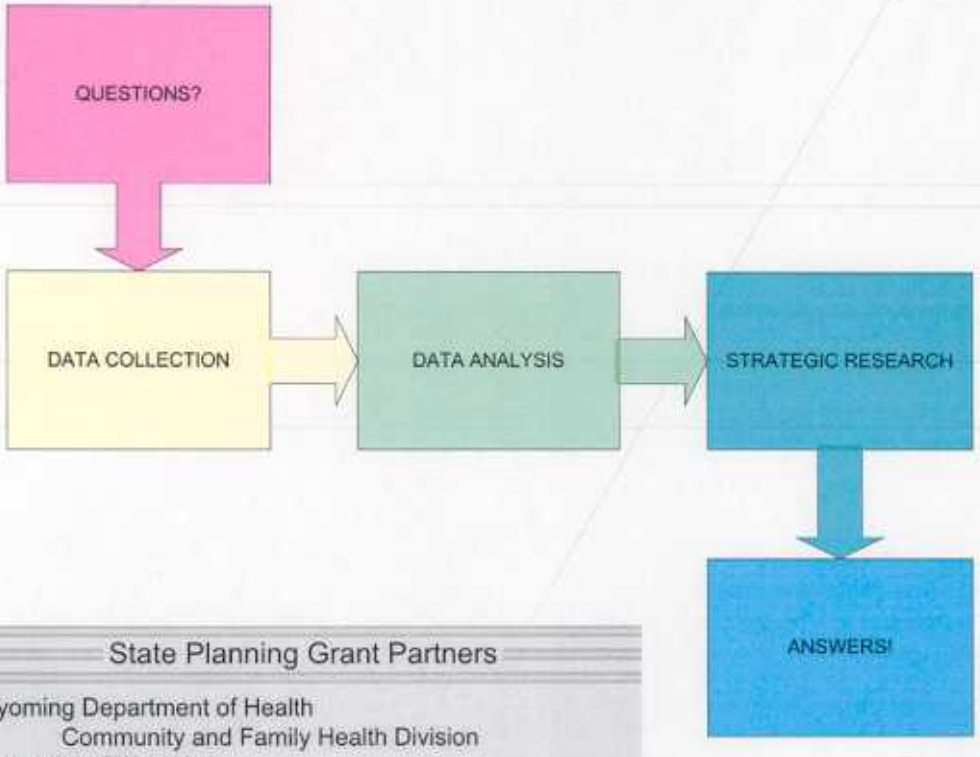
Provide computer and video conferencing equipment; websites: databases to store and distribute data; travel and meeting support.

- Public and private web sites
- Video Conferencing
- Data Base for research



UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING
Center for Rural Health Research and Education

Research for the Wyoming State Planning Grant project is being carried out through the University of Wyoming Center for Rural Health Research and Education (CRHRE, prounounced "share"). The CRHRE provides data collection, data analysis, and strategic research capabilities to support policy development and decision making, as well as tools and technology for data storage, telecommunications, and information management.



State Planning Grant Partners

Wyoming Department of Health
- Community and Family Health Division

University of Wyoming
- College of Health Sciences
- College of Nursing
- Survey Research Center

Wyoming Statistical Analysis Center

Human Capital Management Services, Inc.
- Dr. Harold Gardner



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Background Information

Wyoming was one of 10 states selected by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to receive a State Planning Grant (SPG) in 2002. Twenty states, including most of the Rocky Mountain States, were previous grantees. Information about the HRSA State Planning Grant Initiative, including a summary of the work done by the first twenty grantees, is available on the HRSA web site at www.hrsa.gov/osp/stateplanning. Preparation of the grant application was a collaborative effort involving many state agencies, private agencies, concerned citizens and other stakeholders. The total grant award was $1,023,473.

Project Goal

To develop a strategic plan to provide all Wyoming citizens with access to high quality, affordable health insurance coverage.

The SPG Task Force

A Task Force was appointed by the Department of Health to provide direction to the project.
Thomas F. Stroock, Chair, Former United States Ambassador to Guatemala, *Casper*
Thomas Spicer, M. D., Vice Chair, Physician, *Rock Springs*
Senator Cale Case, Wyoming State Senator, *Lander*
Senator Mike Massie, Wyoming State Senator, *Laramie*
Representative Jerry Iekel, *Sheridan*
Representative Jane Warren, *Laramie*
Ken Kamis, Former Director, Wyoming Department of Health, *Cheyenne*
George Bryce, Insurance Executive, *Casper*
Jeffrey Feike, President &CEO, Ivinson Memorial Hospital, *Laramie*
T. Chris Muirhead CPA, Board Member of Wyoming Medical Center, *Casper*
John Vandel, RPh, Health Care Provider, *Torrington*
Laurie Quade, Small business owner, *Cody*
Cathy Keene, Tribal Representative, *Fort Washakie*
Virginia Basse, NP, Health Care Provider, *Worland*

Ex-Officio Members

Ken Vines, Wyoming Insurance Commissioner, *Cheyenne*
Brent D. Sherard, M. D., State Health Officer, Wyoming Department of Health, *Cheyenne*
James Page, M.D., Associate Dean, UW College of Health Sciences, *Laramie*
Deborah K. Fleming, Ph.D., Director, Wyoming Department of Health, *Cheyenne*

The Task Force has met four times in different locations around that state to hear a wide range of presentations and research updates. The Task Force is charged with achieving consensus on a strategic plan to cover the uninsured and will also have the opportunity to make recommendations to the federal government of proposed changes in federal law that would benefit the state.

The Research Contract:

The Department of Health contracted with the University of Wyoming Center for Rural Health Research and Education (UW CRHRE) for: Data Collection and Analysis; Strategic Options Research; and Administrative and Technological Support. This partnership has been successful in strengthening the capabilities of the University to support health policy research for the Department of Health and other agencies and organizations.

The Research

Expected Results:

Wyoming-specific population information
Accurate county level information
Understanding of the attitudes and reasons behind lack of insurance
Understanding of the perceptions that affect choice about insurance

Data Collection and Analysis:
A Data Collection and Analysis (DCA) workgroup, composed of UW faculty, state agency staff and other interested stakeholders, has provided input and expertise on the tools and methodologies for the quantitative and qualitative studies.

Quantitative Studies: Wyoming specific household and group quarter surveys are complete. The overall response rate for the survey is 85.45%, which is exceptional.

Qualitative Studies: All focus groups and key informant interviews are complete.

Employer Survey – Department of Employment:
A change in the original research plan was made to enter into a partnership with the Department of Employment (DOE) in 2003 to expand the DOE Employer Benefits Survey to include additional questions related to health insurance coverage rather than conducting a separate survey. Analysis of these survey results is currently underway.

Strategic Options Research:
Concurrent with research into the characteristics of the uninsured, the Task Force has explored options to cover provide accessible and affordable health care coverage to Wyoming citizens. The Task Force has been assisted in this phase of the project by a Strategic Research workgroup composed of UW faculty, state agency staff, and other interested stakeholders.

An initial set of over thirty options was considered by the Task Force and narrowed down to eight options, which may be feasible in Wyoming. Research is continuing on these options.

In addition to these more traditional types of data collection and analysis, the UW CRHRE has contracted with Human Capital Management Services to provide additional analytic and strategic research capability. Data from the household survey will be incorporated into a large database of insurance and health care usage records to create a more complete picture of the risks and benefits associated with health insurance coverage. This research will be used to evaluate the risk associated with health insurance to various target groups.

Preliminary Research Findings

Household Surveys:

- 14.2% of individuals are not covered by some form of health insurance
  13.1% children
  14.5% adults - highest percentage is in the 19 to 24 year old group (31%)
- 19.4% of the uninsured report someone in the household is eligible for employer coverage but is not enrolled 61.4% say they cannot afford it
- While 50% of those individuals with household incomes of less than $5,000 annually are uninsured, 30% of those earning between $15,000 and $20,000 are uninsured, and 27% of those earning between $30,000 to $40,000 are also uninsured
- 7% of uninsured individuals have been uninsured for a year or more and 2% have never had insurance
- An analysis of comments received with the surveys will be included in the qualitative analysis. The main themes, which are emerging so far, appear to be related to cost, availability through employers, and the perception that government plans could be a solution.

Focus Groups:

- The uninsured seek health care only when they really need it and will stop taking medication if they cannot afford it
- Many people are worried about major expenses associated with health care
- Some felt ignored by medical providers and cheated by criteria for public assistance programs
- Most participants do not have insurance because their employer does not offer it or they are unemployed
- Costs of private insurance were seen as too high
- Participants felt very negative about the insurance industry and health care system
- Subsidies for premiums would be helpful, as would a state plan with a sliding fee scale

Options Categories under Consideration

Small Employer Purchasing Pools
Bare Bones Medicaid Expansion
Health Insurance Outreach and Education
Public Options for Direct Care
SCHIP Expansion
Employer Buy In to Existing State programs

Current Status

Extension:
Wyoming received an extension to allow the project to use unexpended SPG funds to complete the work outlined in the original twelve-month grant application. This extension will allow for completion of data analysis and options research necessary for the Task Force to make final recommendations. It is anticipated the final survey results will be available in September and that the Task Force will meet one or two more times to conclude their work.

Supplemental Funding:
A request for Supplemental Funding was submitted in July. Supplemental funds are awarded on a competitive basis to states previously awarded SPG funds. Awards will be announced in August. Most grantees have requesting these funds to be able to continue to participate in this initiative to build on previous work and to benefit from free technical support from national organizations. The University is committed to continuing the SPG partnership to continue to focus interest on the uninsured and to continue to build an infrastructure for data drive policy research. The activities proposed for supplemental funding can be modified as necessary at the direction of the Health Care Commission.

HRSA Interim Report:
An Interim report has been submitted to HRSA detailing the progress made during the first twelve months of the project. A final report will be submitted at the conclusion of the project.

Web Site

www.wyominguninsured.uwyo.edu

Upcoming SPG Events

October 3 – SPG Task Force Meeting- Casper Holiday Inn

For More Information About the SPG Project

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