



Community development team
uses innovative methods to train
STATE LICENSING BOARD MEMBERS

SITUATION

Licensing boards in Wyoming protect the public. They provide reasoned and thoughtful feedback to all applications and other actions brought before the board and act in the best interest of the public and of the profession they are serving. Even though each licensing board is unique, the role of each board member is essentially the same: do what the statutes have charged their board to do, including:

- Approve new licenses
- Decide on renewal of licenses
- Determine when any disciplinary action may be required against existing licensees

The primary responsibility of board members, as a whole and individually, is to ensure compliance with legal and ethical obligations of the board, including any related agency. Board members' legal obligations are determined by law, rules, regulations, by-laws, executive orders, written policies, and procedures.

The attorneys in the Office of the Attorney General (AG) serve licensing boards in an advisory capacity and as their prosecuting attorneys. Advisory attorneys advise the boards in deliberation and represent the board when required. The prosecuting attorney is the representative of the applicant review committee and determines whether there is sufficient evidentiary basis for denial in contested cases. The attorneys in the AG office have also regularly provided training to licensing board members around the state.

In the fall of 2011, Ryan Schelhaas, senior assistant attorney general from the Office of the Attorney General, contacted the southeast area extension community development educator interested in incorporating adult learning principles to better engage board members, strengthen learning, and encourage increased

attendance at the trainings. The area CDE educator worked with Schelhaas and other AG staff members to incorporate adult learning principles into their 2012 and 2013 State Licensing Board trainings in two primary ways: serving as a resource to the AG's office staff in planning the training, and helping them incorporate participant engagement activities into presentations.

State licensing board members and staff members from around Wyoming traveled to Cheyenne August 20, 2012, and June 25, 2013, to attend the revised board training. Fifty three attended the 2012 session, and 47 attended the 2013 session.

Attorneys from the AG's office provided an overview of board responsibilities, information on public meetings, public records, and rule making. In 2013, one session focused on public meetings and engaged participants in a lively session in which they had the opportunity to use a remote response system during a mock meeting to "chime in" when the mock meeting participants erred. Schelhaas and the area CDE educator led an interactive session on governmental ethics. In both years, participants were led through a role playing exercise to better understand the investigation process. Tara Kuipers, northwest area educator with the community development team, concluded the day with a workshop on being an effective board member.

IMPACTS

According to Schelhaas, "The board members enjoyed the training and continually commented that they appreciated the new interactive format and use of real-life scenarios as it facilitated the sharing of ideas, opinions, thoughts, and questions." He further noted that, "The training allowed for many great

discussions among attendees and presenters, which required everyone to really think about the information being presented and apply it to real-life scenarios."

In 2012, 94 percent of evaluation respondents either agreed or strongly agreed they have a better understanding of their role as a board member after attending this training. In 2013, 100 percent either agreed or strongly agreed they have a better understanding of their role as a board member. When asked how they would rate the overall training, 100 percent of the evaluation respondents selected either 4 or 5 (indicating good or excellent) in 2013, and 94 percent selected either 4 or 5 in 2012.

When asked about the most valuable aspect of the training, one participant cited "*The overall view of how the board works and the view from the attorneys involved.*" Another listed, "*Good discussion about public meetings and public records act. Really like the clicker voting and discussion. I like the mix of AG plus extension service speakers.*" And a third respondent said, "*I appreciated hearing from all the attorneys and their opinions and interpretations. It gave me a lot to think about in my role as an ED. I also enjoyed the investigation scenario experience.*"

When the participants were asked what they would do differently as a result of the training, one participant said they would "*listen better and work harder to get the info out there.*" Another said they would "*be [a] more thoughtful board member*" and a third said they would "*be very careful about maintaining appropriate behavior as [a] representative of the state.*"



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