PEER —TO— PEER LEARNING

Summary of Innovations

Tailoring Data Visualizations for Impact: Lessons Learned
April 2025

The Cancer Peer-to-Peer (P2P) Learning Program is a recipient-informed learning and engagement opportunity that supports recipients of the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection (NBCCEDP) Program and the Colorectal Cancer Control Program (CRCCP) to engage with their peers on important topics.

The April 2025 P2P call series was titled "Tailoring Data Visualizations for Impact: Lessons Learned." This call series followed a webinar featuring Ann K. Emery from Depict Data Studio titled, "Visualizing Change: Harnessing Tech to Demonstrate Impact." Ms. Emery joined each of the calls and offered hands-on advice to awardees regarding their data visualizations.

The learning objectives for this call series were:

- Discover innovative ways to apply data storytelling techniques from the April 14 webinar.
- Gain firsthand insights from fellow awardees in a facilitated discussion as they reveal their strategies for tailoring data visualizations - exploring successes, overcoming challenges, and sharing key lessons.
- Enhance your program's storytelling with actionable techniques to make your data more engaging, persuasive, and meaningful.

Summary of Innovations

<u>Who Can Help Bring Data Visualizations to Life</u>

- Cancer program staff, especially for last minute requests
- Health department epidemiologists and data managers provide data, and the communication team creates visuals; program evaluators assist as well
- Comprehensive cancer coalitions have very talented members and can help on materials for the legislature or the public; some CCC programs have provided funds for education campaigns
- Cancer centers and educational institutions, and legislative affairs staff are partners that can often assist

- Ask a variety of partners for feedback on visuals so you can make improvements and learn what users like

Leveraging Existing Content, Templates

- Use previous and approved formats and then improve or adapt them for current needs
- Canva can be a user-friendly tool; however, their graphs often do not meet accessibility guidelines/dataviz best practices
- Find an application where you can record your voice and then put into ChatGPT, so it has your tone, voice, and style
- Use Office 365 tools, including SmartArt in PowerPoint; keep multiple presentations related to a specific topic (e.g., program outcomes) in one PowerPoint file to save time when creating a new slide deck and hide/unhide slides as needed for a specific presentation
- Utilize QR codes to link to other materials for providers (e.g., referral forms, database)

Addressing Challenges

- Lack of communication expertise and the time it takes to get something created and/or approved is a common challenge; solutions include repurposing existing content and tapping into communication expertise outside of the program, including communication staff in partner organizations

Practical Tips

- When sharing data with clinics and comparing them with others:
    - Gray everything out with just the one clinic highlighted, or
    - Show an average across all clinics and how one clinic compares to the average
    - For low-performing clinics, show them their data instead of comparing them to others
- Mapping tips:
    - Instead of expensive map-making software, create maps in Excel, which has a map feature. Most collaborators have/use Excel, so they can assist or edit the visual
    - Use zip code level median income as a base layer and density scatter plots for enrollment to identify areas throughout the state that are being missed with screening coverage
- Excel tips:
    - ChatGPT can be used for things like getting lists, e.g., list of counties in a state – for data “scraping” (extracting information from a source, like a website) and easy copy/paste
    - Use data sort to remove blanks
    - To quickly access your brand (organizational/program) colors, put your colors in one time in Page Layout “Colors”
- Visuals/Icon tips:
    - Weepeople font can provide small people icons of real people; change the colors and boldness through font and bold features; in Weepeople font uppercase letters are men and lowercase are women
    - Make people representative – not just skin tones; think body shapes, clothing styles, and hair styles
    - Use real illustrations that look hand drawn

    - Use photos of people instead of people icons
- Chart and graph tips:
    - Don't use vertical text (it is outdated and takes 1.5x longer to read); also, do not use diagonal text; use horizontal text, which means you may have to make the graph larger or change columns into bars
    - Most people understand fractions more than percentages 33.33% vs 1/3 of people; make sure the graph matches what you want your data to say
    - Start graphs at 0
    - Use commas in big numbers so they are easier to quickly read, and hide the decimals
    - Use black font – not gray
    - Title should not be centered
    - Use area charts for more to see (chart filled in – more ink)
- Tailoring content for different audiences:
    - Use infographics for advisory committee meetings. Especially good for partners from different backgrounds. Better than graphs with a lot of different data. It can focus just on what they need to hear.
    - In planning calls, ask stakeholders to send you things that they really like so you can see what appeals to them and how they consume material.
    - Use only two slices per pie chart. Pie charts are at the bottom of visuals to make them easy to read.
    - Keep reading level at 6-8th grade level for public-facing documents; use the free MS Word readability function or readable.io (free) to assess
- Sharing qualitative data:
    - Avoid long text paragraphs; put important information in a picture/annotated chart
    - Use a timeline of how things unfolded instead a page of paragraphs or bullet points; people look at visuals longer
    - Use AI to help identify themes in qualitative data
- Table tips:
    - Do not use shading
    - Align text to the left
    - Only use bright font color in the areas where you want to focus (patterns vs. headers)
    - Use checks instead of Xs or use boxes, circles
    - In Webdings font: lower case g (filled in square), c (empty square), n (circle)
    - Do not use "stoplight" colors, which are not color-blind friendly; use neutral colors in light, medium, dark shades

Key Resources Provided by Depict Data Studio

- P2P April Webinar Recording, *Visualizing Change: Harnessing Tech to Demonstrate Impact*
    - Passcode Required: P2PLearning
    - Not for distribution outside of P2P Learning awardees
- Dataviz 101
- Tiny Differences that Transform Dataviz
- Blog post on tailoring graphs to different audiences
- Chart Chooser. Use code NACDD for a complimentary license. There are 200 licenses.

- Pie chart template. Use code NACDD for a complimentary license. There are 200 licenses.
- YouTube video: why I'm not in love with Canva for dataviz
- Small multiple maps instead of one large one. This blog post has pretend numbers, but it was based on a CDC project.
- Before and After
- SmartArt example for inspiration
- Examples of interactive dashboards
- How to make maps in an Excel file
- Excel troubleshooting
- Example using concatenation

Since 1988, National Association of Chronic Disease Directors and its more than 7,000 Members have worked to strengthen state-based leadership and expertise for chronic disease prevention and control in all states, territories, and nationally. Learn more at chronicdisease.org.

The "Enhancing Cancer Program Grantee Capacity through Peer-to-Peer Learning" project is supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling $525,000 with 100 percent funded by CDC/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by CDC/HHS, or the U.S. Government.