

# Section 1: Cultural Awareness



**Lesson Learned:**  
**Programs should be culturally relevant.**

## Significance

A program that is designed for the continental United States does not necessarily mean it will be successful in the Pacific.

The contrast between the United States and the Pacific is very dramatic and yet many fail to recognize it. One common mistake is to aggregate the jurisdictions into one homogenous group when in reality, each of the jurisdictions in the Pacific has their own unique language, learning styles, traditional cultural practices, social/political structures, and protocols. In order for the program to be meaningful and relevant to the Pacific communities, it is important to acknowledge and address these cultural, social, economic and political issues.

## PDTRC Example

- PDTRC developed a *Diabetes Today* Curriculum to fit the Pacific, responsive to the needs of the Pacific. The following materials were developed: (1) Pacific Diabetes Today Guidebook – Trainers and Participants Version; (2) Pacific Diabetes Today Site Coordinator’s Manual; (3) Pacific Diabetes Today Community Assessment Guidebook
- PDTRC simplified the language, enlarged the print, and added graphics, photos, and case studies to reflect Pacific Island cultures, situations, and peoples. For example, the Guidebook includes a “*Pacific Islander, Who We Are*” section and all the photos and graphics in the Guidebook are from the Pacific.
- The training methods were adapted from a train-the-trainer model to a train-the-community model to reflect the cultural learning styles of the Pacific which include face-to-face contact, hands-on experiences, and a “talk-story” format.



## Lesson Learned:

**The training should be flexible to accommodate differences in the stages of community readiness.**

### Significance

Communities in the Pacific are at different readiness levels for program planning and implementation. Some community groups were well established and familiar with planning and implementing programs while other community groups were recently formed and needed extra training and assistance. Feedback from the Pacific emphasized the need for a curriculum that was flexible. We utilized a modular format that allows for communities to select modules that were pertinent to their needs and flexible enough for the modules to be used in any sequence.

### PDTRC Example

- The Kosrae Diabetes Today, a newly formed community group, used all four modules in sequence during the original training. A year later they requested additional training on evaluation (Module 3).
- The Moloka'i Diabetes Task Force, an established community group, already had completed a community assessment and requested only training on program implementation (Module 4) and evaluation (Module 3).



*“The best thing about the curriculum is that it is very flexible. After our group, the Kosrae Diabetes Today finished our first activity, we requested and received training on evaluation only.”*

Maheta Kilafwasru  
President  
Kosrae Diabetes Today

*Picture: Kosrae Diabetes Today Volleyball Team, Kosrae, FSM (2001)*



**Lesson Learned:**  
**Face-to-face meetings are important to building relationships.**

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## Significance

Developing and cultivating relationships is very important to the success of training communities and developing programs in the Pacific. Pacific Islanders come from oral traditions and place importance on face-to-face meetings that allow people to gauge intent, sincerity, and trustworthiness as information is exchanged. In developing successful relationships with Pacific Islanders, meeting face-to-face is the preferred mode to facilitate communication.

## PDTRC Example

- PDTRC convened an Advisory Council with representatives from throughout the Pacific and Hawai'i at the onset of this project. The council met at least once a year, providing the opportunity to develop and solidify relationships which helped guide the project.
- Council and community members requested on-site planning and training in lieu of regional trainings. On site contact strengthened personal relationships and kept training relevant to the needs of the specific communities. It proved to be the basis of trust and a closer working relationship.



*"The actual face-to-face meeting during the Training Preparation Phase allowed us to visualize the dynamics of the core group, share past examples from other training sites, socialize and get to know each other better."*

Gil Suguitan  
Guam  
Pacific Diabetes Today Trainer

