

The John A. Hartford Foundation Communications Institute

For 14 years, SCP designed and conducted an annual communications conference for grantees of The John A. Hartford Foundation. These included junior faculty members in medicine, nursing and social work, as well as those actively involved in practice change projects at their home institutions. The most recent Communications Institute gathered 32 grantees, and in a two-and-a-half-day format provided them with the knowledge and skills needed to develop strong strategic communications plans that will help them and their project teams bring about improvements in health care and quality of life for older adults.

A Plan in Hand

All aspects of the Institute were geared toward enabling participants to leave with a draft communications strategy and action steps for implementation. Through high energy sessions with expert faculty, participants:

- Understood the purpose of a strategic communications plan;
- Learned the building blocks of a strong communications plan;
- Drafted a strategic communications plan specific to their own change project;
- Identified action steps to be taken when they returned home from the Institute;
- Got inspired to use their new skills and networks to accelerate their practice change and other work to improve the health of older adults.

Program Overview

The Communications Institute sessions all had an emphasis on experiential learning and interaction, working through SCP's resource, [Are We There Yet?: A Hands-On, Minds-on Guide to Developing a Strategic Communications Plan](#). These sessions covered a variety of topics including defining clear communications goals objectives, analyzing audiences & environment, creating compelling messages, assessing assets, choosing vehicles & tactics, and evaluating the work.

In addition, there was a facilitated "Consultancy," session that enabled participants to bring a current communications challenge to their colleagues and assembled experts and get focused feedback.

Finally, the meeting provided time for unstructured networking and discussion, to provide the foundation for field-building professional relationships and collaborations in the months and years ahead.

Participants Tell it Best

The Communications Institute consistently receives high marks from participants. Here's what some 2016 participants had to say:

"I've learned new skills that will advance my work while also making some valuable contacts. Thank you for this terrific learning opportunity!"

"There was an excellent balance of teaching and practice time. Coupled with the opportunity to obtain feedback on our practice, this was a fabulous learning opportunity."

"I'm very impressed with the results from the conference. I came out feeling like I had accomplished something. I felt better equipped to go back to my workplace and be empowered to make a change in the way we had been doing things."

"I cannot begin to tell you how much I appreciate your expertise and talent, and all that you brought to the meeting. You have greatly enhanced our chance for success with our project. Thank you!"