

HIV Research Catalyst Forum

TREATMENT • PREVENTION • ADVOCACY

Final Report on the 2010 HIV Research Catalyst Forum

The first HIV Research Catalyst Forum, a conference organized by and designed for community research advocates, was held in Baltimore, Maryland in April of 2010. Modeled after the North American AIDS Treatment Action Forum (NATAF), last met in 2005, the Catalyst Forum aimed to revitalize the community response to the domestic and global AIDS epidemic by amplifying the voices of community advocates in HIV treatment and prevention research.

More than 250 attendees from around the country participated in this year's Forum, including 170 community advocates selected through a competitive scholarship process, and 80 leading advocates in their respective fields invited as presenters, representing a 1:3 faculty to attendee ratio.

After the Forum, e-mail invitations were sent to all scholarship recipients to participate in an online evaluation. 145 out of 170 scholarship recipients completed the evaluation form, an 85% response rate. The evaluation form was designed to assess the Forum's success in meeting its three main goals:

1. For new advocates to gain knowledge, build capacity, and sharpen skills
2. For experienced advocates to exchange ideas, craft strategies, and tackle new challenges
3. For advocacy networks to recruit new participants and collaborators to strengthen planned or ongoing research advocacy campaigns

Following are excerpts from attendees' comments and the overall outcomes of the evaluations.

The program book (including attendee demographics), symposium web casts, and presentation slide decks are available on the conference website at:

<http://hivresearchcatalystforum.org/webcast/presentations>

Excerpts from Attendee Evaluation Comments

I was really impressed with the selection of attendees. It was a diverse mix of advocates and providers who have been in the field a long time and those who are brand new. I loved the feel of the conference.

Highly recommended for anyone looking into getting their feet wet into Advocacy, I was glad to see many young faces interested in helping take up the slack many left behind after no longer being with us.

It was inspiring, challenging, motivating, and even pleasantly baffling at times. As a newcomer I learned an immense amount of information to take back to the community I serve. I will without a doubt utilize the skills I have acquired. The HIV Research Catalyst Forum definitely set a standard for what is to be expected.

As a sixty-seven year old long-term survivor, I was impressed to hear so many mature leaders in one place. It was also inspiring to see the large number of articulate, energetic young folks who are stepping up. I now have a resource network and platform from which I can work more assertively with a much sounder knowledge base.

As someone that has never participated in any aspects of research it was very informative, and I came away with a new passion for assisting in developing an advocacy board with the clients that I work with to educate them on how their participation in research is needed and how it helps the community at large.

The meeting was a success, the blend of young activists and veterans was just what we needed at this point in HIV activism. I would think that many of the older and more experienced HIV activists were looking for a venue such as this catalyst forum, where they might work formally to help prepare the next generation of HIV activists. A lot of what I saw at this forum were activists not only benefiting from content of what was shared but also the process on how things were shared.

This was one of the best conferences I've attended. The level of sharing from conference participants was both inspiring and energizing. I'm continually amazed by how consumers can participate and educate themselves and become such integral parts of HIV advocacy.

As a young advocate I felt really encouraged and supported. Everyone was also really friendly and approachable.

I loved it. It was one of those galvanizing experiences in which a lot assorted bits of knowledge that I had, and a lot of other knowledge I needed, was sorted out and organized in my brain. Many synapses fired.

My feelings of inadequacy lessened with each person sharing how their knowledge base increased with hands on experience. My passion for HIV involvement has been renewed.

This was the highlight of my volunteerism in HIV/AIDS. I've been rejuvenated to continue to fight this battle. It represents all the people that I have lost to the virus and how it is not in vein, because there are many more people out here fighting.

I have only worked in HIV/AIDS specifically for about 15 months and I feel new to a lot of it. I really appreciated the opportunity to speak with people who have been addressing it both professionally and personally for decades. Invaluable. People were interesting, involved, pleasant, and had the experience and direction I was looking for.

I am so motivated by this forum. I appreciated that I was able to learn from pros and fellowship with "newbies" like myself yet I didn't feel out of place. I could have stayed a few more days getting information. Thank you for this life changing opportunity!

I have been positive for 25+ years. This forum has inspired me to become more involved in advocacy work. My spirit has been renewed. I feel empowered, inspired, and a part of a larger community with like-minded people who share a common purpose! THANK YOU! It was great! And a great motivation for someone like me that has been burnt out.

Overall, I felt the Catalyst Forum has absolutely changed my life. I learned so much and this forum gave me more fire to continue this fight against HIV/AIDS. Even though I am young, I felt encouraged to stand on the shoulders of those that came before me to continue the fight. To learn more about different advocacy network that I have never heard about and to get their information and to join in the networks opened a lot of opportunity for me, to advocate with others in a different setting other than my own.

The Catalyst Forum was an amazing experience. For many of us who are interested in research advocacy, it can feel like we are alone in our communities. The chance to network nationally and learn from national leaders was wonderful.

It was a great experience and much different from any of the former conferences I've attended in my 10 years of working in HIV. It was very thought provoking, insightful, instead than some of the "Give me freebies" conferences I've been to in the past... Excellent.

I really enjoyed the Catalyst Forum and learned way more in this setting than in many other conferences.

I liked it that most of the sessions were structured to speak to people like me. I did not have to struggle to understand the way I often have to in scientific conferences.

The Forum was awesome. You succeeded in bringing together diverse members of the community -- seasoned vets like me and new bloods with great potential. Overall you really aimed correctly for the information presented and the best thing was how you tied it all together with definite concrete steps for people to take back to their communities to begin or advance advocacy.

I must say that this is the first time in a long time that I attended a conference that gave me NEW information. I gained information last week that will enable me to do phenomenal work in the community we serve.

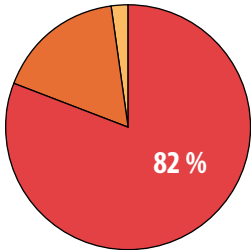
Wow. This is by far the most engaging and enjoyable conference I've attended. Everything was so well organized, the facilitators were knowledgeable and amazing, the cohesiveness of the group was spectacular. I was sad to leave.

I think this was one of the best conferences that I ever attended. The logistic, organization, staff support and workshops was in general very successful. Giving us the chance of not only to get information, but to become part of the people who are willing to work and join forces in this area.

I thought this conference was AWESOME. So much information I'm still digesting all that I learned. I need to take a week & review what all was covered so that I can remember all that the excellent presenters covered.

How Successfully Did The Session Meet Its Goals?

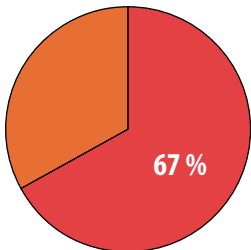
Very Successful Somewhat Successful Not Successful



OPENING PLENARY

Goals:

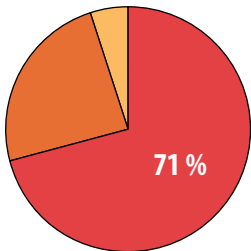
1. Provide a historical background on this meeting
2. Illustrate the impact of research advocacy
3. Inspire participation in the movement



SYMPOSIUMS

Goals:

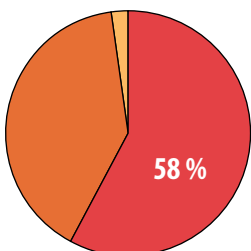
1. Provide an overview on state of research
2. Present key concepts and challenges
3. Identify advocacy opportunities



RESEARCH ADVOCACY AFFINITY GROUPS

Goals:

1. Encourage critical analysis and problem solving
2. Set research priorities and advocacy strategies
3. Engage hands-on work in advocacy issues



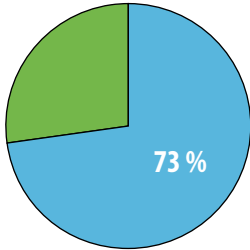
MOVEMENT CATALYST: COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

Goals:

1. Become part of the research advocacy community
2. Identify knowledge and skill sets needs
3. Develop ongoing support mechanisms

Did The Session Meet Its Outcome Objective?

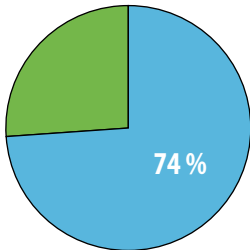
Yes No



SKILLS BUILDING WORKSHOPS

Objective:

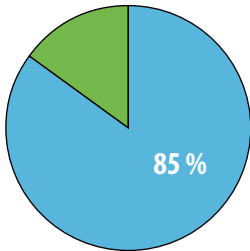
1. Learn new research advocacy skills



NATIONAL AIDS STRATEGY TOWN HALL ON RESEARCH

Objectives:

1. Improve understanding of the NAS
2. Provide good example of research advocacy



ADVOCACY NETWORK RECRUITMENT

Objective:

1. Join an advocacy network according to interest