

Community-Based Participatory Research Evaluation Planning: Oregon's Specific Population Tobacco Prevention and Education Networks

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Oregon's Tobacco Prevention and Education Program (TPEP) is a comprehensive, statewide public health effort aimed at reducing the toll of tobacco-related death and disease. TPEP activities and TPEP-funded services are designed to benefit all Oregonians through education and outreach, policy development, and changes in community norms. All TPEP-funded programs work to achieve the following long-term goals, as outlined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): 1) creating smoke-free and tobacco-free environments through public policy, including voluntary policy; 2) countering pro-tobacco influences such as advertising and promotion of tobacco to adults and youth; and 3) promoting quitting among adults and youth.

To address disparities in tobacco use, TPEP grants funds to five community-based organizations (CBOs) to support Tobacco Prevention and Education Networks (TPENs) and coalitions. TPENs focus on population groups within Oregon that use tobacco at higher rates than the general population or suffer disproportionately from tobacco-related diseases. TPENs develop and implement culturally reflective best practice strategies to reduce tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke in an effort to eliminate tobacco-related disparities. Population groups identified as disproportionately impacted by tobacco in Oregon include African Americans, Asians and Pacific Islanders, Hispanics/Latinos, urban American Indians, and Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/ Transgender/Questioning (LGBTQ) Oregonians.



NPC Research conducted a Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) evaluation planning project with Oregon's specific population TPENs. This CBPR project assisted TPENs in developing community-driven evaluation plans and tools, while building capacity for program evaluation. The first step of the project was to review evidence-based practices as defined by the CDC. In our review, we found that little research documents either how best practices should be adapted to meet the needs of these cultural groups, or the extent to which these adaptations are successful. Moreover, we found little research that examines the effectiveness of the best practices, as originally developed, for these specific populations. Findings to date leave many questions about what the most effective strategies are for populations experiencing tobacco disparities, and how culturally specific elements may enhance program effectiveness.

The second step was to apply the basic principles of CBPR to develop a general framework for the evaluation. Our framework included the following series of overlapping and iterative activities: 1) information gathering, 2) information synthesis, 3) information sharing & feedback, 4) developing goals, 5) completing an evaluation plan, and 6) reviewing progress.

Third, we worked with the five TPENs to adapt the general framework to the unique needs of each community. During this step we had the parallel goals of 1) developing an evaluation plan for selected activity for each TPEN; and 2) building the capacity within each TPEN to carry out their evaluation plan and to independently do evaluation planning in the future. The TPEN's selected activities (or projects) were all vehicles for achieving policy objectives (e.g., educating business owners to encourage the adoption of voluntary smoke-free policies).

The fourth and final step was to create culturally appropriate products (i.e., materials and tools) for carrying out each TPEN's evaluation plan. Each Program Coordinator was given schematics of their evaluation plan, a logic model, evaluation questions and data sources, and a set of customized tools designed to gather information as delineated in their evaluation plan.

The TPENs will be expected to use their evaluation plans and tools to report on program performance and to document movement toward achieving objectives outlined in their grant agreements with the TPEP. It is hoped that this project will assist the TPENs in articulating their outcomes as well as their findings, successes and challenges in implementing Best Practices to community leaders, funders, and policymakers, and ultimately help build an evidence base for how Best Practices are implemented in diverse communities.

Lessons Learned

Evaluation planning within a CBPR framework was particularly appropriate for the specific population TPENs because it honors the values, traditions and priorities of historically underserved groups. Further, some of the TPEN population

groups have a history of being extensively "researched," sometimes in ways detrimental to the well-being of individuals in these groups. Thus these groups often are (rightly) distrustful of evaluation efforts. CBPR is a technique that asks community members to engage in developing culturally appropriate techniques to collect information to answer the questions that these stakeholders want to know. However, CBPR is a time-intensive process that can be challenging for both practitioners and evaluators. Below we share some of the lessons learned throughout the CBPR process.

1. **Ensure TPEN Readiness for Evaluation Planning.** Evaluation planning was most efficient when there was a tangible project that was being implemented by the TPEN. It was more difficult to identify project activities and intended outcomes if the project was not well developed. The TPEN Program Coordinators were all in very different places in terms of their knowledge of evaluation, their perceptions of the utility of evaluation, and their readiness to take on an evaluation planning project. For some TPENs it was necessary to spend a great deal of time talking about the usefulness of the evaluation planning process. For other TPENs, the evaluation planning process was mysterious until the end of the project when things seemed to coalesce. Given that Program Coordinator participation and buy-in is essential for the evaluation planning process, future efforts should allot enough start-up time to address these issues before the actual planning begins.
2. **Ensure Community Readiness for Evaluation.** In addition to TPENs being ready to engage in the evaluation planning process, community stake-

holders must understand the usefulness of evaluation. In some cases we found that community stakeholders were unsure of the value of evaluation given the TPEN's goals. This is especially problematic when using a CBPR framework, which is based on the presumption that an active group of stakeholders will take the lead in designing, and sometimes even implementing and overseeing, evaluation activities. Evaluation planning teams may need to include extra time to address this issue with community stakeholders before evaluation planning can be expected to occur. Community readiness for evaluation planning should also be discussed with the Program Coordinators when recruiting community stakeholders to gauge the amount of preparation that will be necessary before evaluation planning can begin.

- 3. Recruit Appropriate Community Stakeholders.** It is important for community stakeholders to be an invested group who will either provide tangible support for evaluation activities, or represent individuals who would be taking part in the evaluation itself. A challenge for many TPEN Program Coordinators was recruiting and retaining community stakeholders for evaluation planning. This difficulty may be due to the fact that some of the TPENs do not yet have consistent coalition members focused a particular policy objective. Another reason for this difficulty is the way that the different TPENs view "coalition"—some Program Coordinators believed in gathering a group of people together for a single task, others were housed in organizations that provided them with a consistent group of partners, and still others felt it was more efficient to insert themselves in existing

networks rather than creating a new one. The extent to which TPENs have an invested group of community partners should be explored more thoroughly at the start of the process in order to determine appropriate recruitment strategies and expectations for participation in evaluation planning.

- 4. Engage a Versatile Evaluation Team.** In the end, there were differences between the TPENs in terms of the type and scope of core projects selected for evaluation planning, and the progress that had been made on each project. In some cases, projects were underway and very concrete, and in other cases, projects were nascent ideas. The NPC Research team had to apply a wide range of skills in order to adapt to each TPEN's current state of affairs (everything from project conceptualization to writing formulas for database reporting). Thus, the versatility of the evaluation team was quite important to address the myriad different evaluation activities developed during the planning process.
- 5. Be Flexible during the Evaluation Planning Process.** Each TPEN's evaluation planning process deviated from the blueprint that we articulated at the start of the project. The evaluation planning team should be flexible and receptive to feedback from the Program Coordinators and/or communities. Interestingly, large shifts in the direction of the evaluation planning process typically occurred in the context of one-on-one meetings with the Program Coordinators. In these meetings the Program Coordinators acted as "interpreters," bringing feedback from the community to the NPC Research team. It is important for the evaluation team to be receptive to

such feedback, and to spend time talking one-on-one with the Program Coordinators to make sure that the process aligns with community needs.

6. **Provide Clear Next Steps.** Evaluation planning is just the first step in developing an ongoing evaluation system for each TPEN. A common question that we encountered during this process was “What is going to happen with these evaluation plans?” The purpose of this project was to facilitate the development of community-based evaluation plans and evaluation tools and to build capacity for program evaluation. The ending point of this CBPR evaluation planning project should be viewed as a starting point for integrating evaluation practices into each TPEN’s daily work. Now that the TPENs have a better understanding of the importance of evaluation and how to plan for it in the context of a specific project, they will need continued technical assistance and support in order to actually start performing evaluation activities.

General Recommendations for TPENs

Although considerable progress was made in planning evaluation activities for the TPENs, each TPEN requires a number of supports to encourage their ongoing evaluation efforts. The following is a brief list generalized across all five TPENs. Specific recommendations for each TPEN can be found in their respective sections in the full report. There are several entities that could potentially provide the support described here including Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS), existing coalition partners, college or universities (i.e., providing internship opportunities for students), and volunteers (e.g., AmeriCorps).

1. **Provide resources for expanding current projects.** Several TPENs planned to evaluate projects or aspects of their projects that have not yet been realized. It is important that the TPENs are provided with the resources to launch or expand upon their current projects.
2. **Provide support and motivation for using and reviewing the tools.** Although tools were developed in the context of specific projects for specific communities, we recommend that certain tools (e.g., Community Power Map, contact and event tracking sheets) be used for all future TPEN projects. We also encourage the various TPENs to share each other’s tools (e.g., the LGBTQ TPEN can share media campaign tools should the AA TPEN decide to take on such a project). As the tools are being used, we suggest that the TPENs engage in ongoing dialogue with each other and Oregon DHS about whether 1) the tools are generating enough (or too much) information, 2) the right questions are being asked/answered, and 3) the tools are appropriate for their respective communities. We encourage the TPENs to modify or discontinue use of the tools as necessary.
3. **Provide ongoing technical assistance in data collection.** Most of the TPEN Program Coordinators, while enthusiastic about the tools that were developed, have little training in evaluation and/or data collection, and often have service delivery and coalition development (appropriately) as their primary focus. It will be important as they begin to use the tools for technical assistance to be provided to ensure that data collection is being conducted, and conducted correctly.

4. **Provide resources for database development, management, and data use and reporting.** Collecting information is not helpful unless that information can be compiled, managed, interpreted, and used. All TPENs need resources to handle the demands of ongoing data collection and analysis. Moreover, the TPENs may need assistance in interpreting data once analyzed, and understanding how to use the information to target their educational efforts or to present to larger audiences.

In sum, a CBPR evaluation planning process is an appropriate method for achieving a range of evaluation objectives. In addition to the development of evaluation plans and tools, this CBPR evaluation accomplished several evaluation objectives:

1. **Provided Program Advocacy.** A basic assumption of the CBPR framework is that communities are the experts. The evaluation planning process encouraged the TPEN communities to take control of what to evaluate and how to evaluate it. It also legitimized different ways of knowing that were meaningful to the communities, which lead to increased interest in evaluation.
2. **Built Evaluation Capacity.** The evaluation planning process was designed to equip the TPENs with the basic knowledge and skills required to plan and conduct their own evaluation. The process served as a blueprint that can be adapted to future evaluation efforts.
3. **Encouraged Program Documentation.** In addition to understanding the importance of documenting their work, the TPEN Project Coordinators now have tools to do so that can be modified and shared.
4. **Identified Key Community-Specific Processes.** By examining a specific activity undertaken by each TPEN, it was possible to learn more about how to attain policy objectives within a specific community. For example, we learned that coalition building is an essential first step in mobilizing a community around tobacco-specific policy. Communities often lack a shared understanding of the problem and/or do not prioritize tobacco-related issues. Each TPEN now understands the importance of coalition building and has tools to evaluate their efforts. Thus, examining what works within each community will improve our understanding of what it takes to achieve policy objectives.
5. **Encouraged the Development of a Community Knowledge Base.** Over time, program documentation and evaluation efforts will lead to the development of a knowledge base about how to do tobacco prevention and education work in various communities. The TPENs now understand how their work can contribute to building a foundation of knowledge around community-specific practices for tobacco prevention and education.