TCEC: Culturally Competent Evaluation Strategies and Goals

Background

In spite of California’s success in reducing smoking rates, the smoking prevalence in the following demographic groups remains particularly high: African Americans, American Indians, Asian/Pacific Islanders, Hispanic/Latinos, LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender), and Low Socioeconomic Status. The California Tobacco Control Program calls these populations “Priority Populations.” Its explanation for these disparities reflects the challenge: “The reasons for tobacco related disparities are numerous, complex, and diverse: Lack of access to culturally competent medical care, limited community resources, competing priorities, limited tobacco control infrastructure, cultural traditions, and targeting by the tobacco industry all contribute to greater tobacco use in these communities” (Communities of Excellence, p.2).

Because of these disparities, one of the CDPH’s Tobacco Control Program’s objectives is to “eliminate disparities and achieve parity in all aspects of tobacco control” (Master plan, p. 13). The Master plan specifies that “smoking must be reduced in the population groups in which smoking prevalence is the highest” (Master plan, p. 13) and that also exhibit disproportionately high smoking related disease rates. For this reason, CDPH requires that grantees write their intervention plans with these populations in mind, for instance through outreach and intervention activities with these populations. In the current funding cycle, all state funded projects are required to include cultural competency objectives; in addition competitive grants are made available to organizations that work exclusively with priority populations.

Need

TCEC recognized its responsibilities within the effort of eliminating disparities and achieving parity because the intervention activities of Tobacco Control projects in California are closely linked with evaluation activities. For example: In order to implement a multiunit housing TC objective, projects will routinely conduct interviews and surveys with multiunit housing residents. Therefore, interview and survey instruments must be designed in a way that they will accurately assess the opinions and needs of all residents. Since many standardized instruments are tailored only towards a generic audience, data collection often becomes exclusive: entry into specific cultural groups is denied; questions are not understood or misunderstood. As a result, the tobacco control intervention may not reach audiences that are most strongly affected by tobacco use. Other examples are the need to evaluate cultural competency objectives, for instance the outreach and inclusiveness of tobacco control coalitions; and the implementation of a culturally specific curriculum in a TC training.
Definitions

In order to advance culturally competent tobacco control, TCEC is committed to work towards a practice of culturally competent evaluation. But what is culturally competent evaluation? The definition encompasses three levels: culture, cultural competency, and culturally competent evaluation.

Culture

A set of socially transmitted and learned behavior patterns, beliefs, institutions and all other products of human work and thought that characterize the functioning of a particular population, profession, organization or community (The Colorado Trust). In California cultural difference is particularly pronounced because of the comparatively high number of recent immigrants with diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Cultural Competency

The most commonly referred to definition of cultural competency mentioned in evaluation literature comes form from Cross et al., who define it as a “set of congruent behaviors, attitudes and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enables that system, agency or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations” (in: Voices from the Field). In California Tobacco Control this means that organizations such as TCP, TCEC, LLAs and Competitive Grantees need to acquire qualities and practices that allow them to work with multiple cultures.

Culturally Competent Evaluation

Endo et al. base their notion of culturally competent evaluation on Cross’ definition and on interviews with health and evaluation leaders and propose three areas of evaluation practice that make for culturally competent evaluation: “(1) the characteristics of culturally competent evaluators (e.g., attitudes, skills and knowledge), (2) a culturally competent approach that includes and respects community voices in the evaluation, and (3) specific strategies in culturally competent evaluation design and implementation.”

Goals

Taking these reflections into consideration, TCEC developed the following three overarching goals related to cultural competency:

1. To become a culturally competent organization (e.g., to reflect cultural competency in daily work; to act as a “broker” for groups’ sharing of experience).

2. To develop expertise in general cultural competency that we can pass on to our clients (knowledge and skills that apply to the work with any group, such as how to assess the culture of a group or community; how to involve members of the community in planning and carrying out program activities and evaluation; how to address culture related challenges).

3. To develop some expertise in cultural competency that is specific to priority groups that we can transfer into usable tools for our clients (tips and tools for working with each of the groups on the priority population list, including kinds of interactions and questions that are and are not appropriate for specific groups).
**Work completed in 2007/2008**

- Conducted a needs assessment of competitive grantees who expressed the need for culturally competent evaluation instruments
- Conducted a state-wide workshop on culturally competent evaluation facilitated by an expert in culturally competent evaluation
- Culturally competent evaluation tools for priority populations in collaboration with TC organizations on the TCEC website
- Began a case study with an organization serving Asian communities in Los Angeles
- Teleconference on culturally competent evaluation in June 08.

**Work to be completed in 2008/2009 and beyond**

- Ongoing Training of Evaluation Associates in Culturally Competent Evaluation
- Collaboration with other researchers, research institutions, evaluators and evaluation institutions to further the field of Culturally Competent Evaluation
- Conducting trainings in cultural competency for grantees
- Conduct case studies to learn culturally competent methods
- Collaborate with consultants to develop culturally competent evaluation methods and tools
- Present results at conferences

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*For more Tips & Tools and other resources, go to our website: [http://tobaccoeval.ucdavis.edu](http://tobaccoeval.ucdavis.edu)*