Culturally Appropriate Data Collection Methods & Instruments: More than just Translation
Priority Populations & Coalitions Conference, Oct.3-5, Marina Del Rey

Considerations for Creating Culturally-Competent Data Collection Instruments

General Principles
1. Build trust and rapport with elders, community leaders, and participants by showing respect for their culture, explaining why you are gathering information and how it might benefit the community.
2. Build rapport with data sources, the people providing the information. This can take different forms, depending on the special population with which you are working.
3. Communicate to participants how the data will be used, and disclose the levels of confidentiality associated with the information they give.
4. Select locations for data collection that are accessible and comfortable for participants.
5. Understand that subgroups of a specific population can differ in norms, values, education level, and their relationship to tobacco. Expertise with one subgroup doesn’t always translate to another.

Data Collection Method
1. Sensitive topics may be addressed through careful decisions about method, rapport-building, question order, confidentiality, and other means.
2. Illiteracy can be a barrier in using written instruments without pictures or facilitation. Left-to-right reading is not the custom for all cultures and language groups.
3. Gender can influence the dynamics of in-person interviews, especially with certain topics.
4. There can be a power imbalance in collecting data from groups that traditionally lack power, such as youth, women, minorities, and the poor.

Data Collection Instrument Development
1. Avoid jargon (Environmental Tobacco Smoke) and acronyms (ETS).
2. Use simple words that will have the same meaning for all respondents (tobacco smoke).
3. Understand that respondents will interpret questions and terms based on their own experience and context.
4. Be certain that questions are understandable and relevant to all subgroups. Consider collecting demographic data to differentiate among subgroups in data analysis.
5. Be aware of the fact that members of some cultures are uncomfortable stating strong or critical opinions; “yea-saying,” answering a question in a way they think would please the interviewer or organization, can be a polite tendency of members of some cultures.
6. Standardized questions with multiple choice answers are easy for some but not others.
7. Consider the mode of administration: Will they read it or will it be read to them?
8. Pre-test the use of pictures or illustrations as well as the wording of items.
9. Translate questions into the language of your audience, testing to make sure the translated version conveys the same meaning, including across subgroups.

For more resources, visit our website: http://programeval.ucdavis.edu