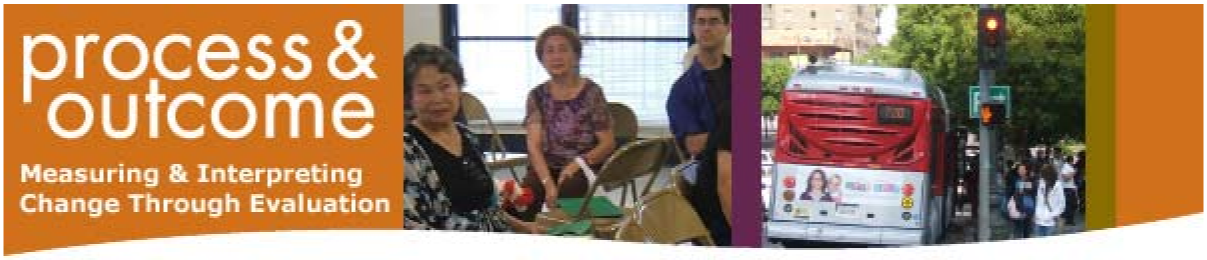
CENTER FOR PROGRAM EVALUATION AND RESEARCH

TOBACCO CONTROL EVALUATION CENTER



Fall 2010

In This Issue

Subscribe

Sign up here to receive the TCEC newsletter direct to your inbox every quarter!

Join Our Mailing List!

Welcome

The hectic days of summer are over. As autumn leaves begin to fall and the hours of light grow shorter, it can be a good time for tobacco control projects to work out the specific details of their evaluation plans --- to decide exactly who or what to include in their samples, develop data collection instruments, and start to collect baseline data.

At the same time, they also begin the long-term processes of recruiting and revitalizing their coalitions and volunteers, establishing relationships with new communities, and making contact with potential advocates and opponents.

Along the way, evaluators and project staff may take many forks in the road of decisionmaking and unless these choices are documented at each step, those who follow may get lost.

So, that's what this issue is all about --- initiating the early phases of your policy work and mapping the path you take.

Hope you find it helpful,

Robin Kipke
Editor

TALES FROM THE FIELD

Making the Most of Your Volunteers

Volunteers, what a resource! By bringing their enthusiasm and energy into our projects, they can lighten our load, expand our reach into the community, and extend our grant dollars at the same time.

On the other hand, sometimes they sign up for activities but don't show, fail to follow directions, or sop up scarce staff time and resources.

To find out how to avoid these pitfalls, we talked to several project directors about how to recruit, retain and utilize volunteers, especially youth.

Youth volunteers bring energy to projects

Finding Volunteers

Coalitions and like-minded organizations are great places to recruit adults, but getting youth volunteers
is more complicated. Because of the permissions involved with signing up minors, Jay McCubbrey, Project Director of Tobacco-Free Humboldt found that "the best way to recruit teens is by recruiting adults that are in contact with those teens -- teachers, club leaders or parents." He continued, "We put out fliers for our program at other county offices and that's where we got some of our best recruits."

Dawn Dunn, Project Director of the Tobacco Prevention Settlement Program in Santa Barbara, taps existing groups for volunteers. "The youth [who get involved] are already in some sort of club, so it's their club leader who says, 'Can you work this weekend? Can you help with this project?' We don't organize the youth, we let their adult [or youth] leader [do it]."

Retaining Volunteers

Once you've recruited a pool of volunteers it's important to keep them motivated in working on program efforts. They need to feel like being involved is enjoyable but also is accomplishing something worthwhile.

<u>Make it fun</u>. "You have to make it a good time," Jay advises. "That goes with everything, I think, but especially working with the kids. Make it fun and show them how it can serve their interests, as a good opportunity."

Educating the public with a smile and jar of cigarette butts

Marjorie Lee, the director of the Tobacco Education Program in Trinity County, tries to deliver important content in an engaging way. "We'll do some type of game where they can win something and then at the same time we'll talk to them about [the task]."

Same thing with training them as data collectors. "If we're doing a training on how to conduct surveys, we usually do some type of fun warm-up game, something that they're going to enjoy. Then we do the training part of it."

<u>Reward them with things they need and want</u>. All three directors mentioned the importance of feeding volunteers and also taking the time to celebrate the completion of data collection or community education activities.

While food is always appreciated, other incentives can do the trick too. Dawn suggests asking the organizations you recruit from about the best incentives. "Find out what's in it for them and try to provide that. Maybe your agency has free meeting rooms and you can let them use your space."

Jay emphasizes the valuable experience that volunteers can gain. "We tell them, 'If you have your community service papers for the high school, we'll sign those so you can get that done. And it's also something that looks great on a resumé!" However, he believes that the youth often value the experience as much or more than the reward. "I think they liked [the $25 gift certificate] but I think they would have done it without [that]. They wanted to try something out and they enjoyed it."

"After they have done so much for us, we try to make the incentive [something that] pertains to them," Marjorie explains. "In our community, we only have a movie theater in the one town. So here, a lot of kids really like to get the movie passes because they can walk to the movies. In the other community, we pick something in their [area], maybe a gift card to the local variety store. So we really try to personalize it."

Maximizing the Utility of Volunteers
Some practical suggestions: Make sure you'll have enough volunteers to accomplish the task! While 20 may sign up, plan on only about half actually showing up. Then you won't get caught short.

Seek out volunteers' ideas and give them opportunities to take on responsible roles (once you've laid out what your project needs from each activity).

Marjorie finds that flexibility enhances the kids' enjoyment of their task. "We're not slave drivers, so we let them have some say in how they're going to do it. Instead of just standing at our booth with a survey, they said, 'Hey, could we walk around and get these filled out?' We said, 'Sure, go ahead and do it that way.'"

Friendly volunteers staff information table at Cancer Fair

That being said, don't hesitate to be directive when needed. Provide thorough training with enough practice and oversight so that you ensure that everyone can demonstrate what they need to do. Otherwise, the quality of your data collection or community presentations can suffer, making everyone's effort a waste of time.

Dawn has some specific advice for making interactions smoother and more productive:

- Get everyone's contact information.
- Remember that cell phones are a must for staying in touch, especially out in the field.
- Assign one adult leader and, if you can, a youth leader.
- If you only have a little money, incentivize the kid who is willing to call all the other kids to make sure they're going to be there. "It's certainly cheaper than county staff!"

Volunteers can be a valuable resource for programs, so manage them well and keep them motivated!

Photos by: Grace Brosnahan, Dawn Dunn and Whitney Hawkins

back to top

EVALUATION NEWS YOU CAN USE

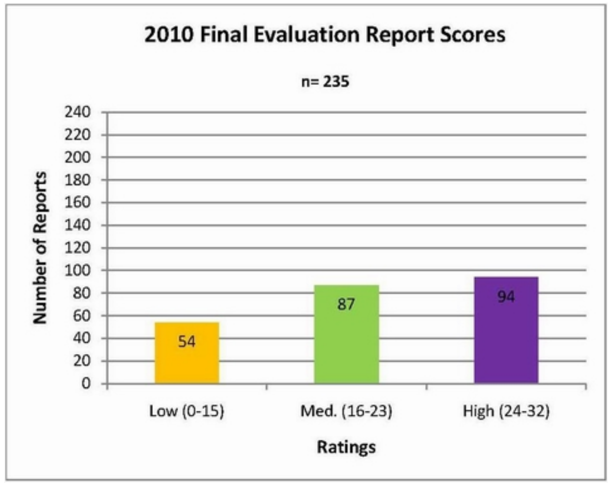
A Final Look at Evaluation Report Scores

We have finished scoring all of the 2010 Final Evaluation Reports that we received by the end of September, and overall the results are excellent!

Just a few comments on the outcome:

The Good... The best news for us is how many of you "got it" -- understood and followed the FER format laid out in *Tell Your Story.* Almost 100 reports received a "high" rating with scores between

24 and 32 points!



Another finding that makes us happy is that so many of you recognized the value of folding your process evaluation results back into the progress of the project as you went -- and told us that in your FERs.

Some delightful stories emerged from this batch of FERs, where you told us candidly -- and often with humor -- what went well, what didn't work out as expected, what work-around solutions you tried, and the human reactions to your work on the part of project staff and members of the public: tenants, local officials, merchants and restaurateurs, volunteers, coalition members, and many others.

Many of you included photographs of the settings, signage, and individuals involved in the projects, which is a wonderful way to give a story vivid reality for the reader.

the Bad... Sadly, a number of FERs scoring in the 'high' range met the technical requirements without ever telling us enough about the project for its true feeling and substance to emerge. Too often, there was just the barest description of the intervention, for example, and insufficient attention given to the settings and the nature of the samples for the reader to visualize the actual experience of attaining -- or not attaining -- the objective.

In scoring the FERs, we took points off most frequently for the following:

- Title Page: omitting contact information and not identifying the affiliation of the report authors.
- Abstract: leaving out the project context and -- especially -- the recommendations called for.
- Project Description: not providing a sufficient social/demographic/attitudinal backdrop for the project and giving too brief an overview of the intervention for us to be able to understand the nature of the project.
- Evaluation Methods: not explaining why the study design (experimental, non- or quasi-) was selected, not saying how the samples were selected, not giving the source of data collection instruments, and not telling us who did the data collection.
- Evaluation Results: leaving out negative findings.
- Conclusions and Recommendations: not describing strengths and weaknesses of the intervention and not providing explicit recommendations (as opposed to "lessons learned").

and the Ugly. There were some FERs that made little effort to distinguish from the range of events anticipated in the project plan (e.g., "5-7 letters to the editor will be written and sent to two local papers") and the living details of the completed intervention itself ("6 letters to the editor were written by coalition members and published in the *Daily News* during the spring, summer, and fall of 2009"). Another tip-off that we were looking at a plan and not the actual intervention was the tense of the verbs: "will be written" versus "were written."

It is perfectly fine to write something once -- for example, the background or conclusions -- and copy it into the abstract, but do edit the material so that it fits appropriately into its new section. In some cases, the imported material stopped mid-sentence or contained elements that clearly had no place in their new location. The worst cases of this miscalculation involved copying whole passages from previous reports without so much as updating the years during which the work was done -- fortunately, we didn't see that often.

So while we are gratified that the regional trainings and related webinar on writing FERS seemed to have a positive impact on the quality of the reports we received, over the next few years before the 2013 reports will be due TCEC will be looking for ways to better convey what's expected and how to go about writing effective final evaluation reports.

back to top

EVALUATION TOOLBOX

The Importance of Documenting Project Decisions Along the Way

Project continuity is vital to successful outcomes. Ideally, the same program staff and evaluator will guide a project from Scope of Work to Final Evaluation Report, altering details as necessary and keeping a record as they go. But if key players depart, can a project stay on course?

During the 2007-2010 funding period, a number of projects lost vital project staff as county offices eliminated positions, froze hiring, and shuffled remaining workers to different departments.

No, I think it was over here...

Particularly when the time rolled around to write Final Evaluation Reports, new project directors sometimes found themselves without sufficient information to describe the project properly.

Yvonne Rodriguez, who runs the Sacramento County Tobacco Education Program, was in this spot. "When we were actually in the process of doing the report, it was quite painful because at least two of the three of us had no history of tobacco," she explained.

Between past progress reports and the summaries their former evaluator had prepared, they were able to pull their FER report together, "But there were still some holes; I felt like we were dealing with Swiss cheese," Yvonne said. What was missing was a record of why certain choices were made: "Why we chose that city over another one; why we went to a certain council member over another one to help carry this through."

Document why certain choices were made

Kimberly Bankston-Lee, Project Director of Sacramento Taking Action against Nicotine Dependence (STAND), and her staff faithfully enter project details into the database their evaluation firm has prepared, logging meetings, events, training and technical assistance, advertising, etc., as they take place. But there is no mechanism for recording the reasoning behind pivotal decisions.

"As far as if I were to leave and somebody else had to pick it up? No, that's a huge gap," she said.

Michael Romero presently directs the Placer County Tobacco Prevention Program, among other county programs that include Public Health Emergency Preparedness. Staffing configurations have changed three times during the recent funding cycle, with his tobacco responsibilities competing for time with the H1N1 pandemic.

Walk this way

He noted, "We went through terrible struggles just figuring out what's been done, and then you add evaluation to that, and it just makes it all the more complicated."

There are at least three good reasons why programs should document their decisions as they go along:

1. Staff/evaluator departures. Unless someone (or several people) have kept close track of the design from the original concept to its current form, new and remaining staff and evaluators could be left wandering around clueless about how and why project study designs changed and what to do next.

Change happens

2. Normal project evolution. Good projects are dynamic, able to respond to new information and influences by changing direction in small and large ways. At the time, it is hard to imagine not being able to remember the chain of events, but when it comes time to write up each project's final evaluation report, busy people can find their memories a bit hazy. "Why did we make this decision again? How did we end up doing that intervention, and what worked best? Who did we include and exclude from the survey sample?"

3. Preserve project history. As circumstances change and new opportunities become available, reliable archives can be mined over and over again for information about what things worked and what didn't. Good records can serve as a portfolio of your own best practices -- and a way to avoid making the same mistakes ever again.

Okay, fine, but how should this be done, by whom, and when? Who has the time for more documentation?

Right now, Yvonne is making notes as she goes but she envisions a computer-based protocol that all staff members will discipline themselves to use on a regular basis. Kimberly, who for years has been keeping her own record of things that don't necessarily fit into the database in her trusty steno pad, can see a more formal effort involving prepared sheets which can be used by those who prefer to make notes on paper or logged electronically in an Access database.

Michael just can't see doing more documentation -- "We do it enough!" He prefers oral to written reporting among his team members as a means of "recording" project changes for future reference, but creating this shared understanding of events requires discipline.

Using facilitated discussion techniques, which include repeating and summarizing each other's comments, Michael and his team meet every two to three weeks for this purpose. His philosophy: "You have to commit to a communication system that is effective but not in the way."

Tracking project decisions has undeniable long-range benefits. It can be a good investment of staff time and

Pieces of Information to Document

Intervention:

- How you approached populations of interest
- Key contacts in the community
- Who was supportive/opposed and why
- Effective/less effective arguments/strategies
- Methods used to recruit, involve & maintain volunteers

Evaluation:

- Rationale for sampling decisions: who included/excluded, size
- How data collectors were trained
- Findings of data collection instrument pilot test
- Any problems that arose during data collection
- Promising strategies for data collection: location, timing, populations of interest, getting people to agree to participate
- How data helped inform the program

energy if the work can be streamlined, shared among staff members as a routine chore, and complements a program's operating style and resources.

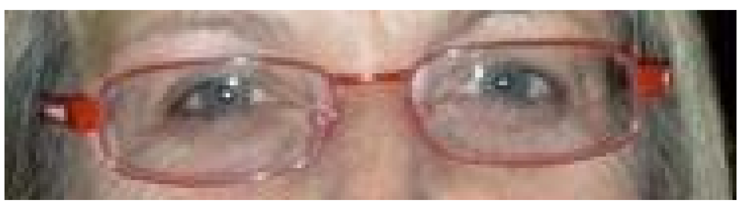
back to top

How can I be sure my data collection instruments will collect the information my project needs?

What's in a question? Well, as it turns out, quite a lot! When it comes to developing questions for your data collection instruments, there can be more to it than just brainstorming or pulling out old data collection instruments from your files or those of other projects.

First, do a little end-use strategizing, or thinking about how the data you plan to collect will be used by your project. Start by asking: who is the data meant to inform or persuade? Then identify what specific pieces of information you need in order to inform or persuade your target audience. TCEC has developed a checklist of questions that can help you work through the process of designing an instrument that will actually collect the data you need.

Once you've identified the chunks of data you're seeking, from there you can develop questions to capture the info. At that point, it may make sense to see if the instruments your project used in the past will still meet the need. Or you may want to see how other projects have framed the issue by looking at examples of their surveys, observation forms or key informant interview guides. To get your hands on a selection of data collection instruments on any objective, contact TCEC. Evaluation associates there can search their repository of instruments compiled from projects throughout the state.



TCEC's got a second set of eyes to look at your draft

After you've developed a draft of your own data collection instrument, it can be a good idea to have an evaluation associate look it over and provide advice on how it might be improved. Whether you are well versed in evaluation or new to it, it's useful to have a second set of eyes review what you've come up with in order to catch what might seem clear to you but ambiguous to other populations.

The next step in the development process is to pilot test the data collection instrument on a few individuals in your population of interest (people like those you plan to target in data collection but who are not in your sample). Try out the survey or question guide and explore:

- Whether the questions flow off the tongue easily
- If they are understood by participants in the same manner as intended
- Whether everyone in the population of interest understands them in the same way
- Where further clarification is needed in order for people to understand what is being asked
- If you are getting answers you did not expect (this might indicate that the question is being understood differently than intended)

Once the pilot test is complete, the next step would be to revise the instrument one last time and then train data collectors carefully on how to implement it. After that, you're on your way to getting the data your project needs!

Photo by Julie Elmen

back to top

WHAT'S NEW AT TCEC

Upcoming Events & Releases

TCEC's Evaluation Newsletter Wins Award!

Process & Outcome, the Tobacco Control Evaluation Center's electronic newsletter, recently won a award from the National Public Health Information Coalition's (NPHIC) 2010 competition. Of submiss all over the country, 24 states and 10 local-level health departments were awarded for excellence in p communication. The awards were announced at NPHIC's annual conference. To check out other win can go to the NPHIC website.

Tune in to Upcoming Evaluation Webinar

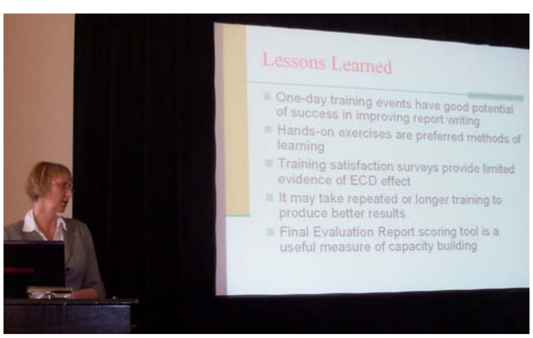
Our next webinar will provide an overview and short tutorial on SurveyMonkey, a program to create yo great tool that many local projects have already begun using, and we're hoping more of you will tap in evaluations. Our webinar will show you how easy it is to get started, and then we'll go over some of S responses and analyzing results. Don't miss it! The webinar is scheduled for Thursday, December 2

1. call 1.866.740.1260 and enter access code 2974659, AND
2. log in at www.readytalk.com and enter the access code 2974659

Presenting at American Evaluation Association Con

What difference does it all make? That's what we wanted to know.

TCEC looked at whether its training efforts made a difference in your Final Evaluation Report scores. and looking at participants in our regional training and webinar on writing final evaluation reports, we that took part in either or both capacity-building interventions did better than those projects which did



Our research was written up in a paper which we were Evaluation Association conference. In this way, we we control programs as well as evaluation capacity buildin

As we continue to work with the data, we hope to subm journals in the next few months. In the meantime you c

New Evaluation Resour

In coming months, look for the release of new products

- A 10-minute video about how to conduct observations in outdoor areas

- An instructional video about using SurveyMonkey to create surveys and analyze data
- Additional sample data collection instruments (with training specifications) accessible from our website
- A brand new offering in our *Culture in Evaluation* series, a guide for working with youth populations

back to top

CENTER FOR PROGRAM EVALUATION AND RESEARCH

TOBACCO CONTROL EVALUATION CENTER

We are the statewide technical assistance center on evaluation for all TCP-funded projects in California

Project directors, their staff, evaluators and subcontractors can call or email our evaluation associates for individualized assistance with questions about their tobacco control-related work with regard to:

- Developing evaluation plans
- Creating or adapting data collection instruments
- Analyzing data and interpreting results
- Writing up your final evaluation report

Access our collection of useful evaluation resources via the web where you can:

- Download our Tip Sheets for "how-to" information on evaluating tobacco control interventions
- Watch short training presentations on data collection methods
- Find our *Culture in Evaluation* guides for suggestions on working with priority populations
- Listen to archived recordings of past TCEC webinars

WE'RE HERE TO HELP!

Tobacco Control Evaluation Center (TCEC)
Dept. of Public Health Sciences, UC Davis
1616 Da Vinci Court, Davis, CA 95618
530.752.9951 main line, 530.752.3118 fax
tobaccoeval@ucdavis.edu
http://tobaccoeval.ucdavis.edu

back to top

Forward email

Email Marketing by

SafeUnsubscribe®
This email was sent to ddmitrevsky@ucdavis.edu by tobaccoeval@ucdavis.edu.
Update Profile/Email Address | Instant removal with SafeUnsubscribe™ | Privacy Policy.

Constant Contact® TRY IT FREE

University of California, Davis | One Shields Ave. | Davis | CA | 95616