

Lessons from the Field:

HOW TO HAVE A SUCCESSFUL RELATIONSHIP
WITH YOUR EVALUATOR¹



Evaluation Requirement

Local Lead Agencies (LLAs) and Competitive Grantees have always been required to evaluate their program activities in accordance with the California Tobacco Control Program (CTCP) guidelines, but the CTCP requirements have evolved over the years (Tang et al., 2002). In 2004, CTCP established the California Tobacco Control Evaluation Center (TCEC), based at the University of California, Davis, to provide evaluation-related technical assistance to Local Lead Agencies. TCEC is charged with providing consultations, conducting workshops and trainings, developing evaluation tools, reviewing evaluation plans, and providing other forms of assistance to support projects' evaluation efforts. However, TCEC's technical assistance activities do not alter the grantees' responsibility to use evaluation in their own programs. Each grantee must designate at least 10% of its overall budget for evaluation of which a minimum of 208 hours per year must be used to contract with external evaluation professionals. The remainder of the evaluation budget can be spent to support its own agency staff with time and materials to implement a portion of the evaluation activities. Beginning in 2018, CTCP will enforce the requirement for LLAs to have an Internal Evaluation Project Manager (EPM) to oversee evaluation activities and ensure that evaluation activities were used to support the project's intervention activities. Competitive grantees are not required to have an Internal Evaluation Project Manager (EPM) as the roles and responsibilities of the EPM are performed by the Project Director.

Intent of this Paper

The intent of this paper is to share information we have learned from current LLAs, Competitive Grantees and Statewide Technical Assistance Providers about their evaluation arrangements, and satisfaction with their selected approach. Additionally, we have included a section on "How to Have a Successful Relationship with Your Evaluator." TCEC appreciates the participation of tobacco-funded grantees in the collection of this data.

Methodology

Information for this paper was drawn from three sources: 1) a 2005 survey of LLAs; 2) 2017/2018 Regional Focus Groups in California (7); and 3) a 2017/2018 online survey of LLAs, Competitive Grantees and Statewide Technical Assistance Providers. All three methods were used to determine the evaluation approach used for their tobacco control projects and the level of satisfaction with their selected approach. In 2005, 59 (97%) LLAs were reached and included in this study. In 2017 and 2018, a total of 81 (78%) LLAs, Competitive Grantees and Statewide Technical Assistance Providers participated in regional focus groups and/or an online survey.

Evaluation Roles

There are multiple people involved in various steps throughout the evaluation process. Each of these roles provides a unique perspective of the evaluation activities, which when combined provides a deeper understanding of how to use evaluation in tobacco control strategies.

Internal Evaluation Project Manager (EPM)

The EPM is someone within the agency who meets the requirements of the [Local Program Evaluator \(LPE\)](#)². Only LLAs are required to have an EPM. The EPM provides a minimum of 10% FTE (208 hours) per fiscal year on oversight of the evaluation plan and ensures that evaluation is

¹ This paper was based on a study reported at the National Conference on Tobacco or Health in May 2005. For more detailed information on the research questions addressed by the study, results for each questions, and methods implemented, please refer to our paper titled "Benefits of Internal vs. External Evaluation for County-based Tobacco Control" (Huddleston et al., 2005) available through PARTNERS or our website (<http://tobaccoeval.ucdavis.edu>). This updated paper is based on the most recent data collected in 2017 and 2018.

² Requirements of the Local Program Evaluator (LPE) are outlined in the LPE Directory.

used to inform intervention activities. This position is responsible for coordinating with the EE and ensuring that evaluation activities are proceeding according to the evaluation plan timeline, as well as an Internal Evaluator and other project staff working on evaluation activities, as appropriate. Local Lead Agencies (LLAs) are required to have an EPM.

External Evaluator (EE)

An EE is someone outside of the agency who meets the requirements of the [LPE](#). An EE provides an outside, unbiased, and objective point-of-view; therefore, the EE must be completely separate from the health department or agency that performs tobacco control interventions. An EE is responsible for designing the evaluation plan and providing consultation on the entire scope of work, developing data collection instruments, and preparing evaluation reports.

Internal Evaluator (IE)

The IE is someone within the agency who meets the requirements of the [LPE](#). This role is typically filled by epidemiologists, health educators, or other agency staff that perform evaluation activities. The IE may take on some of the evaluation tasks in the workplan. This position is not a requirement for any project. However, some grantees with available qualified staff may choose to involve them in various elements of the workplan, such as training data collectors or collecting primary or secondary data.

Other Project Staff

Health educators are often involved in outreach, trainings, and materials development that are inherently linked to and informed by evaluation results, as well as in collecting data, sharing results, and meeting with policy makers. Administrative specialists help with scheduling, correspondence, and other aspects of planning and performing evaluation tasks, as well.

Advisory Group, e.g., coalition or other community members

An advisory group with people from target populations and partner organizations can help throughout various steps of the evaluation process so that the terminology, examples, visuals, and resources are appropriate for and tailored to the population of interest. An advisory group can help identify the most appropriate way to collect data within a particular population, help develop the evaluation plan, provide input into the design of data collection instruments and training materials, take part in data collection, engage in participatory data analysis, and ensure that results are shared with the community from whom data are collected. Advisory groups are an effective and widely-used method to promote diversity inclusion and culturally competent evaluation.

Beginning July 1, 2018, LLAs were required to have an Internal Evaluation Project Manager (EPM) and an External Evaluator (EE), in addition to a Project Director (PD) and any Other Project Staff (OPS). In anticipation of this requirement, many LLAs began to expand their evaluation teams during the FY 2017/2018 to meet this deadline (Figure 1).

Types of Evaluation Arrangements

As indicated in Figure 1, by Spring 2018, 27 of 60 LLAs (45%) had identified a member of the evaluation team for the EPM role. (Note that CGs and Statewides are not required to have this configuration although the Project Directors typically fill the EPM role and External Evaluators, rather than Internal Evaluators, are utilized. For that reason, data on the configuration of evaluation teams in 2005 for CGs and Statewides was not available.)

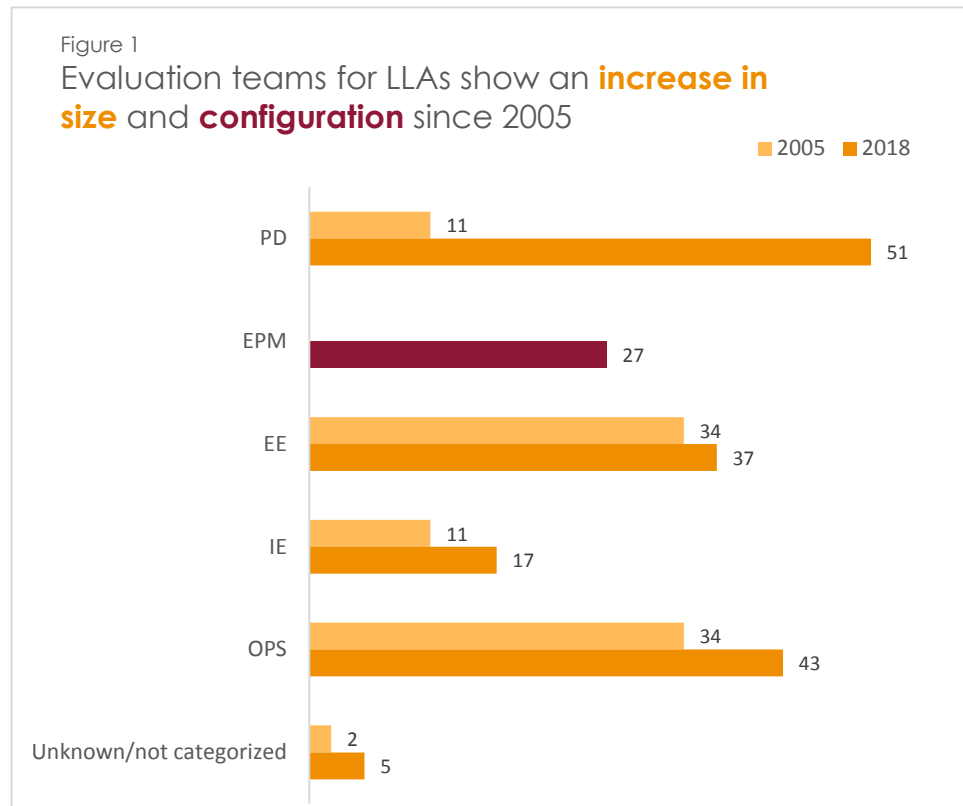
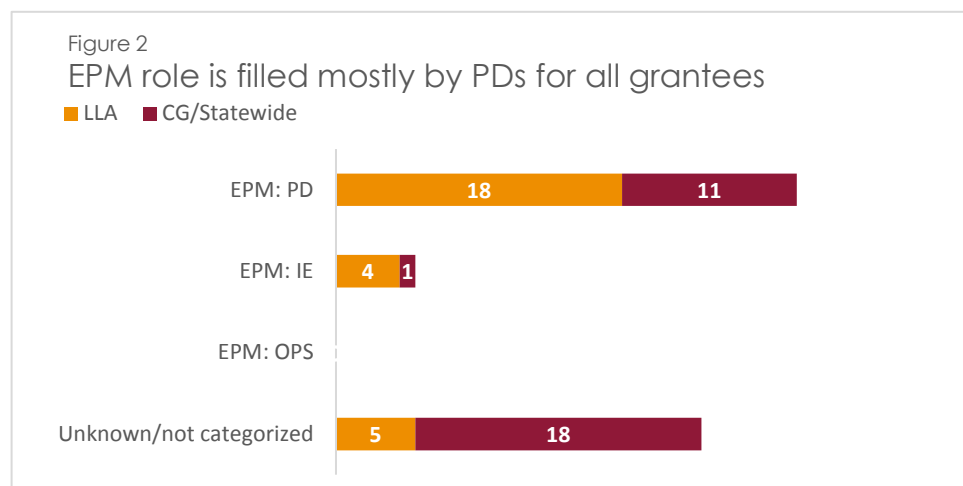
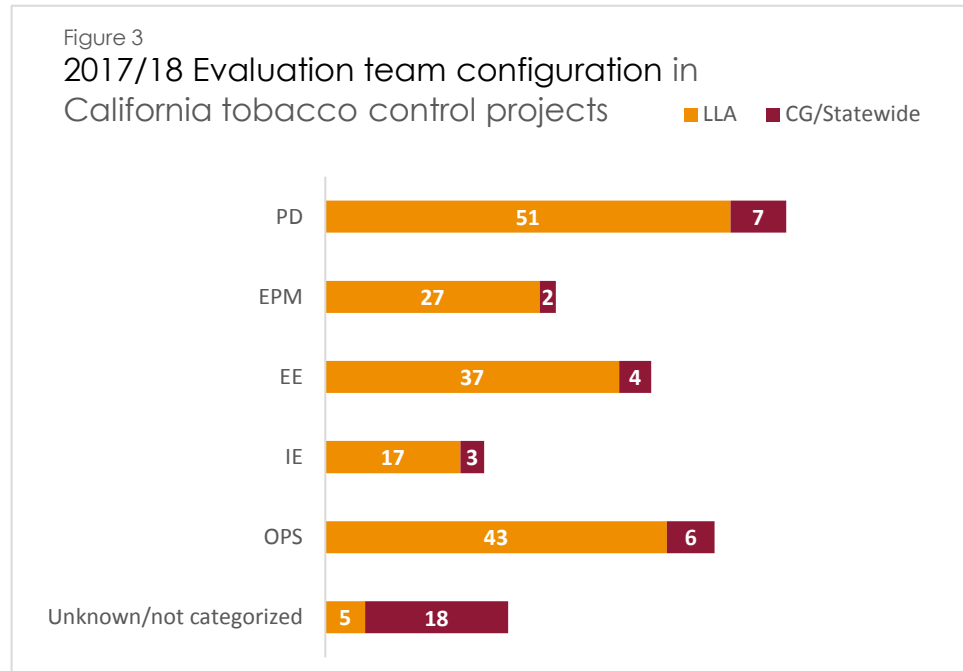


Figure 2 shows that for 18 of the LLA and 11 of the CG/Statewide grantees, the Project Director was designated as the EPM. In just 4 of the LLAs and 1 CG or Statewide, an Internal Evaluator was going to serve as the EPM. None of the grantees indicated that Other Project Staff (OPS) were designated as the EPM. However, 5 of the LLAs had not yet determined how the role would be filled and the 18 CG/Statewide grantees that had not yet designated an EPM role are not actually required by CTCP to do so.



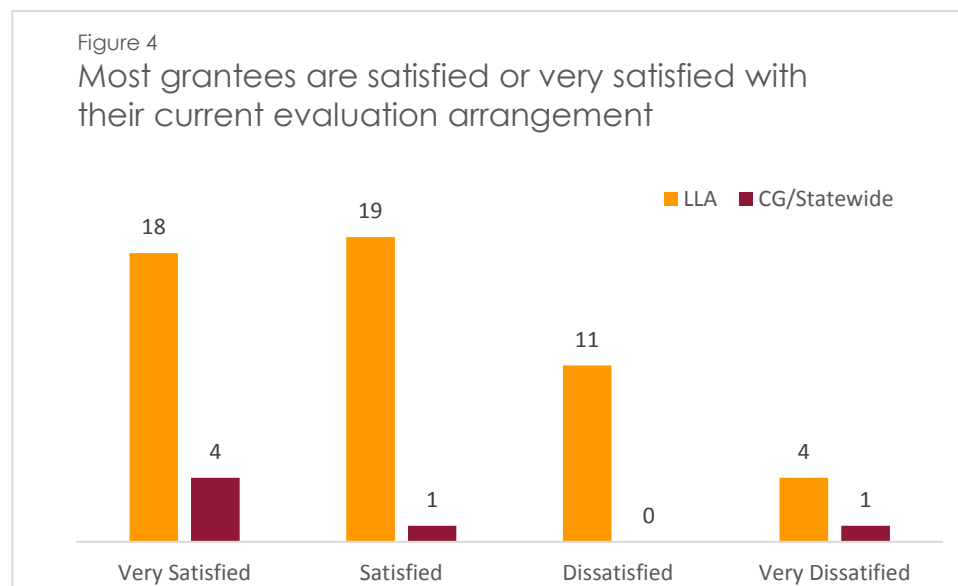
Based on these data, the evaluation team configurations for California tobacco control projects in the 2017/2018 fiscal year indicate that the projects are well on their way to completing the expansion of evaluation teams for LLAs. Of 60 LLAs in the 2017/18 fiscal year, 27 have already established the EPM position and 37 have already hired an EE. The data in Figure 3 was collected prior to the July 1, 2018 enforcement date. For that reason, the status at July 1, 2018 of the 33 LLAs that were still working on establishing the EPM position and the 23 that were still in the process of hiring EEs is unknown (Figure 3).



Satisfaction With Type of Evaluation Arrangement

In a 2018 survey of grantees, we asked how satisfied projects were with their current evaluation-related arrangements. Most Project Directors (42 or 72%) indicated that they were *Satisfied* or *Very Satisfied* with their current evaluation arrangement (Figure 4). More than one-quarter (16 or 28%) of the Project Directors were *Dissatisfied* or *Very Dissatisfied* with their current evaluation arrangement. These results suggest that some grantees may be looking for a new EE with which to work in the 2018/2019 fiscal year.

How to Have a Successful Relationship With Your Evaluator



The project directors that we interviewed identified the strengths and pitfalls of the different arrangements. The lessons they learned about what works and doesn't work are summarized below. These keys to a successful evaluation arrangement may seem obvious. Nonetheless, we hope that listing them will help you in your future decisions about what kind of evaluation arrangement to have and how to manage the arrangement in place.

Keys to a successful evaluation arrangement

- Communication-- Have an explicit plan for ongoing and regular communication between the project director, project staff and evaluator(s). Speaking the same "language" is also important.
- Integration-- Integrate the evaluator (especially when external) into the project team. This can also help facilitate better communication.
- Clarity of roles-- Internal evaluators may have more than one role in the project (for example acting as the project director and evaluator). External evaluators and the internal staff they work with also need to have clearly specified roles so that it is clear who is responsible for what aspects of the evaluation. Clear roles can be especially important for projects that want an evaluator that is not involved in the everyday operations of the work.
- Clarity of timeframes and deliverables-- Determine who is responsible for what, and when. Evaluators with multiple projects (internal or external) may have a problem scheduling or meeting the deadlines for a project if not laid out in advance.
- Evaluation expertise-- Find someone with evaluation expertise and, if possible, someone who can help build the staff's capacity for evaluation.
- Project expertise-- Make sure your evaluator is knowledgeable about tobacco control in general, as well as your specific tobacco control project. This is important for developing an appropriate evaluation plan, as well as tools and reports.
- Planning for evaluation use-- The project director needs to be sure s/he is getting the evaluation that is needed for the project, and not the one that the evaluator is interested in doing. This also includes planning for how data and results will be used and disseminated.

References

- Huddleston, J., Braverman, M., Cooksy, L., Elmen, J., Yao, T., Tang, H., & Cowling, D. (2005). *Benefits of Internal vs. External Evaluation for County-Based Tobacco Control*. Paper developed for the National Conference on Tobacco or Health, Chicago, Illinois.
- Tang, H., Cowling, D.W., Koumijian, K., Roeseler, A., Lloyd, J., & Rogers, T. (2002). Building local program evaluation capacity toward a comprehensive evaluation. In R. Mohan, D.J. Bernstein, and M.D. Whitsett (eds.), *Responding to sponsors and stakeholders in complex evaluation environments*. New Directions for Evaluation, No. 95. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.