

## Making Data-informed CX Decisions

by Robin Kipke

When it comes to setting priorities for new 3-year workplans, how does your project decide what to focus on?

Hopefully decisions are based on more than just a hunch or randomly picking topics out of a hat. You are on more substantial footing when your conclusions are based on actual needs assessment data.

That's where the Communities of Excellence (CX) process comes in. Armed with relevant local and statewide data, you and your coalition partners can see where the greatest need for tobacco control policy is or where you could potentially capitalize on community readiness and momentum.

To do this accurately, though, you'll want to have an array of useful information at your fingertips during the process. You don't need to re-invent the wheel; just know where to go for the data that can give you the best picture of where your community is protected from vs. vulnerable to tobacco influences.

Where should you start in terms of evidence and sources? First, compile an accurate snapshot of your community population. Turn to the US Census Bureau's [American FactFinder](#) to gather demographics of who's living in your area. Look at population size, ages, gender, ethnicity, income, rural vs. urban, languages spoken in the home, single family home vs. multi-unit housing dwellers, etc. Look at the California Health Information Survey ([CHIS](#)) or County and Statewide Archive of Tobacco Statistics ([C-STATS](#)) for statistics on tobacco use and health disparities among adults, ethnicities, youth.



Next pull out any data you have from recently completed work objectives. Did you conduct any youth tobacco purchase surveys or observations lately? Be sure to have those results on hand. They can provide evidence of the scope of the problem in stores, parks, events or apartments. Did you conduct key informant interviews with decision-makers or do a policy record review about their readiness or



resistance to new policy endeavors? If your media activity records tracked all published letters and articles about tobacco-related issues (not just those you submitted), they can be good indicators of where the public thought is on this topic. So dust off the write-ups of your evaluation activities (both in your evaluation reports and the analysis summaries your evaluator should have provided) and get full use of the data you collected and analyzed!

Naturally, as part of this you will have your Retail Campaign dataset and the analysis summary of the seven relevant CX indicators provided by CTCP. These will give you a good idea of which retail indicators you might want to address first.



Then depending on other topics you have an interest in examining, turn to other sources for additional facts and figures. For example, look to the Board of Equalization (BOE) for the number of tobacco retailers, the regional apartment association for the number of complexes and/or units, the Parks and Recreation department for the number of parks, or state or county resources for the number of child care facilities in your jurisdiction, etc.

There are lots of databases and resources that you can tap for information. In fact, the Evaluation Unit at CTCP is compiling a list of resources by indicator that you can turn to. In addition to the Policy Quality and Reach scores that CTCP will be providing for your CX needs, you'll be able to use the Policy Evaluation Tracking System (PETS) — a searchable policy database — to look at Multi-Unit Housing (MUH), Tobacco Retail Licensing (TRL), Sampling, and Outdoor Secondhand Smoke (OSHS) policies passed in your jurisdiction. This database demonstrates the strength of local policies relative to ChangeLab Solutions' model ordinance language while offering detailed information about when the policy was passed, went into effect, and in most cases provides a link to the policy language itself. Lastly, the TECC library is always a great help in locating information.

Having data at your fingertips to consult during the CX process will allow you to make data-informed decisions. This means everyone in your group can start from the same factual premise, making for more meaningful and inclusive discussions as you set priorities. It can mean the difference between relying on “guestimates” vs. basing your choices on actual evidence.



Which would you rather count on for direction for the next three years of hard work?

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