Assessing Public Health Advocacy Capacity:
Lessons from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s Tobacco Policy Change Program Evaluation

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Presentation Objectives

- To identify challenges in evaluating tobacco control advocacy programs
- To identify approaches to dealing with these challenges
- To provide a model for evaluating comprehensive, community-based tobacco control advocacy programs
Background: The Tobacco Policy Change Program

- Funded by RWJF, starting in 2004
- Total of 75 grants
- Currently in 4th round, 11 grantees
- Goal – promote healthier communities & states:
  - Broader advocacy base
  - Stronger partnerships
  - Reduction in disparities
  - More diverse policy infrastructure
  - Policy change
Examples of TPC Advocacy Goals

- Passage of clean indoor air ordinances
- Medicaid coverage of cessation services
- Tobacco tax increases
- Restrictive land use ordinances
- Repeal of state preemption rules
Evaluation Framework

Main evaluation questions:
- Were grantees successful in achieving goals?
- What are main elements of success?
- Does program structure facilitate achievement of goals?
- What is lasting impact of TPC?

Examine program experiences from dual perspectives:
- Advocacy evaluation
- Community partnerships
Important Applications from Advocacy Evaluation

The policy change process:

- **Key inputs**
  (e.g., experience, funding, reputation)

- **Advocacy strategies**
  (e.g., issues analysis, grass roots organizing, legal action)

- **Key activities**
  (e.g., constituency building, issues research, policymaker education, public info campaign)
Important Applications from Advocacy Evaluation, cont.

Advocacy outcomes:

- **Contextual factors** very influential
- **Contribution** not attribution
- Importance of **interim outcomes**
- Importance of **realistic outcomes**
Examples of Advocacy Outcomes

- Increased public awareness of TC issues
- Increased public support for TC
- Constituency growth
- Policymaker support for issue
- Movement through political process
- Adoption of policy
- Implementation of policy
- Enforcement of policy
- Maintenance of policy
Important Applications from Community Partnerships

The partnership process:

- Engagement of marginalized communities
- Partnership building is ongoing
- Partnership stage of development & readiness is important
- Paying attention to factors influencing partnership functioning (e.g., shared goals; governance & decision making)
Applications from Community Partnerships, cont.

Partnership outcomes:

- **Sustainability** of the partnership & health promotion goals
- **Community capacity** development
Evaluation Challenges
(short list)

- Multiple sites (each w/unique goals, plans, strategies, & activities)
- Changing group of grantees
- Grantee staff/participant turnover
- Evolution in program purpose
- Changes in program activities
- Projects at different stages of experience
- Identifying appropriate outcomes
- Complexity
Dealing with Evaluation Challenges

- Input from funding agency & grantees
- Assumption of multifactorial non-linear model
- Quantitative and qualitative methods
- Site visits and case studies
- Focus on understanding dynamic nature of program and big picture
Design Elements: Triangulation

- Multiple sources of data
  - Program documents
  - In-depth phone interviews
  - Online survey
  - Site visits

- Multiple sources of information
  - Grantee organization members
  - Other coalition members
  - Other TC actors in community
  - Funding agency staff
  - TA providers
Design Elements: Indicators of Sustainability

- Increased awareness of value of advocacy
- Increased community capacity for advocacy
- Duration of coalition collaboration post-grant
- New and/or strengthened alliances
- Increased community awareness of TC as health equity issue
- Strengthened coalition funding base for advocacy
- Strengthened relationships between traditional TC players and non-traditional/grassroots players
- Increased capacity to address other PH issues
Design Elements: Funding Agency Role

- Origins & history of program
- Program premises
- Program goals & changes over time
- Grantee selection criteria & changes
- Agency role in TA & program implementation
Lessons from TPC Evaluation

- Logic models & evaluation should include program history & funding agency role
- Logic models & evaluation should include a dynamic perspective
- Examine a continuum of outcomes
- Examine capacity building processes & outcomes
Advocacy Evaluation Resources

California Endowment

http://www.calendow.org/Article.aspx?id=3774

Alliance for Justice

http://www.advocacyevaluation.org/
http://www.afj.org/for-nonprofits-foundations/reco/