

# ENGAGING YOUR SUPPORTERS

## Overview

Most counties have developed an impressive list of tobacco control supporters and recruited a significant number of TFAN activists. These supporters have been identified via phone banks, newspaper inserts and petition drives to support statewide initiatives. All names are stored in a statewide data bank and many counties maintain local data banks.

Because of this past work, the tobacco control movement is in a strong position of having sufficient supporters to be engaged in our upcoming campaign to secure funding for continued tobacco control efforts. The challenge is to communicate with our supporters and motivate them to take action in support of our upcoming effort.

## General Strategy

Develop ways to communicate with your supporters. Initial communication can identify the most active supporters and is necessary to inform all supporters of your activities and invite their participation. On-going communication is critical to keeping them involved and having them take action at key times.

## Suggested Tactics

- Phone calls to all supporters gauging their support and capturing their e-mails for future communications and for TFAN. This can be done with volunteers or paid callers such as college students or professional telemarketers.
- Interactive mail that surveys supporters as to their level of interest, specific skills and again captures e-mail information. This asks the supporter to return something that indicates level of interest and how they would like to help.
- Create an event, such as an organizational kick-off, legislative briefing, Women of Influence dinner, grassroots training or strategy session that all identified supporters can be invited to. This provides a reason to mail and do follow-up calls to build the event.
- Periodic newsletters informing supporters of upcoming activities, meetings, events that they can participate in.
- Periodic e-mail and social media communication keeping supporters up to date and encouraging their participation and action.

Activating and organizing supporters is always a challenge. People have competing interests and demand for their time. The key is to provide opportunities that make good

use of peoples' time – and provides a sense of making a meaningful contribution that truly supports tobacco control.

The above list of suggestions represents only a few strategies that coalitions or local spin-off groups have used to successfully engage identified supporters in either local clean indoor air campaigns or as part of the statewide initiatives. Talk with your colleagues about what has worked in their counties and with your state partners who are continually working on developing successful strategies and can share ideas from around the state and from other states.