

## Indiana's answers:

- a) In order to solve the problem of having too few activists in communities with too many significant issues, some community workers begin their coalition building by joining other groups. This solves other problems of coalition building, such as not enough time or too much distance to get out to a meeting. Sometimes workers not only join other groups or coalitions, but also attend meetings of other groups and organizations and keep the tobacco control messages alive by reporting the issues of tobacco use. Consistent tobacco reports of what is happening nationally, internationally, with new tobacco products or industry tactics and any new successes in the state or upcoming struggles helps to inform the community and creates a "buzz". By maintaining consistent presence in other coalitions and organizations, tobacco control issues can be adopted and support received when a community policy campaign begins.

Forming a stand-alone coalition seems to work best for those who target specific organizations to meet around the table. Organizations that have health as an intrinsic concern can devote their work time to the issue of tobacco control. The obvious organizations are hospitals and staff; health departments and staff; health educators in the school systems; ACS, ALA and Heart Association local volunteers from local fund-raising events.

Even obvious health stakeholders in rural areas are not an easy "get", however. No matter the health career (with your latter questions) of strong activists, these supporters have relatives and friends with existing history of tobacco use. Working with tobacco users can be a hurdle and can prevent involvement with tobacco control because the political nature of the issue (where and when someone can use a legal product). Because of the high percentage of tobacco users in rural communities, the issue can never be thoroughly disengaged from their personal lives. Any change in the community is; any policy promoted as a change is seen as intrusive and unwanted. It's up to the coalition to continue talking about the issue and to support consensus that the problem of tobacco harm is bigger than the problem of our relatives and friends discomfort with change.

Building relationship with the individual and organization members takes time and repeated face-to-face engagement in order to keep moving forward. Workers who are able to maintain consistent and persistent contacts with people and the will to not drop the effort when there is disagreement, are able to grow rural coalitions and keep groups moving.

A common and easily agreed on issue is that in rural areas, even tobacco-growing areas, adults do not want to have another generation of tobacco using youth. All rural areas, due to percentages of poverty and mix of education achievement have experienced someone close who has been harmed by tobacco. It is the rural dilemma to come face-to-face with these two facts – youth become tobacco users is not good and friends and relatives, acquaintances and co-workers have been ill or died from tobacco use have touched each and every person living in Rural USA. It is possible to bring more non-traditional individuals and organizations to the table on the basis of these two commonalities, alone.

So, with the ebb and flow of coalition attendance and engagement, it helps to always state at the beginning of each meeting, the common experiences and agreed goals of the group and to review the successes and work during the meeting to strategize next steps for those events and actions and programs that are not working as well.

- b) Most non-coalition members can be persuaded to give their contact information. Once the contact information is obtained, coalitions can develop a short list of things non-members will do for the group, from signing authorship of a letter to the editor to taking information to other groups they join. All fringe members can be on the lookout for potential leaders and for those who express interest in the issue of tobacco use, in order to recruit new members to the coalition. So, two things come from friendly non-members – communication to the community from an outside source and recruitment to the membership of the organization. Beyond that, some coalitions just have a list of folks who are non-members who are willing to call a couple people or attend a community event when they are needed.
- c) Probably the most relevant shift in Indiana rural coalitions happened as a result of reduced funding. With no funding, no “give-away trinkets” could be purchased, no one could be paid to provide teaching, training, space, for one-to-one programs, so the effort came down to this:

What policy can we gain approval for and how can we celebrate it?

We started to rank the policies from the smallest voluntary policy to the biggest possible policy for a community and came out like this:

- Voluntary policies in business, restaurants, public places, places of entertainment
- School policies (this became a contest between counties – who could get all of their (sometimes six school corporations) to adopt comprehensive tobacco free grounds policy language? This is also a basis to compete one school against another and in rural areas, this translates from highly evolved sports competitions, band competitions and rivalries, to administrative pride.
- Hospital policies, once a core group of hospitals in Indianapolis joined hands and declared smoke free grounds, rural tobacco control coalitions used the example in encouraging the public and the hospitals to join a growing list of Smokefree hospitals.
- Celebrating and advertising Smokefree public places, such as restaurants, bowling allies and other places of entertainment, like the Little League Ball diamonds as they declared smoke free grounds (and Little League is HUGE in rural areas).
- 4-H Fair Grounds, similarly followed suit and also set a standard for smoke free grounds – some local county fairgrounds have a more comprehensive written policy than the Indiana State Fair – so there is competition.

Again, policies as a competition to excel resonates in rural areas – everyone knows everyone and those who step out and declare themselves for smoke free air become leaders within the community.

- d) Many coordinators have gotten push back from friends and relatives. When this happens, the coalition becomes the strength and protection. If you can't tell your relative their smoking is harming people, perhaps hearing a sermon from the minister, or hearing a new policy in their favorite restaurant, or hearing about someone's individual success quitting can be the tipping point. As the issue is brought forward to the public, the hurdle is to allow people who want smoke out of their lives and smoking away from their friends to speak up.

However, on this issue as others, anyone in tobacco control has to be willing and passionate enough to never give up and to be consistent, persistent and firm about the truth of the harm of tobacco control. Your friends and relatives may never be swayed, but they will also recognize the strength of character and the adherence to truth that the coalition and the individual represents. In rural areas, backing down and quitting is a weakness for individuals and groups.

- e) Tobacco affects every chronic disease outcome that we know. There are many public health issues, but tobacco remains a priority in rural areas, because we have been fighting the battle long and hard and there is evidence we are winning. Not that other issues aren't important, but that this one issue is important and we have the answers for this problem with accessible available cessation, increasing the price of tobacco and foremost, with policy solutions.

If one took any article in a rural paper, one could repeat details of the article and respond to the article by turning it to a tobacco-control message. We can respond to the importance of the issue of a need for exercise, clean water, a new sewer for a town, a garbage dump by pointing out that these are important issues and that tobacco use harms more of our citizens than all these problems combined. The costs associated with school revenues may be offset by each citizen giving up one pack of cigarettes, one drive-through hamburger, one game of golf this month and donating to the school and as a result of giving up a \$5.00 pack of cigarettes or other small purchase, like a cup of coffee, we can correct our need for school revenue.

But again, in keeping tobacco control a priority in rural areas, it is necessary for staff to be on the lookout for opportunities for messaging tobacco priority to the public through media or organizations and word-of-mouth. Face-to-face continuous dialogue is very important.

- f) In rural areas, decision-makers need to be approached by their constituents and other influencers within their circle of friends. The need for policy, given the economic, health, and community harm is compelling and finally, the elected officials need to have a reason to change their minds and still save face. If an elected official gets repeated contacts from those who cast their ballots – this means the elected official can “save face” and state that they don't personally agree with the “law” but they have been approached by their constituents and asked to vote for this law. They can use compelling economic data the coalition prepares or opinion surveys that show the public is largely ready for this change.

We have found decision-makers occasionally become champions because something happens in their life or among their relatives. The coalition can say there is health harm from tobacco, however, when a decision-maker experiences the harm by heart attack or cancer scare, they are able to alter their relationship with the decision. One of the most effective ways to approach opposing decision-makers is to provide personal testimony from constituents, calls, letters, and also place the testimony in the local paper or provide the testimony to the group this opposing decision-maker frequents.

Again, in rural areas, the most compelling action coalition members can take is to continuously, consistently and persistently engage in face-to-face dialogue with supporters as well as opposition, because it is the rural relationship that makes communities and it is in these relationships that communities can come to feel safe from the “unknown terrors of change.”