Oklahoma Department of Health's answers:

a) When working in rural areas it is crucial for the program coordinator and coalition members to attend as many civic organizations, city council meetings, community events, and other activities going on in the community where you can educate local community members about the coalition and its efforts. In rural areas it is likely that you will greet the same people within different organizations, in doing so you are establishing a good rapport with individuals within those organizations, and you are starting to build capacity for them to have vested interest in the coalition.

b) To keep coalition members vested in the program it is vital for the program coordinator and coalition members to aid one another in their efforts within each other's own organization. The concept "I help you, in turn, you help me" comes into play. Coalition members see that it's not only about the tobacco free coalition, but you really value that individual and their organization's efforts. By doing this, coalition members are more apt to be satisfied within the coalition and their vested interest within the coalition is renewed.

c) We write into our strategic work plan that each monthly Tobacco Control Coalition Meeting we will routinely place two agenda items: Opportunities and Announcements. These two items allow discussion of events coming up in the next month or several months and how the coalition members and partners can participate. In addition we provide a calendar of the events planned for the grant year and ask coalition members to think about how they can participate and contribute to those events. Opportunities and announcements and a visual of what is planned for the year promote participation. We also utilize a "High 5 List" that informs the members and partners of what we have accomplished and where we are going next. We share this with the coalition each month and review it each quarter.

d) We had a lot of success by focusing on the "Whole Picture" in regard to the health of our communities. We have formed bonds with most aspects of healthy living in our community and work to see them succeed in their goals. Additionally we work to be the point of contact for our communities in regard to health. We pride ourselves on, that although we cannot provide all services, as the first point of contact, we can direct people to where they can get help.

e) Look to recruit potential members that can incorporate the tobacco work plan into their work plan. Recognize that potential recruits are stretched thin with their work and rather than seeing tobacco as an additional burden that they don't have time for show them how it relates to their job and can in fact benefit them.

f) For example, a respiratory therapist was recruited after initially turning down an invitation to join. The second recruitment attempt was framed to show the person how membership could benefit them and the hospital. In the end this person became a very active coalition chair and the hospital was happy to assist with things. In turn the coalition needed to let the hospital own certain things versus the coalition being seen as the main reason something occurred. The coalition worked with the hospital on going tobacco free but the hospital wanted the publicity of it to be framed more as it was their own initiative versus having an outside influence coerce them into doing it. The hospital administration pays keen attention to how they will be perceived by the public. Part of this is they want to be seen as more progressive and self-directed than their competitors. In small settings turf issues and competition can quickly come to the surface. The coalition has to be aware of these

things and again be flexible in working with this issue. If that means not being publically seen as the catalyst that brought about a change then this is acceptable. Don't get hung up on who gets the public adulation and glory rather take a backseat in order to facilitate the change. The goal is to change social norms rather than self-promotion. The competition among groups can be strong. Recognize this and let them take ownership.

g) In small setting relationships get entangled and as a result of this people are less likely to rock the boat and take a stand on an issue. A lot of this can be traced back to financial concerns. Different people and agencies are concerned if they do take a public stand on something that they perceive will be controversial it will negatively impact them in a financial way. People are reluctant to offend people that they know personally and/or may have a relationship with them in different settings. They may have multiple roles that they interact with this person on. They may sit on a school board with them, attend church with them and have close relatives who own a business together. Again, these entangled relationships make people less reluctant to rock the boat and more inclined to continue with the status quo.

h) The local champions that do arise in these settings are often people who have been negatively impacted by tobacco and this drives them to want to make a positive difference. These local champions aren't content with going along with the status quo. Many grantees in rural areas have encountered these champions while making presentations to civic clubs. Not only is the person a connected mover and shaker via their membership in the civic club they also have the emotional courage to take the lead on the initiative.

i) We have several community partners that assist the coalition with a number of activities to help move indicators. The main reasons why the coalition has community partners is 1. We have established rapport with identified organizations within the community, but there is still room to build upon that relationship and they may not be ready to become a vested member. 2. Due to restraints and restrictions within some organizations it is not possible for individuals to attend coalition meetings consistently to represent their organization. Community partners have assisted the coalition by co-sponsoring events such as Kick Butts Day, collaborating with organizational events to promote the Helpline, and collaborating on other events in the community to assist in moving indicators.

j) The coalition and staff are involved in coalitions and partnerships with missions that fit with the tobacco control coalition, for example, Bringing Our Strengths Together (BEST) and working with Tribal Nations. We promote the idea of common goals, common ground and that by combining our resources and our members we can accomplish more.

k) Identify individuals in your county such as local champions to provide presentations in your county would be a great way for local residents to be able to relate to the topic at hand.

l) We meet with coalition members that represent different community sectors to engage them to help move our planned strategies forward. This meeting is accomplished during the Assessment piece of the strategic planning process. We discuss our Indicators and Assets and how we will include the representatives in moving the plan forward. For example: When working to pass Clean Indoor Air and Youth Access ordinances, we made sure our local partners/collaborators from the community we were focused on were at the table.

m) We recognize we are a spoke on the wheel. We all can only work effectively when all are successful. We work to lift up all the other entities serving our community rather than look at it as a competition.

n) Every community is different. The best practices are usually a foundation or jumping point to plan strategies and interventions. We look at what opportunities are in the communities, who the champions are, what barriers are there and plan our strategies around that.

o) In small rural areas, it's important to approach a community carefully. It is a good idea to attend meetings such as the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club and City Council meetings to get a feel for the organization and the individuals who attend the meeting and how they respond. In turn, the coalition gets an overall idea of the individuals who make up the organizations ideology about certain issues, and if they would be a proponent or an opponent with the mission of the organization. If an opponent, how do you possibly, make them become a community partner or coalition member? Once that is decided, you can then start going and educating organizations about tobacco control policies and programs. Also, when talking to the public and educating them about the program the phrase tobacco use prevention is more user friendly than tobacco control. People are more receptive to the "prevention" versus "control", especially in a community that has a high tobacco use rate.

p) That is the crux of the problem. It is a dance; you provide leadership to empower coalition members and partners to become the leaders.

q) By building relationships in the community, we establish a trust and a rapport before asking them to pass a policy. We are present at more community events to build up our reputation in the community. Also since the communities are so tight, we focus our attention to what will be best for the long term.

r) We are very sensitive to these relationships. We must listen more than we talk. We approach when the time is right for them even when it is not the best time for us. We partner with who we can and leverage their skills to bring in others.

s) Using the ecological model is very important. Using the process to get to policy change is even more important in this type of setting. Awareness and education are important. Effectively informing key leaders facilitates buy in for local policy change, especially when its someone you know.

t) We work together. Cherokee word for this is "ga du gi". We believe that if we are all working to improve the health of the community; we can do it in many ways. Tobacco control, drug and alcohol awareness, clean parks etc. The whole idea is an arching goal of health and safety in the community; there are many ways to accomplish that and again it is you scratch my back; I'll scratch yours mentality.

u) We are willing to work hard to promote other entities even if it initially only gets us a little exposure.

v) Most of our community health statistics can in some form or fashion be related back to some form of tobacco, use or exposure to second hand smoke, for example, heart disease prevalence. Also, if you are helping with an event as part of the coalition, having done the ground work and face to face visits will help many to recognize you as the tobacco use prevention person.

w) In instances like this, we continue to reach our goal in another direction by educating as many people as we can and continuing to gain support by other community partners. Being persistent and

caring can lead to a change in ideas. Even when it doesn't pass one year you can also wait for the next. When situations change such as leaders etc, many ideas change and opinions can be impacted by one key leader. Also getting support from influential people can change opinions of that one leader. When we have students/youth present the message that they bring is that the policy change is not about the tobacco users, but where they use tobacco.

x) You are a valuable resource. We empower them and provide skill based training, such as public speaking skills, so they may present issues to key decision makers. Few decision-makers want to be the one who says no to youth who is speaking the truth and is passionate about what they believe.

y) Involve not only the coalition, but the community. Conduct surveys of the community; be able to use those numbers at the meetings. Run ads promoting the passing of tobacco free parks in the local papers; bring awareness to the entire community, not just the council members. They are the ones making the decision, but they are also elected officials. So if this is something the community wants, and the community puts a little pressure on the council, it will happen in time.

z) We use positive peer pressure in instances such as this. We are also strategic with our marketing to "encourage" the change we would like to see. We sometimes step back to allow others close to the entity to come on board and then later approach them again.

aa) Working in rural areas, we've experienced mixed scenarios where small town dynamics and knowing everyone in the community, having close connections has been a help and a hindrance. Having the mayor of your community as your Sunday school teacher is a help when wanting to approach the city leaders to discuss ideas or ways to improve the community wellness. The relationship established helps when scheduling time to meet. Having that personal connection can sometimes cause difficulty when approaching to ask for policy change that isn't popular or discuss areas of needed change that are not favorable. Committee members also may have connections within the community, but may not always be willing to utilize those with committee concerns. Contacting school officials that are close friends or acquaintances to discuss the non-compliance of a 24/7 tobacco free campus policy created in years pass can be a hard conversation to start if not approached correctly. These are only a few examples of ways that connections can be great, but the need to carefully select the route to take with an approach or conversation can be very important. Getting committee members involved to the point that connections are utilized, but not damaged has been a small struggle.

bb) A local wealthy and influential store owner owned various businesses including two large convenience stores. It was common knowledge that these two stores sold to minors. It was known that minors would pay extra for tobacco and the clerks would pocket the extra money in exchange for making the illegal sale. This same store owner was also a city council member and friends with elected officials. As a result of the power and influence he held the city completely stalled on passing a youth access ordinance. The store owner stated that there wasn't a problem with underage sales and "even if there was it was very minor an occasional mistake" plus he had such a hard time finding minimum wage employees to work the stores that they didn't need to punish those that "may occasionally sale to minors and run off his hard to find employees". The store owner also donated money to the city for various projects. As a result the city officials were willing to turn a blind eye to what was going on.

cc) The coalition was frustrated with getting ignored and continually hitting roadblocks with the city. They came up with a different strategy. Along with Operation Storefront they worked with a competitor convenience store to change their tobacco industry contract to the bare minimum versus the maximum that they previously had in place. This was turned into earned media with the local paper. This press turned into positive press for the store. In addition to this the Students Working Against Tobacco team members and their families only shopped at this store. It was beneficial that the coalition spent significant money with the paper placing various tobacco control media pieces.

dd) The other thing they did was to partner with their local Area Prevention Resource Center and do Reward Reminder Visits: that are utilized to remind retailers not to sell tobacco products to minors. As predicted the two previously mentioned stores did sale to minors. The coalition had a good relationship with a local reporter that did an earned media piece about the Reward Reminder Visits. This piece included listing out the stores that violated the law and those that didn't. This created awareness and pressure within the community which lead to a decline of the resistance by the city officials. Even though the city hasn't passed the youth access ordinance yet it is much closer that it previously was.

ee) The coalition thinks the youth access will eventually pass and without creating the pressure within the community this wouldn't have occurred. It's significant to note that this is a small area where the earned media got people talking and wasn't "lost or buried" among so many other stories like it would have been in a large urban setting. The coalition knew how much influence the paper had in their small community and they used this knowledge to their advantage.