

## Oregon's answers:

- a) In Oregon, we have found our rural communities are most successful when objective-based coalitions are formed from the broad tobacco partnerships. Once coalition goals are set, move beyond monthly 'report back' meetings to smaller committees working on short-term, specific goals such as tobacco-free parks. People are willing to work on projects where they can be involved and see the outcome. Don't be afraid to change things up. These coalitions are successful by keeping a core leadership group and getting the rest of the work done through people specifically tied to the policy initiative. Maintaining solid relationships and being visible in the community are key factors to keeping members engaged.
- b) Identifying and supporting community champions are important in building the movement for tobacco policies. Finding a way to have champions share their story and voice their support is key. Community champions can help spread the word through social events, churches, and PTA or school meetings. Social media is effectively being used to spread the word, but in most rural Oregon communities, face-to-face communication has the most impact on policy change.
- c) Some of Oregon's rural coalitions have members sit on other workgroups and boards and provide a 'voice' for tobacco prevention and education. Communities may have strong school-based or drug prevention groups that can get behind tobacco prevention as well. Continuing to bring tobacco into the discussion is important for building the movement. It is also important to build into community priorities. If the community is passionate about healthy kids – start with playgrounds and move toward additional parks and other outdoor venues.
- d) Share the facts about the impact of tobacco on your community and the evidence-based interventions that can reduce the burden. Be clear about why policy change works as opposed to a costly education program. One strategy may be to make new connections in neighboring towns or jurisdictions to build support across the county. Assess political feasibility in different jurisdictions and work with key strategic partners to build the movement to other areas.
- e) In Oregon, tobacco control is a public health priority – it is the leading preventable cause of death in all communities. It is important to make the connections for other public health programs and initiatives as all are impacted by tobacco use in some way. You can't dispute the facts and there is clear evidence to show what works to reduce the impact. Talk to as many people as you can, as often as you can. Try to keep policy successes or new data in front of the public through media advocacy. In addition, lend support to other related efforts as often as you can by serving on other coalitions to reduce underage drinking and drug use, promoting healthy communities, worksite wellness, etc.
- f) Policy change takes time – keep the relationships going by attending school or park board meetings, and continue to share information with leaders about the impact of tobacco. It may take several years, but be persistent. Bringing in students and community champions to speak can influence policy makers. Have coalition members write letters to the editor and attend board meetings as well. Often in rural communities, there may be influencers that you have not thought about. Try conducting a power mapping exercise with the objective-based committee of the coalition for developing a strategy.