

Texas County, Oklahoma's answers:

- a) Engaging coalitions – make it fun and offer incentives. Example: When it came to working on the strategic plan, we hosted a Hawaiian themed “Strategic Plan Retreat.” A date was decided on at the coalition meeting and planned for a 4-5 hour day, decorative invitations emails sent to members, small door prizes and short tobacco related guessing games and light lunch provided; several attended. We went over the various aspects of the work plan and the coalition brainstormed work plan ideas.

Keeping them engaged – getting to know them on a more personal level and creating professional friendships, as well as supporting coalition member events when possible.

Being supportive of others programs- within the TSET Grant we ask for coalition members to go to many trainings and attend different conferences and events. We have found it effective, that if we support and attend others conferences, events, and trainings they in return engage the same efforts as we put forth in theirs.

- b) Living in rural communities, most people know each other to a certain degree and use personal contacts for professional use. Many adult activists are friends and family of coalition members who are more than willing to help. Outsiders moving into rural communities seem to have a harder time adjusting, connecting and being accepted with locals with small town mentality. Recruiting established community members is extremely beneficial.

We also address these as community partners. These connections we have found can be more effective advocates than some coalition members. We still engage these individuals and will often go and meet monthly to discuss how we can move indicators and assets.

We have found it effective to link what we do into other organizations in our community. They may not want to be on our coalition but want to partner to do one activity, if we find that this activity will help up network to help us with social norm change either present or future wise, we will still engage with this organization. The payoff will always come back.

- c) In some small town/rural community mentality, tobacco use is a socially acceptable part of life, even from a young age. However, in these communities, families, schools, churches and even some businesses revolve around the lives children. The input of these beloved children can be powerful to sway the decisions of adults. Example: SWAT activism.
- d) Relating to these people on a personal level is crucial. Small town/rural mentality is that the government is trying to control them with regulations...tobacco control is no different to them. Common ground must be found, even if you do not personally/previously know them. At this point, we must take on a “used car salesman” approach and look for some way to connect with them by adding a little something personal about you. Once the individual sees you as a person and not as the government, they are more open to actually hear what you say and not shut you out before you even begin your spill.

Lots of public appearances, Chamber Meetings, Main Street Meetings, Lions Club, Eggs and Issues (monthly Legislature Breakfast) Getting involved in our community, get familiar with local officials.

We have to put effort, money, and involvement into our communities just as much as we want to get back.

- e) It has got to be an issue that personally affects them in one way or another. Whether it is physically, emotionally or financially, most generally everyone is affected by tobacco use. Some may have fought cancer themselves or had a friend or family member who has, giving them a personal connection and a story to tell. Others, tobacco users or not, may just get downright mad thinking that they eventually will pay for other people's right to use tobacco through health care taxes. Regardless of the connection, there is a connection and we can build off of this and show how the fight against tobacco is a priority...if it affects them, it is automatically a priority to them.

We write letters to the editor and currently now have a monthly column in the paper to update the area on what the tobacco control efforts are. By doing this and helping keep it personal, this keeps individuals engaged.

- f) At this point we are going to have to attack this from all angles or we will continue to hit a roadblock.

There has got to be a lot of support from people and/or groups that support the policy, who can affect the stubborn decision-makers. Example: the council members who opposed the policy for personal reasons. These are elected officials...use the community to put some fire under them. Stir the community up by making them aware of ways the policy can benefit the community. Unfortunately when it comes down to it, most people care about other's health but are not willing to stick their neck out for it. However, what does move people is money, especially if they think they are going to have to fork over any of it! Use the media to let the community know about Certified Healthy Communities Incentive Grants, for example, and how that money can save them money out of their own pockets later on. Community members can write letters to the Editor, approach council members via emails, calls, directly at the meetings, etc. **USE THE POWER OF THE MEDIA.**

Utilize youth activism, such as SWAT or other youth groups to approach the board. Adults with the mentality that their world revolves around their children will most likely listen to these kids. Chances are, council members have children or grandchildren whom they can relate to these kids. Again, use the media.

Utilize the media; they can be more cooperative than you think as long as you have established a personal contact previously. Small town/rural communities tend to rely on their local newspaper to keep them updated. The more the subject is in the paper, the more people will talk about it.