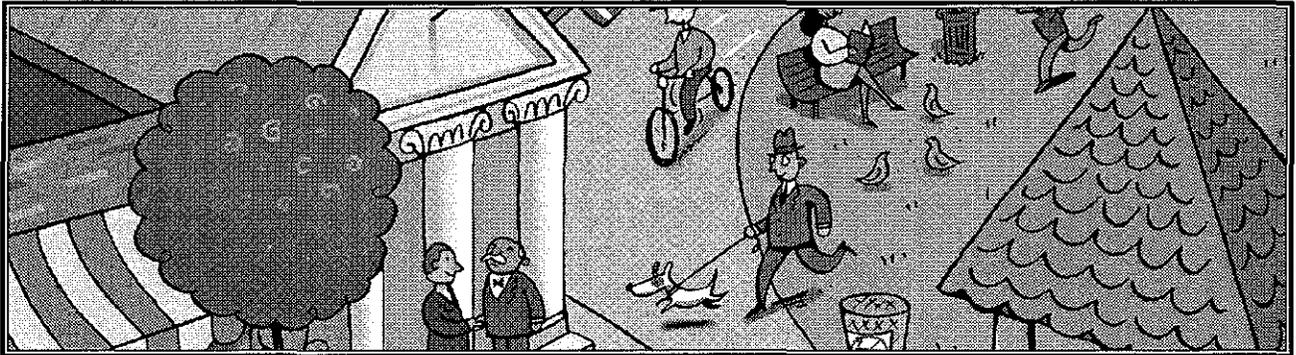


Figuring Out Where We Are Now



Now that you have a team in place or are beginning to form one, and have a 'big picture' of tobacco control, it is time to start detailed planning. Despite all the jargon and theories out there, practical planning boils down to three basic activities:

- *Figuring out where you are now.*
- *Deciding what you want to do.*
- *Determining how you are going to do it.*

In this section, we will walk through some practical approaches for assessing where your community is right now in terms of tobacco control activities. As with the previous sections and those to follow, community assessment is most successful when done as a group activity that everyone contributes to, not something done by one or two people on behalf of the others.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Remember to Begin at the Beginning

From the GETTING THE BIG PICTURE section, you will recall that tobacco control has a clearly defined goal which is addressed through four major priority areas:

Ultimately, the goal of tobacco control is to reduce the human burden of premature illness, death, and disability caused by tobacco products. To achieve this goal, tobacco control programs are more specifically aimed at the four priority areas:

- *Prevent youth from initiating the use of tobacco products,*
- *Promote tobacco cessation services,*
- *Eliminate secondhand smoke exposure (also known as environmental tobacco smoke or ETS), and/or*
- *Reduce tobacco industry influence.*

Tobacco Control Community Indicators

For each of the tobacco control priority areas, there are many different things that could be looked at to help form an overall picture of where your community is now. These are called **community indicators**.

Here are a couple of community indicators as examples:

- *From the priority - Prevent Youth Initiation*

Indicator - Extent of teachers who report receiving tobacco use prevention specific training for teachers.

- *From the priority - Eliminate Secondhand Smoke Exposure*

Indicator - Extent of public and private worksites that designate smoke-free entrances within 15 feet or more of the outside doorways.

All we need to get started is a list of indicators covering each of the tobacco control priorities. Fortunately, the Tobacco Control Section (TCS) of the California Department of Health Services has already developed a list of indicators with input from tobacco control people in communities throughout the State. In all, they have identified 38 important indicators across the 4 tobacco control priority areas. Take a few moments and look over this list, which is the first column of the chart in Appendix 1B of this manual. Don't worry about the other columns in the chart at this point - we'll get to those in later sections.

Tobacco Control Community Assets

Community assets are factors that promote *communities of excellence in tobacco control*. While ***community indicators*** measure what is happening in tobacco control in a community, ***community assets*** measure what the community already has that can make tobacco control as a whole stronger.

Examples of ***community assets*** include:

- *Extent of participation by ethnically and culturally diverse groups on community tobacco control coalitions in relation to their proportion in the community.*
- *Extent of support by local key opinion leaders for tobacco related community norm change strategies.*

TCS has developed a list of 8 community assets which are also found in Appendix 1B.

Using Indicators and Assets for a Community Assessment

Now you have a list of community indicators and assets to do a thorough assessment of where your community actually is in tobacco control as a whole.

With the information you get by doing the assessment, you will be ready to identify the tobacco control priority areas, strategies and goals that will make up your comprehensive tobacco control plan.

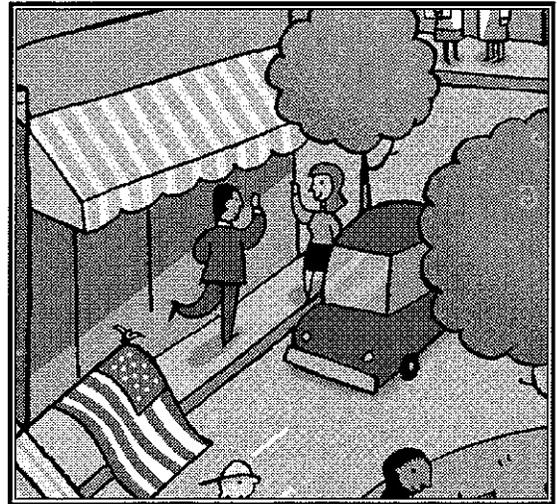
TCS has once again come to the rescue, and has developed a process for rating communities on the indicators and assets. Essentially, you look at each one separately, and using the best

Figuring Out Where We Are Now

data available to you (sometimes that's none!), you rate where your community is on a 5-point scale from NONE to EXCELLENT.

Each *asset* is measured on a single scale. Each *indicator* is to be measured on up to 9 *strategies*. Strategies are things you can do in a community that might improve your assessment rating. The strategies that can be used for assessing an indicator are (not all strategies apply to every indicator, but public awareness and public support are important to successfully addressing all of the indicators outlined by TCS.):

- *Public awareness*
- *Public support*
- *Media attention*
- *Education/awareness campaign*
- *Media campaign*
- *Voluntary policy*
- *Legislated policy*
- *Active enforcement*
- *Compliance*



Here is an example. Let's take the indicator:

Extent of public and private worksites that designate smoke-free entrances within 15 feet or more of the outside doorways.

If you think about the previous strategies, you could conclude that several apply here. One of these might be *voluntary policy*. That is, how would you rate the worksites in your community in terms of their adoption of voluntary policies that contribute to this indicator?

It may be that some study (e.g., Current Population Survey) or some group in your community has data that will give you a hard number to help answer this question. Or, it may be that not much information is available. Using what you do have, the group should make a judgement about where on the scale your community is on each strategy for this indicator.

Let's say you decide that not much is happening in your community outside of a very few businesses that have put voluntary policies into place. So you decide to rate the community as POOR on this attribute.

Maybe on the other strategies that apply to this indicator your ratings range from POOR to GOOD. When the group looks at all the strategies for this indicator together, your best judgement might be that your community rates only FAIR.

This tells you that there is a lot of room for improvement and creativity if you decide this is one of your priorities during the planning process.

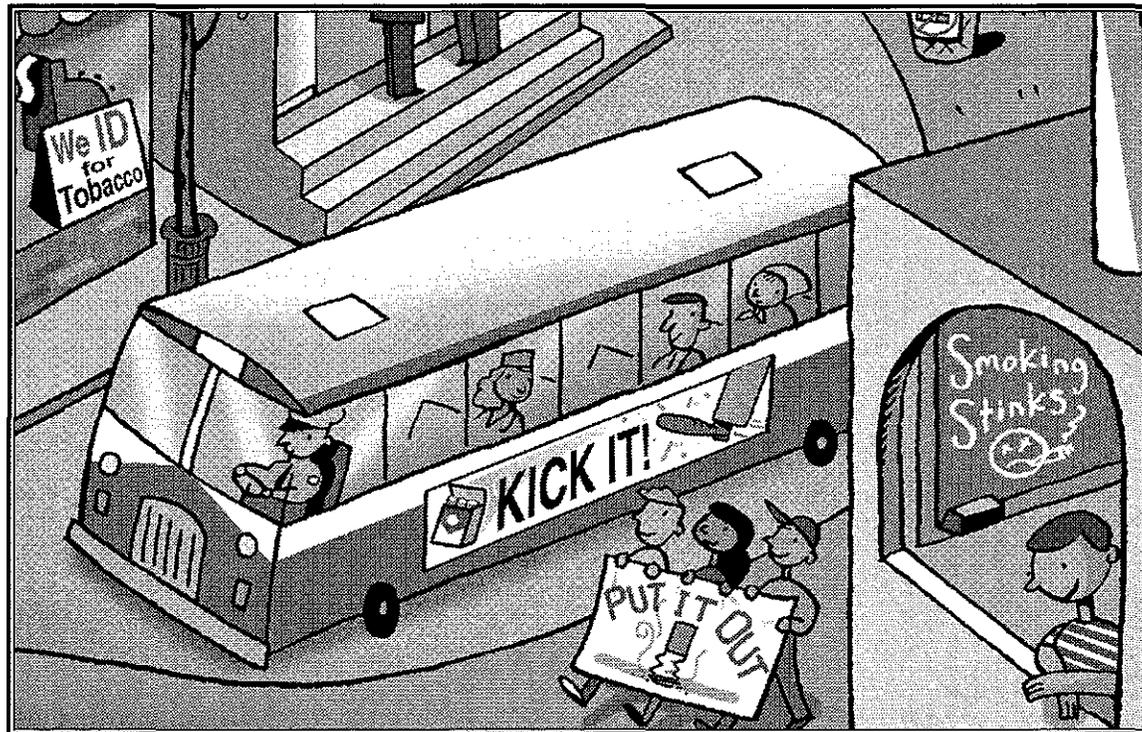
This sounds much more complicated than it is. Once you do one or two of the ratings the rest will come easy. Try practicing with the group on a couple just to see how it goes before you get down to the complete assessment. You will find some simple, step-by-step instructions on how to do this in the HELPFUL TOOLS section below and in Appendix 1A.

LESSONS LEARNED

- *Plan with data! Be sure you use the best information and data available to your community.*
- *Only gather data that will assist you in making decisions. Often data is gathered that is irrelevant to the decisions that need to be made.*
- *Avoid "Analysis Paralysis." It is very likely you will not have "all the data" you might want to assess every indicator. The group should decide it will make decisions even when some data might be unavailable.*
- *Going through the process of assessing the community as a group is an important activity that can greatly increase member interest and commitment to the effort.*

Figuring Out Where We Are Now

- *Tobacco control is often not identified as the only, or even the top, concern of the community. Determine where tobacco control as a community issue lies in context of other community needs. Use this information to develop strategies on how to approach and gain the support of diverse groups in the community whose agendas may relate to yours. For example, groups that help people develop literacy skills may become involved if they can use tobacco education materials to help teach reading skills.*
- *Package and disseminate the results of your assessment to educate, advocate and leverage the support of the public, media, elected officials and other key stakeholder groups. Share what you learn!*
- *Information gathered during the assessment might also include local statistics on tobacco use and ETS exposure, as well as the programs, policies and activities that already exist.*



GETTING STARTED

Here are some ideas for getting started with an assessment of your community:

- ▲ *Practice individually assessing a few of the indicators and assets found in Appendix 1B. Compare your findings with those of others and discuss the reasons for differences you may note. This is a 'pilot test' of the assessment. In doing the 'pilot,' you may find at first that people will interpret the indicators and strategies differently. Discussing these differences in advance will help the group be more consistent when it does the full assessment.*
- ▲ *Do a formal, group assessment of all the relevant indicators in Appendix 1B using the instructions in this manual.*
- ▲ *Do an inventory of all the tobacco control programs and activities in your community, including learning what you can about their accomplishments and impact on the tobacco use problem.*

HELPFUL TOOLS

Two tools are attached to provide guidance and information to help begin your community assessment activities.

Instructions for Assessing Community Indicators and Assets - to provide step-by-step guidance in using the California Department of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section's community assessment tools found in Appendix 1 of this manual.

Types and Uses of Data - to serve as a quick reminder of the differences between qualitative and quantitative data and issues that should be considered when using data in your community assessment.

Tool 3 A

Instructions for Assessing Community Indicators and Assets

These step-by step instructions are intended to be used with the California Department of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section's (TCS) *Community Indicators and Assets* material found in Appendix 1 of this manual.

Remember, this is best done as a group activity with the tobacco control team. Completing the assessment could easily take more than one meeting of the group.

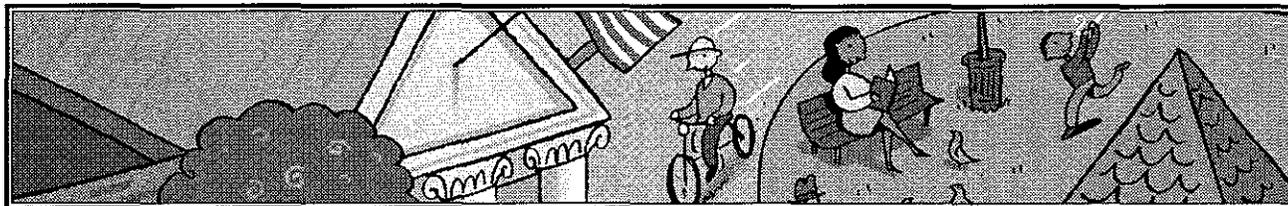
- Step 1 -** *Locate Appendix 1B and familiarize yourselves with its layout. Note that it is divided into separate sections for each of the 4 major tobacco control priority areas (e.g., Eliminate Secondhand Smoke Exposure). Start out by having a group discussion of which of the 4 priority areas you should start with. Pick the one that seems most relevant to your community today.*
- Step 2 -** *Go through each indicator in that priority area as a group and decide which ones apply to your specific community. Not all indicators will apply to every community. Assign responsibility for gathering data for each indicator in your list. Reconvene the group when the data becomes available.*
- Step 3 -** *Hand out copies of the **Community Indicator Assessment Form** found in Appendix 1C. Pick the first indicator that you want to work on and write it's name on the form. You are now ready to rate the indicator.*
- Step 4 -** *As a group, discuss and rate your community on each item that applies. You might also want to individually rate the items that apply and then have a group discussion to compare ratings before agreeing on a final rating. If you need help understanding the rating scales, TCS has developed specific definitions for each point. These are found in Appendix 1E, **Definitions of Attributes for Community Assessment Forms.***

Figuring Out Where We Are Now

- Step 5 -** Now look over all the ratings that apply to the indicator and give the indicator an overall rating on the scale provided. This is a judgement call based on the collective wisdom of the group. Do not average the ratings for the individual items.
- Step 6 -** Fill out the third page of the indicator rating form. Have someone in charge of filling out and keeping a master copy of each assessment form.
- Step 7 -** Handout new copies of the **Community Indicator Assessment Form** and repeat the process for the next indicator that applies. Repeat steps 3-6 until all the indicators that apply to the tobacco control priority area have been rated.
- Step 8 -** Now, go back and repeat the process in Steps 2 - 7 for the indicators in each of the other 3 tobacco control priority areas.
- Step 9 -** Handout copies of the **Community Asset Assessment Form** found in Appendix 1D. As a group, decide which of the 8 assets applies to your community situation.
- Step 10 -** Rate each community asset that applies on the scale provided. Have someone in charge of filling out and keeping a master copy of the asset assessment form for your community.
- Step 11 -** At this point you will have assembled all the ratings for each indicator and asset that applies to your community. This group of ratings will be immensely useful in going to the next step in developing a community plan. At this point, consider as a group the merits of developing a report to the community using your assessment results. Such reports can often be useful in educating the community and motivating others to become involved.

Tool 3 B

Types and Uses of Data



Quantitative Data

Quantitative data are specific numbers that have been systematically derived through some method of counting (e.g., public surveys, motor vehicle records, laboratory test results, etc.). When quantitative data are available to inform decision making, the results are often more reliable and precise.

Examples

State survey and surveillance data (e.g., Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System - BRFSS, Youth Risk Behavior Survey - YRBS)

Ordinance and Policy Tallies (e.g., the number of clean indoor air ordinances in a state, proportion of successful tobacco purchases by minors, number of tobacco free schools)

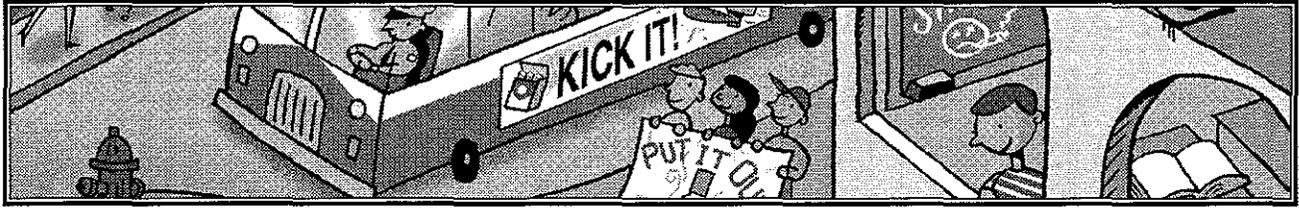
Issues in Using Quantitative Data for Community Assessments

Existing data may not include local community data, but only state or regional data.

Data may not be directly useful for identifying gaps or needs within a community.

There is a need to guard against gathering so much data that it inhibits effective decision making.

New data collection can be an expensive and time consuming undertaking.



Qualitative Data

Qualitative data are more subjective types of information gleaned through methods that rely on summarizing a wide variety of ideas and opinions in a less precise manner than do quantitative methods. Qualitative data can be very useful for getting quick reactions to ideas and concepts or to get a feel for what people are thinking about certain issues.

Examples

- Open ended questions on surveys
- Focus groups
- Central location intercept interviews
- Expert opinion studies

Issues in Using Qualitative Data for Community Assessments

Qualitative methods provide **insights** into issues or populations - not definitive numbers or answers to specific questions.

Qualitative methods typically rely on far fewer individuals who are not usually selected randomly for obtaining information. Thus they are not representative of the population as a whole or even of particular population groups.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Community Health Indicators

<http://faculty.washington.edu/~cheadle/cli/>

Useful indicators designed to assist in monitoring the tobacco control health of your local community.

Comprehensive Tobacco Control

<http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/index.htm>

Centers for Disease Control's website containing data and information on comprehensive tobacco control.