2023 Key Informant Interview Summary

Introduction

In 2017 the California Tobacco Prevention Program (CTPP) conducted five Tribal consultation meetings in Humboldt, Mendocino, Shasta, San Diego, and Riverside counties. The purpose of the meetings was to engage tribal entities to inform the development of funding opportunities to support tribal education, community engagement, capacity building, legislation, regulations, rules, and policies to support commercial tobacco use prevention. The American Indian Initiative funded the following components: 1) a Statewide American Indian Coordinating Center, 2) California American Indian Tribal Projects, 3) American Indian/Alaskan Native Non-profit Agency Projects, and 4) an American Indian Initiative Statewide Evaluation. The goal of the overall initiative was to reduce tobacco-related health disparities in American Indian communities by partnering with tribes and engaging in commercial tobacco use prevention, commercial tobacco reduction, collaboration, and community engagement.

The State of California is home to many tribes, all of whom are self-governed. There are 115 Tribal Nations in the state, with 109 being federally recognized. Each Tribal Nation is unique, with their own governing body and cultural practices.

This report provides a summary of information gathered from Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with CTPP Tribal Initiative grantees conducted between the dates of May 18, 2023, through June 22, 2023, via Zoom. The purpose of the KIIs was to gain insight and inform future funding opportunities to better support tobacco prevention work within American Indian and Alaskan Native populations in California. Invitations were sent to all tribal contacts for each funded tribe and tribal serving organization. A total of 16 KII respondents participated, comprised of 11 participants representing currently funded California Tribal Grants Waves 1-3 and 5 participants from Reducing Tobacco-Related Disparities in American Indian and Alaskan Native Community grants.

Key Informant Interview Findings

Interview notes were examined for key themes and ideas. Throughout the KIIs, five themes came up frequently: Staffing, Scopes of Work (SOW), Media, Policy Work and Technical Assistance (TA). A summary of the feedback around these themes and specific recommendations are provided below.

Common Themes and Recommendations

Staffing

The RFA *California Tribal Grants to Reduce Tobacco-Related Disparities* which funded federally recognized tribes, required minimum staffing of a Program Coordinator/Director (PC/PD) at 50% FTE, a Community Engagement Coordinator at 100% FTE and an

Internal or External Evaluator at 10% FTE. The RFA *Reducing Tobacco-Related Disparities in American Indian Communities* which funded non-profit organizations serving California's American Indian and Alaskan Native Communities, required a minimum staffing of a Project Director or Project Coordinator at 100% FTE, a Community Engagement or Outreach Coordinator at 50% FTE, and an Internal or External Evaluator at 10% FTE. In practice, several tribal governments do not allow program staff to provide project oversight, submit invoices, or manage project budgets. Generally, the Tribal Administrator and/or Tribal Chief Financial Officer (CFO) provides project oversight, submits invoices, and manages the project budget. Because each Tribal Nation functions differently, staffing requirements as outlined by the RFA were difficult to meet.

Staff turnover for tribal and tribal serving grantees is significantly higher than for other grantees. Overall, tribes saw most staffing vacancies. An additional staffing challenge is presented by some tribal office locations. Many are in rural areas, and it can be very difficult to hire and retain programmatic staff in a rural area, requiring a long commute, and when the position is at less than 100% FTE.

Many Tribes and Tribal Serving Organization Key Informants reported that they did not perceive the ability to budget for cultural consultants in the RFA and did not see opportunities to address cultural and traditional components within the grant activities as they are currently written. Cultural consultants can help to create culturally relevant educational materials and resources, provide cultural activities and education, conduct traditional tobacco education, and facilitate elder storytelling.

Utilizing the Comparable State Civil Service Classifications to establish project salaries may create inequities for tribes. In many cases, the comparable state salary would be higher than positions funded by other State and Federal grants and/or for internal Tribal administrative positions, which is often why it is not feasible for tribes to use these recommended salary levels.

Staffing Recommendations for Tribes:

- Include a required Project Coordinator/Director (i.e., Tribal Administration, Chief Financial Officer, or Tribal Department (e.g., Social Services, Education or Health Services) with oversight and fiscal responsibilities at 10% FTE.
- Recommend one or two required Community Engagement Coordinators, at a minimum of 50% FTE each, with FTE depending upon preferred Tribal staffing structures across programs.
- Specifically include Cultural Consultants and Tribal Interns as part of recommended staffing.
- Build some flexibility with how required and recommended staffing requirements are met.
- Provide varying levels of funding for tribal grantees that are commensurate with the level of work.
- Continue to recommend the Comparable State Civil Service Classifications for budgeting, but do not score applications on adherence and be flexible

with proposed salaries from tribes.

Scope of Work (SOW) Activities

Sixty-six percent of CTPP-funded tribal grantees are in rural counties, and most have small populations and members that live off the reservation. SOW activities that require a high number of individuals participating in activities and surveys are challenging and can create resampling issues.

Most of the KII participants highlighted a high need for community engagement, capacity building, and cultural education and connection opportunities within the SOW activities, and provided several suggestions (e.g., storytelling, gatherings, wellness workshops). While many of the suggestions are allowable within current SOW language or could be adjusted via a revision, KII participants noted that due to the approval process within each tribal government, strict adherence to SOW language is common and revisions are cumbersome, so SOWs often remain unchanged throughout the grant period.

Not all tribal entities have economic assets such as casinos, smoke shops, gas stations, campgrounds, and recreational areas. Even when these assets are present, specific policies perceived to have a possible negative financial impact on the tribe may require a significant amount of education and data to generate support.

Several tribes and tribal serving organizations noted struggles with the recruitment and retention of youth coalition members for a variety of reasons, including time commitments and a lack of parental permission or support. Community coalitions are key resources for education and help to identify solutions, including policies, for community problems related to commercial tobacco use. In some tribal communities, youth advocating for policies with elders can be seen as culturally inappropriate.

Participants would like to utilize a wider range of Community Engagement activities to foster culture, support mental health, and build community capacity for commercial tobacco prevention work. Community gardens are inspiring, promote hard work and positivity. They help heal trauma, fill voids, create social connection, and feed the community. Many tribes focus on food sovereignty programs to help fund community gardens and the growing of traditional tobacco. Wellness Workshops can be used to collaborate with and build community capacity with internal government departments and groups such as language/history departments, cultural departments, Social Services, Indian Child Welfare Act Departments, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services, Environmental Protection Agencies, Health and Human Services, Diabetes prevention, Nutrition Programs, Elder focus groups, Housing Boards, Water Boards, Educational Departments, Domestic Violence Programs and Prevention Intervention Programs. Research shows that culture is protective (SAMHSA Native Connections), therefore opportunities to engage in traditional cooking, gardening, and arts and crafts, among other things, is a way to prevent addiction and promote healthy behaviors. Whole health is physical, behavioral, spiritual, and socioeconomic well-being as defined by individuals, families, and communities. Community classes and Wellness Workshops offer a

distraction to tobacco users and encourages community members to explore other hobbies and skills. These types of activities may be more relevant forms of Community Engagement than Community Forums and Town Halls.

SOW Recommendations:

- Consider tribal geography, population size and capacity to accomplish SOW activities when drafting grant requirements. Aim to make SOW activities achievable by considering the unique needs of each tribe and tribal serving organization.
- Ensure SOW activities help to nurture tribal culture, foster belonging and community connections, and provide flexibility, with specific, explicit examples included in activity language of how requirements can be met.
- Provide flexibility for projects to select objectives and tailor activities to advance policies in line with community economic and health priorities.
- Support community coalition work and include youth and elders as coalition members.

Media

KII participants were asked to share their process for placing earned and paid media to reach their community. Several tribes reported they do not have access to paid media or must receive permission from tribal leadership to gain access. Many tribes have limited access to technology such as broadband internet or are in rural areas with limited to no access to internet and poor cell phone reception. Some tribes and tribal serving organizations were successful using social media to advertise for community events and raise awareness with ads in local newsletters and movie theaters.

Media Recommendations:

- Change Paid Media from a required activity to an optional activity.
- Tailor media activity language to highlight potential media outlets and uses of media most appropriate for tribes (e.g., education, awareness raising, event promotion, cessation services).

Policy Work

The CTPP approach to tobacco prevention work centers on the strategy of social norm change, with an emphasis on changing norms in the larger physical and social environment rather than individual behavior change. This strategy focuses on the adoption of policies that lead to reduced tobacco use rates, decreased exposure to second and thirdhand smoke and tobacco marketing, and the promotion of tobacco cessation. After thirty-five years of funding supporting community engagement, education, and organizing, a strong focus of CTPP is on legislated policies enacted by local governments.

Tribal governments and tribal governmental relationships with tribal members are very different, and each is unique. The previous RFA's alignment of tribal SOW policy activities

with those for Local Lead Agencies and other community projects created significant challenges for tribal projects.

More than half the of the Key Informants shared that the strong emphasis on SOW activities designed to engage the Tribal Council multiple times throughout the grant period was unrealistic for them. As a Tribal Nation's governing body, the Tribal Council is navigating many pressing community issues and may not meet very often, and it can be difficult to get on the Council agenda even once during the grant period. Additional time would allow the tribal project to build community engagement and support and collaborate with internal departments and leaders before presenting a policy proposal to their government.

Several KII participants raised concerns regarding the Midwest Academy Strategy Chart (MASC) requirement for policy objectives. The MASC identifies power relationships in the community as well as specific spheres of influence that can be leveraged. In tribal communities, a Tribal Council member may frequently be a relative of staff on the project. Identifying power relationships and community spheres of influence under these circumstances can feel invasive and inappropriate. The Tribal Community Coordinating Center (TCCC), the statewide TA provider for the Tribal Initiative, has worked with tribal communities in creating a Tribal Strategy Chart in lieu of the MASC, which better aligns with tribal sovereignty, policy history, native values, and the culture of native communities. TCCC works with individual tribal projects in adapting the Tribal Strategy Chart to meet the needs of their specific community. Although the Tribal Strategy Chart has been more successful for these projects, there are still areas of improvement needed to ensure this document is culturally appropriate and meets community needs.

Policy Work Recommendations:

- Include only one activity requiring a presentation to the Tribal Council per policy objective.
- Revise the MASC/Tribal Strategy Chart requirement to better align with tribal processes and/or change to a non-submitted tracking measure in progress reports.

Technical Assistance

Several KII participants shared that the Progress Report and required tracking measures are burdensome and can be overwhelming. With frequent staff turnover, there is a continuous need for training and Technical Assistance (TA) to support work and reporting requirements. CTPP collaborated with TCCC in conducting virtual Progress Report TA sessions to go over progress reporting and tracking measure examples, and in person visits were also offered during June - July 2023. These sessions were well attended and successful in helping projects to report out on activities and highlight their progress and accomplishments.

Key Informants expressed a desire to learn more about what other projects in their area are doing, how their work fits into the larger tobacco prevention landscape in California

and to explore potential collaborations. Relationships established between tribal projects and nearby community tobacco prevention grantees could provide support and ensure a more cohesive regional approach to tobacco prevention. Community engagement, capacity and relationship building among local grantees could be beneficial in building a sense of community amongst CTPP funded grantees.

Most KII participants stated that additional culturally appropriate resources are needed to help support their work. As an example, one participant stated the Tobacco Education Clearinghouse of California (TECC) resources were originally created to serve plains tribes and were adapted for California tribes but may require further adaptation to be culturally relevant to specific Californian tribes.

TCCC, CTPP and funded partners collaborated in hosting annual Tribal Showcases, Tribal Learning Institutes, Policy Platform and Progress Report Drop-in Sessions virtually and in person. While TA sessions were helpful, several KII participants reported that it is difficult to request an informal revision on the budget to attend because it often must go through their Tribal Administrator, Tribal Chief Financial Officer, or Tribal Council, creating obstacles for them to attend these learning and collaboration opportunities.

Technical Assistance Recommendations

- Provide one required regional in-person Progress Report TA session per reporting period to go over activity reporting and tracking measure examples.
- Consider CTPP facilitated discussions with Tribal Projects and nearby Local Lead Agency Coalitions to increase awareness, better support tribal needs and encourage collaboration.
- Include a California tribal specific consumer testing group to ensure cultural appropriateness for all AI/AN material and resource development.
- Specifically require participation in annual collaboration and education events for tribes and tribal serving organizations in the project SOW and budget

Summary

In conclusion, Key Informants shared many opportunities to improve future RFAs. A few of these include offering more staffing capacity, flexibility, and cultural support for community engagement; providing a menu of specific options to fulfill activity, event, subcontractor, and overall grant expectations; and being responsive to the unique needs of each funded tribe or tribal serving organization. CTPP understands and appreciates that there is no one size fits all approach to tribal policy work, that building community capacity is the foundation of this work, and it is our intention to empower tribal communities and organizations to do this work for themselves in an authentic and culturally meaningful way.