Law & Policy Partnership to End the Commercial Tobacco Epidemic
American Lung Association & Public Health Law Center
2-E-2 Key Informant Interview Summary Report

Background

The American Lung Association in California (ALA) and Public Health Law Center (PHLC) were awarded a 5-year contract by the California Tobacco Control Program (CTPC) at the California Department of Public Health. The project aims to support commercial tobacco control professionals and advocates in their work to end the commercial tobacco epidemic in California. Together as the Law & Policy Partnership to End the Commercial Tobacco Epidemic, the 'Partnership' provides a variety of services such as the development of educational materials including case studies, policy briefs, and toolkits.

The Research & Evaluation Group (R&E Group) at Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC) serves as the external evaluator for the Partnership. This report summarizes key informant interviews (KIIs) conducted by R&E Group related to the development of educational materials. This activity is part of the larger objective for ALA:

> By June 30, 2024, the Law and Policy Coordinating Center (LPCC), a joint initiative of the American Lung Association (ALA) and the Public Health Law Center (PHLC), will engage and empower local, regional, priority population projects, as well as local and tribal governments across the state to develop laws and policies designed to end the tobacco epidemic in California. To accomplish this, LPCC will create or update 50 linguistically-appropriate policy and educational materials (e.g. new and updated fact sheets, toolkits, policy briefs, and sample policy language). At least 80% of recipients of materials recipients will rate the quality as good or very good.

Methods

In May and June 2022, R&E Group at PHMC conducted qualitative KIIs with members from the Partnership's partner organizations. The purpose of the interviews was to gather insight on recommended material topics and foci of policy and educational materials. Feedback was also solicited on content, messaging, and training needs.

Questions encompassed tobacco control policy issues, needs of their priority populations, barriers to conducting policy and tobacco control work, organizational development, and educational material details such as format, length, style, and distribution methods. Interviews were conducted over Zoom utilizing a semi-structured interview guide and lasted between approximately 30 minutes to an hour.

A total of five partners were interviewed. Interviewees represented the following organizations:

1. California Health Collaborative
2. Monterey County Health Department
3. Riverside County Department of Public Health
4. Sonoma County Department of Health Services

5. Unidos Por Salud

All partners verbally consented to the audio-recording of their interview, which was then transcribed by a third-party transcription service. To ensure the confidentiality of interview participants and de-identify data, the research team assigned each interview transcript a number (i.e., 101-105). One audio recording was impaired, so a partner submitted written responses on a copy of the interview guide instead of partaking in a second interview.

Interview responses were analyzed using a qualitative thematic approach. This report presents recurring themes as well as highlights from individual interviews.

Interview Findings

Target Audience & Priority Populations

Partners reported working with a variety of audiences and priority populations. Constituents included Hispanic/Latinx, Asian, Native American, low-income, and rural communities, as well as general state and county residents, city staff, elected officials, and community leaders.

Policy Priorities

Partner organizations were asked to describe their top tobacco control policy issues to provide insight on their specific needs. Partners were working in almost all fields of tobacco control, yet common focus areas emerged.

Reducing access to tobacco products. Many partners reported efforts to ban e-cigarettes and flavored tobacco. There was a particular emphasis on reducing access to tobacco for youth. One partner stated:

> *"I think the most pressing policies are related to density of retailers and accessibility and availability of flavored and mentholated tobacco and vape products. They are widely available in smaller communities in the Central Valley, a lot of retailers are located near youth-sensitive areas and more are opening right across the street in some communities, and smoke shops aren't being honest about carding minors." (104)*

Reducing second-hand smoke exposure. Partners were also working to reduce second-hand smoke exposure in indoor and outdoor settings. Since smoking indoors is no longer permissible in California, organizations have shifted their work to enforcing these policies and educating individuals. Multi-unit housing was a common setting partners were working with to address second-hand smoke:

> *"We also have focused on secondhand smoke policies, particularly in multi-unit housing. Most of our jurisdictions already have passed these policies, so we work a lot on implementation of the policies and education, so people who live in multi-unit housing know that there's protections and who they can contact if they are being exposed to secondhand smoke." (102)*

Tobacco retail licensing (TRL). A few partners have been trying to establish and update TRL policies in their jurisdictions. This work includes passing flavors and e-cigarettes bans as part of TRL, non-transfer

of license, and having a TRL with a density cap in larger jurisdictions. One partner specifically mentioned modeling the Public Health Law Center's TRL policy:

> *"What we're working on right now that is pressing is for the county to update their countywide TRL to be more comprehensive and to get closer to the model comprehensive TRL policy like the one that the Public Health Law Center published." (101)*

Policy Barriers

Partners were asked about barriers they have encountered related to addressing tobacco use through policy in their work and communities. Several themes regarding barriers emerged.

Political climate. Many partners noted challenges with more business-friendly, conservative communities. Partners reported that communities, elected officials, and businesses are resistant to more government involvement and health-driven arguments. As one partner put it:

> *"A lot of our communities are business friendly in the Central Valley and choose profits over the health and safety of our youth and community members. A lot of elected officials in the area tend to be more conservative as well and prefer not having government or policy involved as they relate to people's decisions to use products. Although we have data, information, and personal stories, it doesn't always make an impact." (104)*

One partner shared that even when businesses are receptive to health-related arguments and impose restrictions of their own volition, they oppose the enactment of actual laws, which they perceive as over-regulation. They shared:

> *"Folks that don't want it -- they're fine with the ideas of people being healthy and, in fact, I spoke with a property manager, real estate person who does like 70 percent of the property management in one of our jurisdictions. And he said that all of his properties are smoke-free because he doesn't want to deal with neighbor arguments. But once it came time to a policy being put in place, that's where he drew the line. He's like, no, not going to go for that because the government already has too much overreach and it costs too much money for this and that." (105)*

Another partner noted that elected officials, even those who aren't entirely opposed to tobacco control policies, can use the resulting lack of community mobilization to stymie discussions on tobacco control:

> *"The work becomes harder because there isn't that foundational skill building and awareness, consciousness, how to work together and the skills related to that. And the elected officials that aren't already predisposed to be supportive, if they're kind of neutral in opposition, I think they notice that and they might take advantage of that weakness, that limitation when there isn't that community capacity built and they have strategies of how to deflect. And that's where, as an example, not wanting to take meetings, not wanting to be fully responsive to the concerns that are expressed." (101)*

Misconceptions. A few partners commented on the effect of misconceptions on community members' and elected officials' unwillingness to be proactive. One misconception that was mentioned was on protective statuses. A partner elaborated on this misconception and how it compounds political opposition:

> *"One of the biggest barriers is elected officials not wanting to adopt policies restricting what people can do in their homes. Health impacts and data don't really help making the case, even if a family next door is being negatively impacted by the secondhand smoke. The biggest misconception is that smokers are a "protected population" so they should be able to smoke wherever they want." (104)*

More broadly, partners are not aware of the misconceptions that impede their work. A couple of partners expressed the need to identify common misconceptions and frame arguments to minimize resistance. One partner speculated that tobacco control is not a priority because of misconceptions around the prevalence of tobacco use and its resolution years ago:

> *"A lot of times maybe we don't know the misconceptions and it would be nice to have some of that formative research to at least have something to base message development on. So misconceptions, I would say maybe the perception that things are okay in terms of just not being as aware of say how many young people are using tobacco products, how many are getting addicted, how easily available they are. And maybe that perception that tobacco issue was already addressed years and decades ago and therefore right now is not like there's other priorities." (101)*

Enforcement. Another common challenge centered on enforcement issues, including educating jurisdictions on different ways to enforce policies that are seemingly inexecutable, and lack of funding for general enforcement and specifically for lawsuits if someone sues for banning flavors, as an example.

Interestingly, one partner questioned the enforceability of tobacco control policies given the rapid expansion of tobacco products. This partner felt unclear about the stopping point and whether efforts are intended to be anti-tobacco when the tobacco industry will continue to find new and different ways to sell their products. They said:

> *"With all the emerging tobacco products, it's hard to stay ahead of it. And enforce it. We just started passing a few flavor policies. And it's going to be interesting how we're going to enforce it. I've heard that there are 15,000 flavors. How are you going to train somebody in environmental health or law enforcement to go and check on those items? I agree flavors are bad. I totally get that at some point. But how are you going to enforce them? And then also saying that these products are evolving so quickly and like we're playing catch up. And what's our end game?" (103)*

Successful Strategies

Partners were asked to share strategies they found successful in overcoming the barriers they faced in their work. Two major themes were identified.

Mobilizing communities and engaging youth. Partners agreed that it is important to engage the community and include a variety of constituents and organizations in discussions. Elected officials may

respond more favorably if it's their constituents asking for changes. One partner acknowledged that the long-term nature of this work can pose as an obstacle to community mobilization. They suggested framing the community's efforts in a way that makes it clear their dedication will pay off in the future:

"The challenge or the work ahead of us is mobilizing, developing those relationships, that trust to really engage constituents to be the voice and to be really concerned and kind of dedicated and have the perseverance to do this type of work, and realizing how long it does take. And that's where as a solution, I would suggest that we think in terms of building that underlying capacity foundation more like with a 10 year plus perspective and then trying to harvest the benefit of that long term." (101)

Youth were mentioned frequently as an effective driving force in discussions with elected officials. One partner said they always try to frame their arguments as a youth issue because most elected officials agree that they don't want youth to start using tobacco products. Another partner agreed that concerns around youth supersede concerns around health:

"Most of our target audiences related to policy change don't actually care about health, unless it is specifically about youth use of vapes and vaping products." (104)

Leveraging relationships with elected officials. A couple of partners mentioned the importance of using connections that community members and partners have with elected officials to support their work. A partner shared:

"We're not supposed to approach or request these interviews with elected officials. And so what that means is we have to work through partners or others. And so what we've been able to do is yeah, ask for help from our coalition. Sometimes we have university student interns, and sometimes we ask them for support sometimes, yeah, other coalition members that might have better access to those elected officials." (101)

Another partner described an experience where it was helpful to have support from a high-ranking health provider who had connections with an elected official:

"In some of our federal jurisdictions, having the director of the local FQHC Federally Qualified Health Center is a huge person to speak. You know we had that person speak in the city council member said, oh, I remember when my doctor interned for you before going to medical school and I'm so glad to hear from you, and it's great to see your face and just that the local connection. And we weren't aware of that necessarily, but having that very perspective, I think can be really helpful." (102)

Existing Materials & Resources

A few partners mentioned accessing the Law and Policy Partnership's online resources. One partner was extremely appreciative of these resources and trusted the comprehensiveness and utility of the materials that the Law and Policy Partnership create. They shared:

"It's very helpful to have a repository available online that I can access at my fingertips. So if a question does come up, I can -- I know where to go, even if it's not something I've reviewed. I have

the confidence in Public Health Law Center, what they've done, that I know the materials that I'm going to look at are going to give me quality, researched, and solid background information. And that's really what I will go to them for." (102)

Needs

Partners were asked to share their needs around training and educational resources to support their work.

Comprehensive regional case studies. Partners expressed interest in resources that included region-specific success stories, obstacles, approaches, and ramifications for different policies and from different perspectives. A partner stated the usefulness in being able to simply point out the number of similar communities that have achieved their shared goal:

"We used to have updated policy matrixes that listed all of the communities and counties in California who had passed specific policies. It was easy to refer to it to say 'this number' of communities in CA have passed a policy and point out which communities are most similar to them." (104)

Another partner believed that case stories on community capacity building would be helpful in maintaining community morale:

"I think telling those stories of how did people get engaged, what made them want to persevere when it was hard, when things were taking too long or progress wasn't being made, whatever the reason, and how did they persevere and what were some key turning points and motivations with within that. So I think telling deeper case studies I think is worthwhile. I think they're hard to write, but I think that's the type of information that both community residents would benefit from as well as those that are leading, kind of coordinating tobacco prevention programs." (101)

A partner who had incorporated regional case studies explained its usefulness for conveying critical information in a meaningful way to both elected officials and businesses:

"We are working on putting together a local version of that to outline what each jurisdiction has and what the effect is on the retailer in real enforcement. And the coalition, and we want you to pick this option because it's strongest or it's the one we agree with the most, but we as the local lead agency can say, here's what the actual effect is. So you understand when you pass this version of it, this is what this means. And that may not be the strongest, but you may not want the strong version for whatever reason, we're not here to say what's right or wrong, but we don't like coming into a situation where we feel like things get dropped or taken out just because people don't -- the decision makers don't understand what's before them." (102)

Parents, students, and schools were also requested as groups to base perspectives on.

Concise educational materials. Partners emphasized the need for documents that were more concise and accessible. One partner felt that long documents were ineffective when communicating with the general public:

> *"You don't need 20 page papers, 30, 40, 50 page paper. That's just a waste of time. It's like it's for academics. They can create them, but they need to be something that are quickly accessible." (103)*

The same partner argued that a short document can be more effective at accomplishing its intended purpose:

> *"All I need is a two-pager that summarizes that policy for an elected official. If your goal is to pass ordinances, what do you need? You need a model language annotated that is wonderful and everything. But you need just a few other simple things that explain what material it is and why it's effective." (103)*

Immediate technical assistance. The same partner expressed the need for technical assistance that provides immediate assistance for time-sensitive questions and requests. They stressed how bureaucratic processes hinder their ability to quickly address elected officials' inquiries:

> *"Have one lawyer answer the phone . . . as opposed to fill out this form and somebody will get back to you in a few days . . . Most times I need a response quick. But that's not the world that we live in. The one where some elected official has a question for you and you need an answer for the county council that same day. That's the question and I need an answer." (103)*

Recommendations

Partners provided valuable information about their priority populations and focus areas. Partners also addressed material, resource, and training needs that would be beneficial to their programs. The following sections offer recommendations for developing materials, resources, and training content to improve partners' capacity to address priority populations and overcome barriers.

Make Resources Accessible to Diverse Audiences

Create resources for non-English speaking populations. Since most partners work with populations that may not speak English, materials that are culturally competent and in other languages are needed to ensure all audiences receive the same high-quality information. A partner who works primarily with a Spanish-speaking population noted how materials in Spanish are required for certain target audiences:

> *"Anything that's provided to the public, our school districts actually have a rule that they won't share anything with any parents unless it's in both English and Spanish. Because it's an equity issue they want to make sure that their monolingual Spanish speaking parents get the same information that their English speaking parents do. So they won't give out the information period, if it's not in both languages." (102)*

Make materials at all literacy levels available. The literacy level of target audiences should also be considered. Materials designed for policymakers and elected officials may not be accessible to community members with varying educational backgrounds and technical knowledge. As one partner shared:

> *"The majority would be high school graduates. And then diminishing percentages from there, it drops off a lot from after a bachelor's degree. And so in terms of the reading level, it's kind of you can interpret that two ways. From an educator point of view, one could ask what's the reading level that you target your communication to, which is different than what's the reading level of the actual audience. And so somewhere between sixth to ninth grade reading level is probably a good way to target." (101)*

A different partner reported working with a population with an average reading level between third and fifth grade. To ensure the widest reach possible, materials should be made available in as many literacy levels as possible.

Shorten and diversify educational materials. Partners prefer concise materials for themselves and target audiences. Infographics, digital media, short documents, and social media were cited as the most effective communication tools with target populations. A partner supported shorter trainings and meetings that were direct and simple:

> *"Somebody needs to become the master of the 45 minute Zoom. The trainings are a lot of repetition. A lot of it is icebreakers, introductions, and people getting online. There's great potential to maximize productivity and education if we focus on smaller timeframes with real simple messages." (103)*

Tailor messages to audiences of varying ideologies. Partners agreed that the political ideologies of their elected officials, businesses, and community members often inhibit their efforts. Some partners have found successful strategies to deal with these issues, such as putting youth at the forefront and leveraging community members' relationships with elected officials. Interestingly, a couple of partners found it important to meet the community where it is:

> *"You also have to understand and have an appreciation of where politically your community is at. I think that's key." (102)*

Partners need access to resources that encourage proactive movement in diverse communities, including conservative communities. Businesses and elected officials who are resistant to overregulation may be more receptive to messaging and language that de-emphasizes this regulatory component. A partner commented:

> *"I would say 'tobacco control' is probably one of those trigger words. The 'control' part, right? Government overreach. That type of thing." (105)*

Compile Population- and Jurisdiction-Specific Information

Develop resources on common misconceptions in priority populations. A partner who felt uncertain of their priority population's misconceptions of tobacco control policies recommended putting together a resource or repository that identifies common misconceptions to make it easier for advocates frame effective messages. They shared:

> *"I remember, this was about maybe 18 years ago or 17 years ago, that Kaiser Permanente put out a booklet, a series of booklets about kind of the health related perceptions and beliefs, behaviors, attitudes of different priority populations. And I haven't seen that in kind of the California tobacco world of like background formative research on priority populations that can help be the foundation for message and material development. I think there is some, but I haven't seen it like maybe all in one place, or it's kind of here and there."* (101)

Assemble regional case studies from multiple perspectives. As previously discussed, partners would like case studies from the perspectives of community members, elected officials, and businesses to better advocate for policy change within their jurisdiction. One partner explained the value of case studies:

> *"I've started describing things as there's some campaigns that are driven within city hall and some that are driven outside of city hall. And it's like the insider and outsider or insider and outsider together, both. So I think it might be helpful to have almost like different categorization is like -- okay, if you're -- because what I've noticed so far is that every community is different, every campaign is different. And so if you can characterize your campaign like this, then you might consider these types of steps or these type of partners to build your power base accordingly. If this is your type of campaign, you might think of this, or you might be strong in this area, but you might have a limitation."* (101)

Key Informant Interview Guide: Law and Policy Coordinating Center
Spring 2022

Thank you for agreeing to participate in today's interview. We are Public Health Management Corporation, the external evaluators for the Law and Policy Partnership. As you know, The Partnership was awarded a 5-year contract by the California Tobacco Control Program to support commercial tobacco control professionals and advocates in the work to end the California commercial tobacco epidemic.

The partnership provides a variety of services and materials such as model language, case studies, policy briefs, and toolkits. We are gathering feedback and recommendations from California Tobacco Control Partners for those educational and outreach materials.

We would like to learn about what types of materials you think are needed and how they could be developed in an appropriate manner for populations you serve. The information you provide us today will be presented to the Partnership Center and will help to inform their content and messaging. This interview will take around 30 – 45 minutes to complete. We'll be recording this discussion so that we can get a word-for-word transcription that will help us to analyze and summarize the feedback that all the stakeholders have provided into a report for the partnership. Do you have any questions before we begin the interview?

Background Information – *First we're going to discuss some brief background information about you and your organization.*

1. How long have you been working in your current position/the tobacco control field?

2. Can you tell me a little about your organization and who you see as your organization's primary constituents?

- If applicable: Are there languages other than English spoken by the populations you serve? If yes, which languages?
- If applicable: What is the average reading level or educational attainment for members of your populations?

3. What are your organization's top tobacco control policy issues? (Probe: tobacco retail, smoke-free housing, tobacco waste, tobacco free outdoors, regulation of hookah)

4. Does your organization provide any type of training, guidance, or materials focused on tobacco control and prevention? (Probes: What is the format of the training/guidance/materials? How often is the training/guidance/materials provided? What staff provide the training/guidance/materials?)

Needs and Barriers – *Next we're going to discuss knowledge gaps, needs, and potential topic areas for future publications.*

5. In your opinion, what is the most pressing policy issue around tobacco and electronic cigarette use in your community?

6. What are some barriers you have observed related to addressing tobacco use through policy in your community/work? (Probes: lack of knowledge, lack of resources, lack of specific services in the community)

7. What strategies have worked for you to overcome these barriers? What strategies have not worked for you?

8. What are your greatest needs in terms of training and resources for developing laws and policies designed to end the tobacco epidemic in California?

Topics and Foci – *Next we're going to discuss specific topic areas for future publications. (Feed topics from answers to questions 3 and 8 or use options below)*

9. Tobacco retail – what do you see as some of the barriers to adopting tobacco retail policies? What information about tobacco retail policies is most important for those in your communities? What are some of the misconceptions about tobacco retail policies in your communities?

10. Smoke-free housing – what do you see as some of the barriers to adopting smoke-free housing policies? What information about smoke-free housing policies is most important for those in your communities? What are some of the misconceptions about smoke-free housing policies in your communities?

11. Tobacco waste – what do you see as some of the next steps for regulating tobacco product waste? What information about tobacco product waste regulation is most important for those in your communities? What are some of the misconceptions about tobacco waste regulations in your communities?

12. Tobacco free outdoors – what do you see as some of the barriers to adopting smoke-free outdoors policies? What information about smoke-free outdoor policies is most important for those in your communities? What are some of the misconceptions about smoke-free outdoor policies in your communities?

13. Regulation of hookah – what do you see as some of the next steps for regulating hookah? What information about hookah regulations is most important for those in your communities? What are some of the misconceptions about hookah regulations in your communities?

Material Details – *Lastly, we have some technical questions around educational materials and documents to understand what type of format would work best for you and to help your audience process information.*

14. What kind of informational materials does your organization make available when engaging in policy/community change work?

15. Who are your target audiences for these materials? (Probes: community members local coalitions, tobacco control stakeholders)

16. How do you distribute materials to your target audience? (e.g. email, website, in-person)

17. What formats of educational materials do your audiences respond best to? Are there any formats that have been ineffective in the past? (Probes: infographics, text documents)

18. Is there anything else you would like to share to help the Law and Policy Coordinating Center better understand your needs around educational materials?