



## Executive Summary

### Tobacco Policy Change: A Collaborative for Healthier Communities and States

*Tobacco Policy Change: A Collaborative for Healthier Communities and States*, which ran from 2004 to 2010, provided resources and technical assistance to local, regional, and national organizations and tribal groups to advance tobacco-control initiatives. The program aimed to foster grassroots efforts to promote policy changes in states and communities disproportionately affected by tobacco use. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) authorized the national program for \$11.7 million.

[Read the full report.](#)

#### CONTEXT

From 1993 to 2004, coalitions working through *SmokeLess States*, an RWJF national program, advanced tobacco excise taxes, laws curbing smoking in workplaces and public spaces, and laws restricting youth access to tobacco products. However, major disparities persisted in who benefited from these policies, with lower-income individuals, minorities, southern states, and tribal nations often lacking protection.

#### THE PROGRAM

*Tobacco Policy Change* awarded 75 grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$150,000 to 59 organizations in 33 states—often groups serving particular populations, including the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities; youth; African Americans; Latinos; American Indians; and other ethnic minorities.

Grantees advanced policies proven to prevent tobacco use, help smokers quit, protect people from secondhand smoke, and sustain tobacco control, through activities such as public education, communications, technical assistance, and outreach in support of tobacco-related policy change. RWJF is prohibited by law from supporting direct or

grassroots lobbying; grantees raised matching funds from other sources to complement their advocacy efforts.

In the final round of *Tobacco Policy Change*, Grantees were funded to pursue policy change designed to tackle a second public health problem.

Evaluators from the City University of New York conducted a quantitative and qualitative evaluation to document grantees' progress, and assess *Tobacco Policy Change* as a grant-making strategy for addressing disparities around tobacco harm.

## KEY RESULTS

- **Many grassroots organizations used *Tobacco Policy Change* to play their first prominent role in the tobacco-control movement and become effective voices for communities most affected by tobacco.**
- **Many of the tobacco policy campaigns in which these organizations participated achieved the desired changes, including smoke-free indoor air laws, increases in tobacco taxes, and Medicaid coverage for services to help smokers quit.**
- **Grantees used the skills they developed through *Tobacco Policy Change* to tackle other critical public health needs, including childhood obesity, access to health care, outdoor air pollution, exposure to radon, intimate partner violence, and workforce wellness.**

## EVALUATION FINDINGS

From a survey of 76 project directors and representatives of their project partners representing 66 projects, evaluators reported:

- 76 percent of survey respondents felt they understood more about the advocacy process as a result of their involvement with *Tobacco Policy Change*.
- 90 percent of survey respondents reported that the grant strengthened their relationships with allies.
- 86 percent of survey respondents felt that their project won them more support from local policy-makers.
- 43 percent of survey respondents reported that their coalition is continuing to work on health challenges beyond tobacco.

## AFTERWARD

A number of coalitions are continuing their policy advocacy efforts regarding tobacco control and other health challenges. However, with the close of the program, RWJF is not closely tracking individual coalition activities.<sup>1</sup>

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### Program Management

Managed Internally at RWJF

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<sup>1</sup> RWJF is still tracking a lot of the tobacco control work through the [Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids](#) and the tobacco control database created by the American Nonsmokers' Rights Foundation; in some instances former *Tobacco Policy Change* grantees are part of the larger statewide coalition (e.g. Texas) that is being tracked.