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August 2016

28-Day Rapid Response Survey & Report: Tobacco Retailer Engagement

Tobacco products are cheap, readily available and easy to get, and are heavily promoted and marketed in stores. This makes it difficult for current smokers to stop and promotes tobacco use to Oregon's youth. The Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention Section is approaching strategies in the tobacco retail environment through two mechanisms. The first is a statewide requirement in the regular annual funding stream (Core Tobacco Prevention and Education Program or TPEP) that goes to all Local Public Health Authorities. The second strategy is a special funding stream (SPArC Tobacco-Free) for seven counties to focus exclusively on tobacco retail policy advancement. The Tobacco Retail Evaluation (TRE) supports this work through ongoing systematic assessment and reporting. The TRE is guided by a small panel (TRE user panel) of Oregon tobacco control practitioners and facilitated by the Rede Group.

TRE
Tobacco Retail
Evaluation

Introduction

Retailer Engagement

Retailer engagement is an important consideration for local tobacco programs working to change the tobacco retail environment. As entities that will be directly affected by any policy change, retailers are clearly important stakeholders. Retailer engagement is a broad term encompassing any number of activities ranging from education to collaboration.

Questions about Retailer Engagement

Oregon TPEP and SPArC Tobacco-Free grantees want to better understand how best to interface with retailers.

Rede worked with the TRE user panel to conduct this 28-Day Rapid Response Survey and Report* to gather information and perspectives from TPEP and SPArC Tobacco-Free Grantees about their experiences with tobacco retailer engagement. In August 2016 Rede conducted this brief survey, which received responses from 31 of the 34 TPEP/SPArC grantees.

9 out of 30

grantees are currently engaging retailers

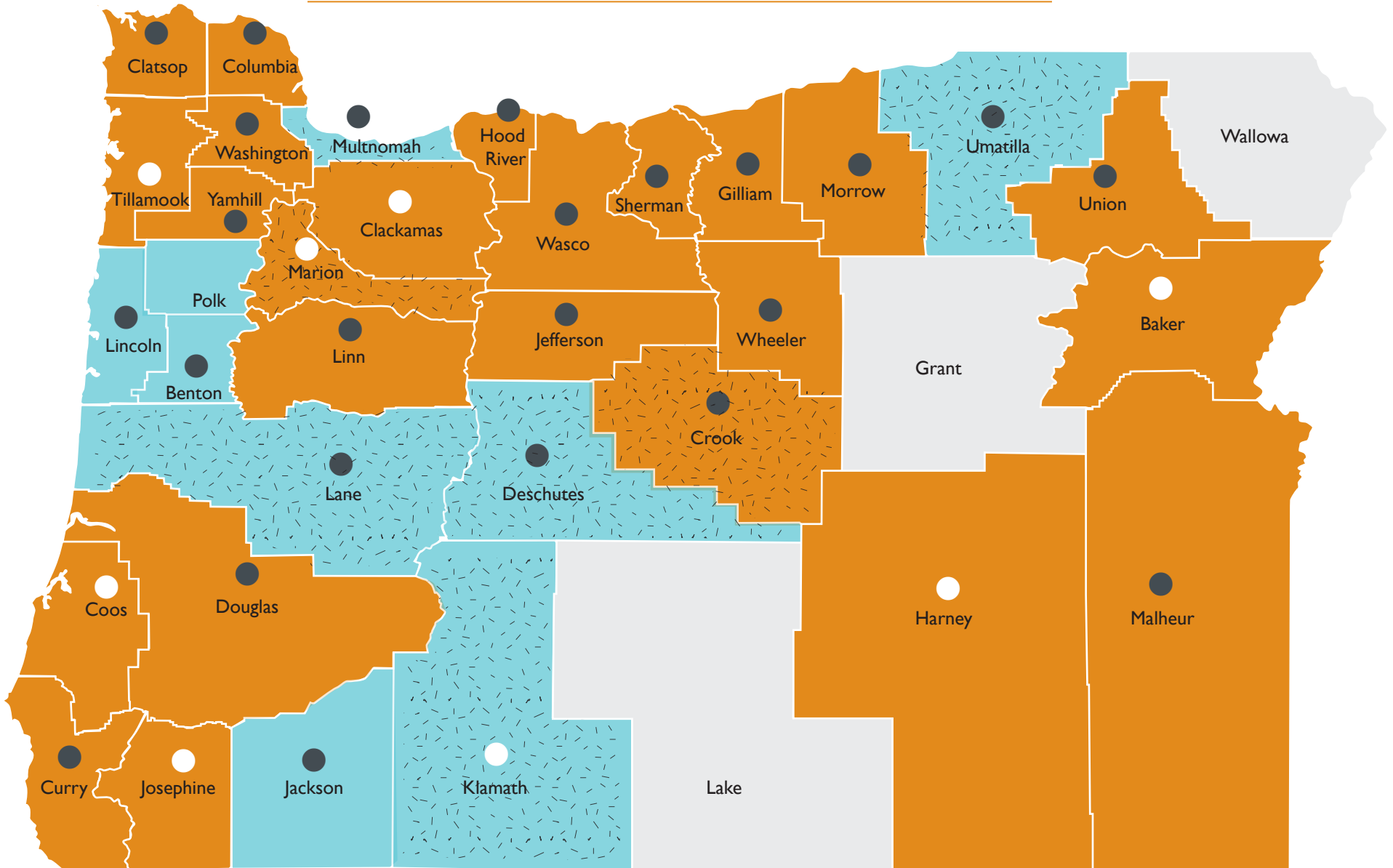
22 out of 30

grantees plan to engage retailers

5 out of 7

SPArC grantees are currently engaging retailers

Tobacco Retailer Engagement Attempts and Plans August 2016



Counties that have not engaged, or have not engaged beyond tobacco retailer assessment

Counties that have engaged beyond tobacco retailer assessment

Unknown

SPArC Counties

Counties that have engagement plans

Counties that do not have engagement plans

Findings

+ Most grantees feel that retailer engagement is important and plan to engage retailers this year.

+ Many grantees expressed uncertainty about the best approaches or strategies for engaging retailers. Six respondents are at the planning stage and are unsure of where to begin the work.

+ Nine respondents described that their local retail assessment did not lead to further retailer engagement opportunities.

+ One out of five respondents said this work was not feasible due to time and budget constraints.

Respondents cited the following reasons for engaging retailers:

- To engage those affected by the efforts, make them feel included, and convey that their opinion is well regarded.
- Recognized a need to inform, train, or build more relationships with tobacco retailers.
- The retail assessment and TPEP workplan
- Requested by Board of Commissioners.

Respondents cited the following reasons for not engaging retailers:

- Board of Commissioners or other decision makers do not support retailer engagement.
- Other pressing priorities in their workplan.
- The work has already been done.
- Lack of interest in the community.
- Retailer engagement will be a slow process.

Grantees cited a variety of strategies to engage retailers

- Use the new federal requirements for electronic devices as an opportunity to start discussions.
- Conduct Key informant interviews with retailers.
- Mail information to retailers.
- Visit tobacco retailers to gain their input on tobacco retail licensure, learn how much retailers may be willing to pay for a license, how much push back we may have when trying to pass an ordinance and their overall feelings about licensing.
- Attend meetings and have conversations with Chamber of Commerce to gain support.
- Develop a community based committee (that includes tobacco retailers) to discuss Tobacco Retailer Licensure (TRL) and other tobacco prevention strategies.
- Increase awareness of flavored tobacco targeted to youth.
- Engage retailers in and around the city targeted for retail policy intervention.
- Engage local youth groups.

“Gather and gauge retailer support before heading to the Board of Commissioners.”

—Grantee

“Know that while you may be able to influence some retailers, you will not change all of their minds.”

—Grantee

“If you can get a local retailer champion, use them to influence other retailers.”

—Grantee

Advice from Grantees

Advice from grantees who have already engaged tobacco retailers:

What has worked:

- Frame retailer engagement efforts around youth tobacco prevention using evidence from Synar and FDA inspections.
- Consider one-on-one engagement versus a forum type setting to have more control and avoid media presence.
- Know that retailer engagement may not always be necessary or appropriate.
- Decision makers often want to see that the businesses most impacted are aware of the work and potentially are part of the process.
- A countywide mailing moved the process from the stage of assessment to increasing awareness, providing education and technical support as needed. It allowed for a friendly exchange of information instead of being seen as the government taking away our rights.
- Send prior communication to retail store managers/owners via email, letter or phone call before going into the store to give them a heads up about the retail assessment or other activities and how the data will be used.
- Find champions and listen to their feedback.
- Be friendly, open, and honest. Be understanding that this is a business regulation but that it is a necessary business regulation because some retailers are not following the law (most retailers know this and agree with this).

- Support retailers to conduct outreach and education to other retailers on this topic.
- Speak with retailers in person.
- Educate community members on a variety of tobacco topics so that retailers do not feel targeted.
- Include retailer representation in the decision making process.

What hasn't worked:

- Not engaging retailers.
- Not having a solid enforcement plan in place.
- Staff turnover.
- Internal disagreements on the topic.
- Showing up in retail stores unannounced.

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“Send prior communication to retail store owners via email, letter, or phone before going into the store to give them a heads up about the retail assessment and how the data will be used.”

—Grantee

Conclusions

- + **Retailer engagement is an important aspect of tobacco retail policy work.**
- + **Local TPEP programs should use caution and strategic thinking with respect to the timing and approach.**
- + **Local TPEP programs should be realistic about retailers willingness to support tobacco retail policy.**
- + **HPCDP should assist counties with technical assistance and tools for developing approaches and strategies for retailer engagement.**

*This is a rapid response evaluation that follows a four-step process completed over the course of 28 days.

The process includes:

1. Develop the survey instrument
2. Collect survey responses
3. Analyze survey responses
4. Report survey findings

The purpose of this evaluation method is to collect information from grantees to report and share findings quickly so those findings can be used in grantees current and future work to implement tobacco retail policy.

Rede group plans to conduct a series of four or five 28-Day Rapid Response Survey and Reports on various topics that will contribute to and inform the larger Tobacco Retail Evaluation.