

# Objective 2: Build Capacity to End the Commercial Tobacco Epidemic

California aims to eradicate the tobacco industry's influence and harm in the state, and in so doing to end the commercial tobacco epidemic.<sup>1</sup> As the state's endgame policy platform notes:

*“This will be accomplished by building a statewide movement that prepares and transitions communities, especially those consisting of populations that have been disproportionately targeted by the tobacco industry, to end the commercial tobacco epidemic, to protect public health, to protect the environment, and to eliminate tobacco-related health disparities for all Californians.”<sup>1</sup>*

This goal requires a strong focus on capacity building and developing and maintaining resources, services, and advocacy devoted to priority populations that have benefited the least from the state's progress in tobacco prevention.

Building capacity while striving for health equity requires investing greater resources wherever people are not afforded an equal opportunity to be healthy.<sup>2</sup> It requires a commitment to developing a diverse tobacco prevention workforce, including a new generation of leaders, as well as active partnerships with groups that have been marginalized due



**Interns train with the Nicotine and Cannabis Policy Center (NCPC), one of three policy research centers funded by TRDRP.**

Source: NCPC

## Key Themes

- ❖ Ending the commercial tobacco epidemic requires capacity building throughout the entire tobacco prevention work force.
- ❖ It requires a special focus on building capacity to serve communities disproportionately impacted by tobacco.
- ❖ Dwindling tax resources necessitate a strong focus on sustainability and partnership.

to racism, homophobia, transphobia, and other forms of bias and exclusion.<sup>3</sup> It also requires a greater focus on the root causes of disparities and the development of programs designed to address these determinants of health.

It is important to bear in mind that as tobacco prevention and cessation reduce the number of people addicted to tobacco, they also reduce the tax revenue generated from tobacco sales. There must be a plan to sustain programming for tobacco prevention and cessation in the face of this reality.

# Recommended Strategies

## Policy

- Ensure that the tobacco prevention and cessation workforce reflects the communities it serves through organization-wide diversity initiatives and strategic succession planning to increase diversity and develop future leaders.
- Increase state funding for tobacco prevention to the level recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; in 2024, California allocated only about 60% of the recommended amount.<sup>4</sup>

## Education

- Provide mentorship and skills development opportunities to help young people, especially those from priority populations, choose careers in tobacco prevention.
- Offer trainings to coalition members and the public about civil service to engage more people in tobacco prevention efforts at the city, county, and state levels.
- Widely promote career development and job opportunities to local tobacco prevention coalitions, youth advocates, local colleges, and internship and fellowship programs to expand access for diverse candidates.
- Highlight and share local successes in tobacco policymaking and other areas of tobacco prevention to help build local capacity.
- Develop retailer communities of practice to disseminate knowledge of best practices for tobacco prevention in retail settings beyond funded organizations.

## Research

- Create and sustain a diverse pipeline of young people, especially those from priority populations, who gain experience in tobacco prevention research or advocacy while in high school or college and then advance to full careers in this field.
- Increase collaboration between doctorate-granting research universities and community colleges serving students from priority populations, exposing them to and including them in tobacco-related research projects.
- Build capacity and develop a more diverse new generation of tobacco prevention researchers to address health disparities and advance health equity in communities disproportionately impacted by the commercial tobacco epidemic.
- Ensure that findings from community-based research are disseminated back to communities in a timely manner for their use in efforts to end the commercial tobacco epidemic.



**California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) student researchers participate in the TRDRP-funded Smoke and Vape-Free Scholars Initiative Program.**

Source: CSUSM

## Partnership

- Improve collaboration between state agencies, local lead agencies, local educational agencies, Tribal communities and governments, community organizations, universities, and other partners to increase opportunities for capacity building in tobacco prevention.
- Collaborate with nontraditional partners such as economic development organizations, employers and business groups, labor unions, faith-based communities, social justice and equity groups, environmental advocates, and community planners, both to increase effectiveness and reach and to help sustain programming as tobacco tax revenues decline.
- Ensure that all agencies and partner organizations have broad access to high-quality training and technical assistance.
- To support the pipeline of future tobacco prevention researchers and advocates, partner with youth organizations, colleges, and universities to engage young people in tobacco prevention work, such as research, policy advocacy, and social norm change campaigns. Where appropriate, provide internships and other sustained learning opportunities for young people.

## Funding

- Help sustain the fight to end the commercial tobacco epidemic in California by:
  - Indexing tobacco taxes to inflation.
  - Dedicating a greater proportion of tobacco tax revenue for tobacco prevention and research.
  - Dedicating proceeds from any tobacco industry settlements and new industry fees for tobacco prevention and research.
  - Requiring publicly funded health insurance programs, including Medi-Cal, Covered California, and CalPERS, to cover and promote barrier-free access to comprehensive cessation services for their members who use tobacco.
  - Demanding transparency in how tobacco and cannabis tax revenues are allocated, and advocating for robust funding of cannabis prevention.
- Promote sustainability in tobacco prevention programming by:
  - Coordinating interagency funding strategies and programs to avoid the duplication of services and maximize the public benefit.
  - Prioritizing activities that strengthen the policy environment, leverage federal funding, and get new partners involved in tobacco prevention and cessation as a regular part of their work.
  - Assisting grantees in planning to sustain their programs.
- Make technical support services available at no cost to grantees, contractors, and partner organizations to help them build capacity cost-effectively.
- Encourage participation in tobacco prevention efforts by providing internships, community engagement grants, and travel reimbursement.
- Provide funding and capacity building resources for Tribes working on commercial tobacco prevention and education.



**Girls Rising, a group of singers and trainers for the Medicine Wheel Project in Resources for Indian Student Education (RISE), an American Indian Education Center funded by TUPE to prevent commercial tobacco use.**

Source: Rise, Inc.

# References

- <sup>1</sup> Law and Policy Partnership to End the Commercial Tobacco Epidemic. [Endgame Policy Platform—Version 4](#). Public Health Law Center and American Lung Association California. November 2023.
- <sup>2</sup> Braveman P, Arkin E, Orleans T, Proctor D, Plough A. [What is health equity? And what difference does a definition make?](#) Princeton, NJ: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; 2017.
- <sup>3</sup> Nixon SA. [The coin model of privilege and critical allyship: implications for health](#). *BMC Public Health*. 2019;19(1):1637.
- <sup>4</sup> Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. [Broken Promises to Our Children: A State-by-State Look at the 1998 Tobacco Settlement 25 Years Later](#). January 10, 2024.