



California Tobacco Control Coalitions: An analysis of survey responses from 25 tobacco control coalitions

Introduction

Local coalitions play an important role in advancing the work of local tobacco control and other disease prevention efforts. California's Department of Public Health, Tobacco Control Program (CDPH, TCP) requires that Local Lead Agencies, which are funded through a tobacco tax for their tobacco control work, establish and maintain local coalitions and involve them in the planning and implementation of tobacco policy work. Each county in California convenes a tobacco control coalition comprised of representatives from local organizations. These coalitions conduct satisfaction surveys regularly. They can do so by developing their own surveys or they can use a service provided by the Tobacco Control Evaluation Center (TCEC) at UC Davis, which makes an online survey available for their use. In the past seven years many counties have taken advantage of this opportunity. TCEC developed the survey in 2007 based on available

literature about what constitutes a well-functioning and effective coalition. The survey was reviewed by three tobacco control evaluators and pilot tested. The purpose of this report is to learn how tobacco control coalitions are doing in California. Moreover, TCEC would like to revise the survey by reflecting any new insights gained from coalition research; by using a principal components analysis to classify the 28 survey questions into a handful of characteristics of coalition functioning which can be compared to characteristics found in the research literature; and, by using a factor analysis to identify similarities in survey questions that could lead to fewer questions that measure the same characteristics more concisely.

Background

Reviewing relevant recent publications on coalitions and the measures used for their success, we found the following: In a study that examined coalition technical assistance and training to improve coalition functioning and efficacy, Butterfoss (2004) identified several factors that could help make coalitions successful, including **compatibility, flexibility, and technical assistance specific to the coalition's needs. Other important factors are regular meetings, ability and willingness to pool resources between coalition members training (leadership development), appropriate funding, communication, and committees.**

Feinberg et al. (2004) point out community readiness (the degree to which the community is ready for the interventions and/or policies the coalition is attempting) as an important factor for the success of a coalition. **The relationship between readiness and perceived effectiveness is mediated by internal functioning.** High levels of infighting disrupted functioning greatly. Diversity can be beneficial to coalitions if they collaborate on ideas and perspectives. If, however, individuals feel suspicion, mistrust, and competition, it can lead to fighting. Fighting should be channeled into productive discussions. Sufficient knowledge and positive attitudes in leadership was associated with internal functioning.

Riggs, Nakawatase, & Pentz (2008) examined effects of a diffusion trial on three factors hypothesized to improve coalition prevention planning (plan quality, plan implementation, and internal functioning). **Findings suggest that coalition capacity to diffuse prevention programs works (partially) by increasing coalition functioning.** Coalition functioning here is leadership, meeting clarity, member cohesiveness, etc. Other potentially relevant points: highly active participants may present a biased view of functioning; and, clarity of goals and understanding of effective approaches may help to increase functioning (intervention involved training segments that addressed topics such as developing a mission statement, organizational structure, assessment, etc.).

Zakocs & Edwards' (2006) review of the literature identified factors related to indicators of coalition effectiveness. They looked at two indicators: coalition functioning and community-wide changes. Coalition function may be measured by how well coalition building actions have been executed (size of membership, amount of resources generated, quality of strategic plans). Community change may be measured by results from strategic actions implemented (reductions in mortality, injury, or risky health behavior). Greater internal functioning gives a coalition a greater chance of achieving community change. **Six factors were found to be associated with**

effectiveness in 5+ studies: formal rules/procedures, leadership style, member participation, membership diversity, agency collaboration, and group cohesion. However, a total of 55 factors were identified across 26 studies.

Barns et al. (2014) identified functional characteristics of 63 Tennessee County Health Councils by conducting surveys with the coalition leadership. They conducted a factor analysis and identified **eight characteristics that contribute to coalition functioning: human and social capital, visionary leadership, strategic thinking, membership diversity, capable communication, formal structures, and membership development.**

The TCEC survey measures most of the items identified in the literature as contributing to high function and effectiveness (see methods section). Some items that were not addressed by the TCEC survey were not relevant, such as compatibility/infighting, which has not been raised as an issue in the tobacco control coalitions, and funding, since tobacco control work is funded through Proposition 99. Other items not addressed by the TCEC survey may be included in a future revision of the survey, such as community readiness, agency collaboration, resource pooling with other coalitions, and TA and training.

Methods

The TCEC online survey measured 43 items. Of these, 9 are qualitative, and 5 are demographic/membership status questions. The remaining 28 items are scaled questions about coalition logistics, functioning, diversity, outcomes, respect among coalition members, and commitment. For this report we only consider the quantitative questions.

Between 2007 and 2013, 24 counties and one funded city used the online coalition survey at least once, mostly in the past two years. Two counties used it twice, two counties 3 times, and two counties 5 times. In total, 503 responses are in the database and build the basis for a descriptive statistical analysis, for which we used Excel. We then imported the data into SPSS and conducted a factor analysis of 28 scaled items on the survey in order to test functional characteristics that may lead to positive perceptions of the coalition. For this, we used the varimax rotation method to compute factor loading. The meanings of the rotated factors were interpreted from the items significantly loaded on their factors. Factor loading greater than 0.4 in absolute value were considered to be significant (Barnes, 2014). Since individual surveys were sent out by coalition leads, the database does not include the number of surveys sent. A response rate could therefore not be calculated.

Results

a. Coalition membership

Coalition members were asked which professional group in the community they represented. The largest group was “Social Services (27%), then “Education” (21.3%), Health Care (13.3%) and 13.9% answered “Other.” Almost one quarter of respondents did not answer the question.

When asked what priority population they represented, either as an individual or as an official spokesperson for that group (Mark all that apply), the largest represented groups were Hispanic/Latino (19.3%) and rural residents (18.9%) (see Table 1). Some groups are underrepresented compared to state population averages (Hispanics, youth, LGBT and military), while rural residents are over-represented in the coalitions that were sampled.

Priority Population Representation	Count	Percent	Statewide percent (2012 census)
None	113	9.1	
Hispanic/Latino	97	19.3	38.4
Rural Residents	95	18.9	13.8
Youth	46	9.1	23.9
Low SES	43	8.5	15.3
African American	34	6.8	6.6
Native American/Alaska Native	23	4.6	1.7
LGBT	17	3.4	4
Military	12	2.4	5.1
Manual/Clerical Labor	10	2	Not available

Coalitions do a good job with retention and with recruitment of new members. Table 2 shows that 39.5% of respondents have been part of the coalition for more than 3 years, while 26.3% have been there for less than one year. As Table 2 shows, a large number of the recruits were involved in tobacco control before joining the coalition, but some were new to tobacco control. Table 3 shows the number of hours members spend on average in coalition meeting per month. The hours per month spent by members of all 25 coalitions are approx. 1900 for an average of 76 hours per coalition per month.

Table 2: How long have you been serving on the coalition?

	n	%
Skipped	28	5.6
Less than 1 yr	133	26.3
1-3 yrs	143	28.4
More than 3 yrs	199	39.5

Table 3: How long have you been involved in tobacco control?

	n	%
Skipped	29	5.8
Less than 1 year	81	16.1
1-3 years	109	21.7
More than 3 years	284	56.5

Table 4: How many hours per month do you spend on coalition activities?

	n	%
Skipped	34	6.8
0-1 hrs	142	28.2
2-4 hrs	205	40.8
5-10 hrs	76	15.1
More than 10 hrs	46	9.1

b. Coalition functioning

Survey items related to coalition functioning generally received very high satisfaction levels. This included logistical support, communication, ability to voice opinions, the frequency of meetings, adhering to starting times and to the agenda, meeting facilitation, inclusiveness in decision making, respect for operating rules and procedures, and shared vision. Negative ratings for these were negligible. The items in table 2 received at least 5% negative feedback (disagree or strongly disagree). The results show that systematic member recruitment and member orientation are weaker than all other items on the survey.

Two other items received scores that could point to a potential challenge. The statement “You are given the option to help decide what goes on the meeting agenda” received 49 (9.1%) marks for “rarely.” When asked, “How often do you go to meetings?” 98 (19.5%) said “less than 50% of the time”.

c. Survey measures

Based on a plot of eigenvalues against the corresponding factor numbers, six factors emerged that had eigenvalues greater than 1 and which we named as follows: “Cohesion and effectiveness, Logistics and leadership, meeting facilitation, respect for members, membership diversity reflecting the community, and meeting attendance.”

All measures had significant loadings (greater than 0.4) on at least one of the factors (table 5), indicating that the survey questions clearly fell into six factors or categories of coalition functioning. Highlighted cells in table 5 show a significant association between each measure (survey question) and one of the six factors. Only two measures, “Frequency of meetings” and “respect for members” had moderately significant loadings on more than one factor indicating the involvement in more than one underlying dimension of characteristics for coalition satisfaction.

Discussion

The online surveys of California tobacco control coalitions show that there is high member satisfaction with most aspects of coalition functioning and outcomes. Coalition members come from a variety of fields, and priority populations are also represented, but not as highly as their state average population size. In spite of high ratings coalitions received across the various items measured, there were a few items that could be improved upon. These are efforts to recruit new members, new member orientation, giving members a chance to participate in developing agendas, and increasing meeting attendance.

In terms of outcomes, there is a strong association between good member

Table 5: Survey items that received 5% or more negative feedback

	Disagree (n)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (n)	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree + strongly disagree (n)	Disagree + strongly disagree (%)
The facilitating agency has a good system for recruiting new members	72	14.3	10	2%	82	16.3
The facilitating agency does a good job with member orientation	55	10.9	7	1.4	62	12.3
The facilitating agency responds effectively to challenges	25	5	2	0.4	27	5.4
The coalition has a feeling of cohesiveness and team spirit	33	6.6	1	0.2	34	6.8
The coalition is connected to influential groups in the community	31	6.2	1	0.4	32	6.6
The coalition activities are in line with its mission	27	5.4	4	0.8	31	6.2
The coalition makes good use of what I have to offer	36	7.2	2	0.4	38	7.6
I have gained new skills and knowledge by participating in this coalition	27	5.4	4	0.8	31	6.2

Table 6: Principal component factor loadings for well-functioning coalitions

	Rotated Component Matrix ^a					
	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Logistics	.155	.737	-.197	.204	-.287	.071
Recruitment system	.247	.793	.032	.111	.065	.131
Member orientation	.304	.762	-.250	.062	-.145	-.075
Communication	.226	.794	-.211	-.115	-.106	-.046
Solicit member opinions	.290	.862	-.188	.064	-.043	-.044
Responding to challenges	.384	.743	-.140	-.029	.013	.266
Frequency of meetings	.408	-.232	.455	-.199	.305	.085
Adhering to schedule	-.221	-.112	.779	-.015	.163	-.091
Contribute to agenda	-.078	-.248	.601	.179	-.067	.037
Adhere to agenda	-.119	-.095	.775	.149	.165	-.359
Facilitation	.001	-.130	.825	-.045	-.089	.013
Attendance/frequency	-.070	.123	-.190	.154	-.021	.861
Cohesiveness	.860	.131	-.131	.181	-.194	-.013
Fair Decision Making	.833	.152	-.230	.306	-.115	.015
Community connectedness	.680	.307	-.260	.244	.232	-.245
Respect for rules	.815	.149	-.149	.316	-.110	.139
Mission clarity	.850	.302	-.030	-.188	.018	-.173
Shared vision	.832	.306	-.192	.043	-.036	-.108
Activities align w/mission	.716	.398	.100	-.200	-.010	-.112
Good Use of skills	.853	.227	-.032	.125	.032	.081
Good use of one's time	.850	.266	.026	-.033	.000	.049
Gaining new skills/knowledge	.792	.228	-.114	.191	.048	-.079
Respect for members	.571	.260	-.096	.537	-.169	-.119
Diversity	-.086	-.219	.080	.055	.918	-.034
Collective skills	.810	.224	-.242	.042	-.141	.038
Outcomes	.783	.135	.112	-.175	.148	.162
Commitment to goals	.771	.144	.064	-.261	.026	.023
Effecting Change	.808	.048	-.006	-.295	-.080	-.075
	Cohesion and effectiveness	Logistics and leadership	Meeting facilitation	Respect	Membership Diversity reflects community	Meeting attendance

(Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 8 iterations).

communication and perception of outcomes, at a statistically significant level. There is also a statistically significant association between member recruitment and outcomes, which means that members think that new member recruitment is highly important and that outcomes greatly depend on it.

A review of the literature on coalitions and measuring the success of coalitions revealed that the TCEC survey measures most of the items found relevant to high functioning coalitions. However, the literature pointed out some measures that are not tested by the TCEC survey and should be included in a revision of the survey: TA and training, agency collaboration, and community readiness.

The factor analysis revealed that TCEC's survey measures factors that are not seen in the literature but shown to be important: respect among members and the need for membership to reflect community diversity as well as regular attendance at meetings. "Cohesion and effectiveness" emerged as an important factor. Results from the descriptive statistics analysis reflects that many satisfaction items related to coalition functioning were rated similarly and could possibly be collapsed into fewer items to shorten the very long survey. The factor analysis also suggests that a number of items loaded on the same factor. The survey revision should therefore collapse some of the items relating to "cohesion and effectiveness" -- those relating to "Logistics and Leadership" as well as those relating to "Meeting Facilitation."

There are several limitations to this study. Not all respondents answered all questions due to users' choice. Since surveys were collected over the course of 6 years and some coalitions used the survey in more than one year, we can assume that there are some multiple survey responses from the same respondent, even though answers may vary in the different years. This could introduce a bias as those respondents that took the survey in more than one year may have answered questions similarly in the different years, thus giving more weight to their responses. Since respondents were not self-identified, we do not know how many same respondents there are. The results are also not necessarily representative for the entire state of California or for coalitions in general, since only 23 counties/cities were represented and because the coalitions are specific to tobacco control and may not yield the same results as other coalitions with a broader or different agenda. Since coalition leads sent the survey link to their coalition members and did not provide us with the number of coalition members sent, we also cannot calculate a response rate. A bias could be introduced if response rates were low and the characteristics of volunteer respondents were different from those who responded. In addition, this study has several strengths, including a large sample with coalition members from various counties in California. It also provides new information about coalition surveys. The large number of questions in the survey allowed us to conduct a factor analysis that provided new insights

into factors that are important to coalition members' perception of a well-functioning coalition and that had not been pointed out in the literature before. Moreover, this study gives California Tobacco Control programs feedback on what works well and what aspects of their coalition work could be improved on. For TCEC it provides important findings for the revision of their coalition survey which may also be relevant to coalition surveys elsewhere.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Tobacco Control Coalitions have been very active in California, spending many volunteer hours on tobacco prevention work and drawing members from a wide variety of community groups. Survey respondents are highly satisfied with the work of their coalitions. The TCEC online tobacco control coalition survey has been a useful instrument to the coalitions that have used it, but it is also a very long instrument that can be shortened and focused on those elements that have shown to be of importance to coalition members and those that have been found important for coalition functioning in the research literature. TCEC will make the results of this study available to the California tobacco control community and recommend that coalitions continue their good work, make a greater effort in recruiting diverse members, and increase member attendance at meetings. The coalition survey will be revised in the following manner: it will reduce the number of questions it asks on cohesion and effectiveness, logistics and leadership,

and meeting facilitation since several questions on the survey can be combined to gather insights on these three factors. It will add questions about TA and training, agency collaboration, and community readiness, which the literature identified as important aspects of coalition functioning.

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