

A Guide to Hosting a Community Forum

In Partnership with Native Communities



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PURPOSE

To enhance community development, you should prioritize building culturally relevant collaborative partnerships to create a larger network to access additional resources and support. Take active steps to build bridges between Native and non-Native organizations, fostering a more inclusive and interconnected approach to address shared challenges and promote mutual growth.



What is a Community Forum?

Community forums allow individuals from all walks of life to listen, learn, and come together to ultimately better their communities. The goal is to build momentum with the community and build collaborative partnerships to advance public health policy goals.

A Community Forum is:

- ❖ A space to discuss and share ideas
- ❖ Opportunity to build stronger connections
- ❖ A collaborative teaching and learning environment
- ❖ Face-to-face meaningful engagement inspired by native values

Define the Goal:

Define the Audience:



Audience to Engage

There are different audiences when organizing a community forum, the community and institutional stakeholders. Identify and articulate the goals of this forum (e.g., inform tribal members of the proposed policy, educate stakeholders about efforts to improve health outcomes in the community, identify resources, and strengthen strategic partnerships).

- ❖ **The Community:** Individuals impacted by your proposed policy solution.
- ❖ **Institutional Stakeholders:** Public health professionals, government entities, educational institutions, community based organizations, decision-makers.

The ideal outcome results in a community that is educated about commercial tobacco and its impacts. Institutional organizations and individuals will engage at a higher level and have taken an important step toward getting involved.



Cultural Considerations

Understand Local Needs and Priorities

- ❖ Consider how social and historical factors have impacted the community
- ❖ Adapt strategies to align with community-established goals
- ❖ Recognize the numerous intricate responsibilities of Tribal leaders and citizens and take a supportive and adaptable approach.
- ❖ Explore merging forums with existing events, to increase relevance, maximize engagement, and minimize time burdens.

Make Connections

- ❖ Learn about the community you are engaging
- ❖ Draw on lived experiences instead of accomplishments to present your genuine self
- ❖ Invest in relationships and connect on a human level

Be inclusive of Native worldviews and experiences

- ❖ Understand traditional knowledge and practices
- ❖ Differentiate between commercial and traditional tobacco

Allow Accurate Representation of Diverse Voices

- ❖ Understand diversity and increase representation
- ❖ Ensure equitable representation, avoid tokenism, and generalizations

Create Inclusive Practices

- ❖ Provide multiple methods for participation
- ❖ Be sensitive to cultural communication norms and individual preferences

Use Community Specific Tools & Resources

- ❖ Adapt messaging and imagery to represent and resonate with the community

Manage Expectations

- ❖ Be flexible and accept factors that are beyond control
- ❖ Anticipate changes in tribal leadership, staff, and priorities
- ❖ Focus on the process as opposed to the final outcome
- ❖ Success is continued engagement and maintaining open lines of communication



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www.organizingtoendtobacco.org | organizingtoendtobacco@heart.org