

Plain Language Guide

to the Communities of Excellence (CX) Needs Assessment Process

Community engagement is at the heart of the Communities of Excellence (CX) Needs Assessment process. Participants bring valuable experiences and perspectives that help identify local public health priorities, and no expertise in public health or tobacco prevention is required to contribute. Using plain, community-friendly language creates an inclusive environment where everyone can participate comfortably. Replacing CX technical terms with words like *issues*, *strengths*, and *opportunities for change* keeps discussions accessible, encourages diverse perspectives, affirms their experiences, and ensures community voices help shape future tobacco prevention priorities and strategies. This guide helps facilitators use clear, accessible language to support meaningful community conversations.



Instead of
*"We're going to
assess
indicators."*

Instead of
*"We're setting
priorities."*



Try This
*"We're going to discuss
local issues and
concerns affecting our
community."*

Try This
*"Let's discuss where we
can make the biggest
difference."*

CX Term	Community-Friendly Substitutes	Sample Script Language
Asset	A strength, resource, or partnership that would support the community's objective	Let's start by identifying the strengths and resources already available in your community that can support this work.
Capacity Building	Developing the skills and resources of the people needed for long-term success	What skills and resources do you think would grow the community's/coalition's ability to continue this work over time?
Communities of Excellence (CX) / CX Needs Assessment	Community planning process to understand local tobacco-related concerns	Today we're going through a community planning process to better understand local tobacco-related concerns and opportunities.
Community Mobilization	Bringing people together to take action	Who else should be involved in this conversation/needs assessment so we can work together on solutions?

CX Term	Community-Friendly Substitutes	Sample Script Language
Community Readiness	Ready to take action to solve the problem	Is the coalition, supporters, and public at a place where they are able to address this issue right now?
Equity-Centered Language	Respectful language that promotes fairness and inclusion	Which communities are most impacted by this issue, and how can we make sure their voices are included in decision-making?
Evidence-Based Strategy	An approach supported by data and experience	Let's discuss solutions that have worked successfully in other communities facing similar challenges.
Implementation	Putting a plan into action	Once the community decides on a solution, identify steps needed to put it into action.
Indicator	Issue, concern, challenge, or policy topic area	Which tobacco-related challenges are most important to address in your community?
Jurisdiction	A community area, such as a specific city or county	Which community area are we focusing on today?
Narrative Summary	Summary of what we learned	We'll conclude summarizing the key themes, concerns, and opportunities that emerged from our discussion.
Objective	A specific goal the community wants to work on	What specific goal would you like to achieve over the next three years?
Outcome	The result of what you're trying to achieve	How will we know we've been successful? What changes would you hope to see?
Policy Adoption	Approving a new policy	What would need to happen for community leaders to formally approve this solution?

CX Term	Community-Friendly Substitutes	Sample Script Language
Policy Change	Community solutions, healthier environments, or community improvements	What changes could create a healthier environment for community members?
Policy Quality	How strong, comprehensive, and effective a policy is	What elements would make this solution as effective and impactful as possible?
Policy Reach	How many people are protected or affected by a policy	Let's discuss how many people are currently protected under existing policies.
Public Health Infrastructure	Community support systems	What organizations, programs, or community supports can help move this work forward?
Scope of Work	Action Plan	Let's create an action plan that outlines key goals, activities, and timelines.
Stakeholder	Anyone with an interest in or impact on the issue	Who should be involved because they are affected by this issue or can help address it?
Sustainability	Long-term success	How can we ensure these efforts continue and remain successful in the future?
Technical Assistance	Support and guidance	What additional support or guidance would help your community accomplish its goals?



**CALIFORNIA TOBACCO
ENDGAME CENTER FOR
ORGANIZING AND ENGAGEMENT**
A project of the American Heart Association®

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