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TIP SHEET #11

Working with Rodeo Organizers to Get a No Tobacco Sponsorship Policy Signed

Ideally, try to set up an informal initial meeting with rodeo organizers to determine their general attitudes about tobacco sponsorship and whether there are any major obstacles to passing a no-sponsorship policy.

After creating a rodeo project structure and beginning to build community awareness and support, the next step is to try to meet with rodeo organizers to start a discussion about a tobacco sponsorship policy. Your local strategy should be developed in consultation with your steering committee.

1. Research the rodeo organizers. They are likely to be members of your community. Find out whether anyone you know is acquainted with one of the organizers and can give you insight into how to influence them.

2. Contact rodeo organizers by letter and/or phone to initiate a meeting. Ideally, try to set up an informal initial meeting with rodeo organizers to determine their general attitudes about tobacco sponsorship; whether there are any major obstacles to passing a no-sponsorship policy; and what it would take to overcome any obstacles that exist. Ask for the email addresses and phone numbers of key organizers so that you can follow up with them for further discussion.

3. After the initial contact or meeting with the organizers, ask to make a formal presentation. Bring community members from your steering committee with you and have them present if possible. Distribute materials to leave with the organizers. The presentation should include the following items, as available. (Information about how to develop each of the items listed below is available throughout this Tip Sheet series.)

- Facts about the harm caused by spit tobacco.
- Results of surveys conducted at the rodeo and elsewhere in the community.
- Letters of support from community members and rodeo insiders.
- A list of other rodeos and other organizations inside and outside your state that have policies restricting tobacco sponsorship.
- A position statement on the animal welfare issue.¹
- Examples of concrete reasons why adopting a no-tobacco sponsorship policy benefits the event and the community. For example, it makes the event more attractive to families and children.
- A video that shows community members who support the rodeo's decision to adopt a policy.
- **An offer of “positive media” exposure to publicize the policy and the rodeo event itself, as an incentive to sign.** (Note that not all of the positive media suggestions listed below require additional funding.) One project was able to get a policy passed by telling the rodeo board that if they signed, they would get very positive media exposure. (Do not provide positive exposure without asking for permission, because sometimes publicity about signing a policy is unwanted.) If appropriate, you can also let the organizers know you have the ability to run ads publicizing tobacco company sponsorship of the rodeo and the negative effects of that on the community. Positive media exposure can include:
 - Running local radio, TV or print ads
 - Buying a “thank you” ad in the rodeo program
 - Putting a “thank you” ad on your website
 - Issuing press releases and/or holding a press conference
 - Publicly presenting the rodeo organizers with a congratulatory letter and/or plaque
 - Sending a letter to the editor of your local newspaper
 - Presenting a resolution from the City Council or Board of Supervisors
 - Soliciting “thank you” letters from other organizations and individuals

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- **An offer of assistance in finding alternative sponsors.** It is not uncommon for rodeo boards to request help with finding alternative sponsorships. For example, in 1996 the California Rodeo Salinas had a rodeo scoreboard that was sponsored by the U.S. Smokeless Tobacco Company (USSTC). After advocacy efforts by the Coalition for a Tobacco-Free Monterey County, the Dole Food Company became the sponsor of the scoreboard.
 - Try contacting local vendors, such as grocery stores, banks, restaurants, utility companies, a local western apparel store, a tack and feed store, and car dealerships, and look at the lists of non-tobacco sponsors on rodeo websites for more ideas. Be sure to evaluate any replacements you suggest to make sure they do not replace one health issue with another (for example, it is not recommended that you suggest approaching an alcohol company to replace tobacco sponsorship).
 - If you decide to pursue this strategy, be clear about what is expected. The rodeo organizers should take the main responsibility for finding alternative sponsorship, with your assistance. Signing a policy should *not* be contingent on your finding alternative sponsorship.
- **An offer of one-time replacement sponsorship.** Although not a permanent solution, a one-time replacement of some sponsorship monies by your organization can buy time for the rodeo organizers to secure long-term support. If you pursue this strategy, be clear that it is a one-time only offer. Signing a policy should *not* be contingent on your replacing the sponsorship every year.

4. After the presentation, send a thank you letter to the rodeo organizers, reiterating your main points.
5. If the rodeo organizers seem ready to sign a policy, follow up regularly with them to help the process along and answer any questions that arise. Don't give up if the policy doesn't get signed immediately.
6. If the rodeo organizers are adamant about *not* signing a policy, increase your community advocacy activities. For example, conduct a media advocacy and advertising campaign, work with local opinion leaders to increase pressure on the organizers, and otherwise increase your efforts to get your message out to the public. In addition to these approaches, have someone working the "carrot" (incentive) approach by continuing to try to develop a friendly relationship with key rodeo organizers and repeating offers of positive support and publicity for signing a policy.

¹ For more information about the animal welfare issue in rodeo, see the Introduction to Rodeo Tip Sheet and the "Statement in Support of Rodeo" on the Buck Tobacco website at <http://www.bucktobacco.org/about.html>