



Humboldt County Adopts TRL Policy

On May 23, 2023, the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors unanimously voted in favor of a Tobacco Retail Licensing (TRL) ordinance—which was adopted on July 11, 2023. This success is a direct result of the collaborative efforts of **Humboldt County Public Health’s Tobacco-Free Humboldt**, an LLA; **Tobacco-Free North Coast**, **NorCal 4 Health**, and **HASPI CAN**, competitive grantees; and supportive community members and board members.



Mario Kalson, Director of Environmental Health, DHHS Public Health | **Amber Wier**, NorCal 4 Health | **Jay Macedo**, HASPI, CAN (Communities Against Nicotine) | **Lisa Ollivier**, Humboldt ASUP (Allies for Substance Use Prevention) Chair and community member | **Jay McCubbrey**, Tobacco-Free North Coast | **Sofia Pereira**, Public Health Director, DHHS | **Elaine Hogan**, Program Services Coordinator, Tobacco-Free Humboldt, Healthy Communities Division of Public Health, DHHS | **Caitlin Giddings**, Project Director for Tobacco-Free Humboldt, Healthy Communities Division of Public Health, DHHS



RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

Many ingredients combined for the successful passage of a TRL ordinance for unincorporated Humboldt County. While every policy journey is different, the list below illustrates the complex work needed to usher in a comprehensive policy.

The journey to policy adoption is not linear—some of these steps happened simultaneously or as a result of other steps—but instead is the result of collective action and effort from multiple fronts.

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS: HOW THE COALITION, COMPETITIVE GRANTEES, AND THE LLA WORKED TOGETHER TO ENSURE SUCCESS.

At the heart of this success is an engaged coalition of supportive partners that formed a TRL workgroup. In August 2022, this coalition workgroup began meeting regularly to strategize a cohesive approach to TRL policies in Humboldt County across the unincorporated and incorporated jurisdictions. The TRL workgroup included a community member champion, Lisa Ollivier, who introduced and discussed the proposed policy at crucial Board of Supervisor meetings. This illustrates how community members who are not associated with California Tobacco Prevention Program (CTPP) funded projects can play a key role that funded partners cannot.

Successful collaboration means identifying and utilizing each other’s strengths.

In one instance, the LLA could not ask for letters of support, and other members of the workgroup stepped in to meet that need. Conversely, the LLA was able to utilize its expertise and staff to prepare presentations, organize speakers and talking points, and provide staff support for coalition members in the Board of Supervisor chambers on the day of meetings. So while LLA staff was not able to comment publicly at these Board meetings, they were able to support the partners who could. These are examples of how partners can work together to fill the gaps and move the work forward.



A RURAL COMMUNITY SUCCESS STORY

INTERNAL CHAMPION: ELAINE HOGAN

While it is important to identify external policy champions for your initiative, it is equally important to have strong internal leadership. Elaine Hogan was the Program Services Coordinator for Tobacco-Free Humboldt, which is part of the Healthy Communities Division of Public Health. Hogan demonstrated excellent leadership and support for this policy initiative by educating and recruiting many behind-the-scenes players. In addition to meetings with competitive grantees and the Public Health Law Center to draft policy language, she proactively met with County Counsel to discuss the inner workings of the ordinance and how it would benefit Humboldt County. She also met with the enforcement agency (Division of Environmental Health) to explain the ordinance and gather buy-in for the policy. These are examples of work that cannot always be achieved by tobacco prevention grant staff alone and may need the support of organization leadership.

THE IMPORTANCE OF OUTREACH

When the concept of a TRL was first introduced to the Board in August 2022, supervisors directed Public Health to come back with draft policy language and to reach out to the county's incorporated cities and retailers to gauge their support for the ordinance. To achieve this directive, the LLA contacted cities and followed up with presentations. Competitive grantee project staff (from NorCal 4 Health, HASPI CAN, and Tobacco-Free North Coast) presented at various city council meetings in Eureka, Rio Dell, and Trinidad. These presentations laid out the data and need for these types of ordinances, highlighting the key facets of the drafted policy.

A small-sample survey found that 12 out of 13 surveyed retailers were still selling flavored products.

The LLA followed up on the letters sent to retailers with a small-sample visual survey which was completed the week before the May Board of Supervisors meeting to determine if flavored tobacco products were still locally available. The survey found that 12 out of 13 surveyed retailers

were still selling flavored products. These findings were presented at the Board meeting in May 2023 in support of a local TRL ordinance.

STRATEGIC USE OF DATA

This policy initiative made great use of local data by using it to address support and opposition early on in the process. The workgroup was able to collect and focus on data from particular districts with supervisors who might not support the TRL. They anticipated where they would need the most evidence of the need for a TRL and came prepared with relevant data on issues such as the anticipated impact on local businesses. They were also able to highlight the outreach work in these districts that generated support for the ordinance among retailers and community members. **Some key data utilized for this policy effort include:**

- » **2022 Young Adult Tobacco Purchase Surveys:** Specifically, city data for Arcata, Ferndale, Fortuna, and unincorporated Humboldt. There was an astonishing 54% sales rate to youth in unincorporated Humboldt that was highlighted in a presentation to the Board as part of the argument for this ordinance (data was provided to the LLA by their partners HASPI/CAN and Tobacco-Free North Coast).
- » **California Healthy Kids Survey data:** Used to educate parents through PTA outreach.
- » **Department of Health and Human Services Public Health:** Illustrated how many deaths locally could be attributed to commercial tobacco use. In Humboldt County, 34% of deaths can be attributed to tobacco use. The Board of Supervisors was particularly moved by this data point, as it resonated with their duty to protect their constituents.
- » **North Coast Environmental Center:** Tobacco product waste data was collected and presented.
- » **TFH Data:** Local retailer observation survey data was used. The fact that 98% of retailers surveyed sold non-flavored products resonated with Board members who were concerned about the impact on business.