



Tobacco Use Prevention

2025 REPORT TO THE MINNESOTA LEGISLATURE

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Tobacco Use Prevention: 2025 Report to the Minnesota Legislature

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Commercial tobacco products are tobacco products manufactured and sold by the tobacco industry, including cigarettes, e-cigarettes, cigars, and chew. Commercial tobacco is different from the traditional or sacred tobacco, also known as Cansasa, Asemaa, or Kinnikinnick, and which are used by American Indian communities for sacred purposes.

Learn more about [Traditional Tobacco and American Indian Communities in Minnesota](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/tobacco/traditional/index.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/tobacco/traditional/index.html>).

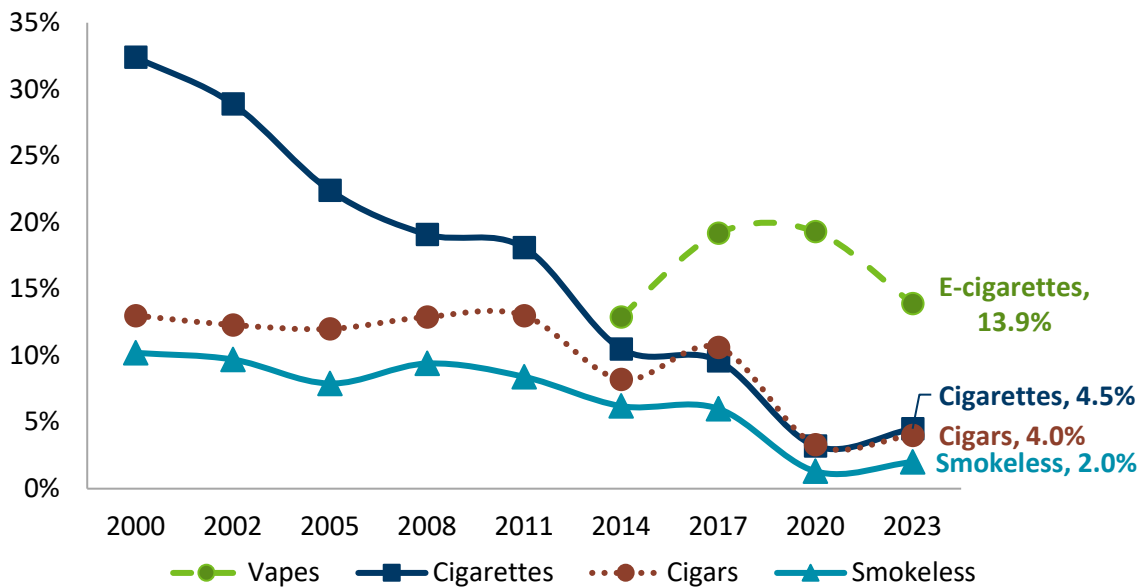
Commercial Tobacco Use Is Still a Problem in Minnesota

Commercial tobacco use kills over 6,500 Minnesotans every year and costs the state \$4.7 billion annually in medical costs.¹ Although overall use rates continue to slowly decline, research by the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) has found that many young people still use e-cigarettes (vapes), and for them the signs of nicotine dependency are increasing. In addition, commercial tobacco use rates are not falling at the same rate for all communities. The tobacco industry continues to target communities with price discounts and special promotions for commercial tobacco products.

Youth e-cigarette use and nicotine exposure escalate the risk of addiction

Data from the 2023 Minnesota Youth Tobacco Survey shows 13.9% of Minnesota high school students reported using an e-cigarette in the past 30 days. E-cigarettes are the most used commercial tobacco product among youth, and nearly all e-cigarettes contain nicotine. Nicotine is highly addictive.

Figure 1 - Percent of high school students who used a commercial tobacco product in the past 30 days, by product type: 2000-2023.

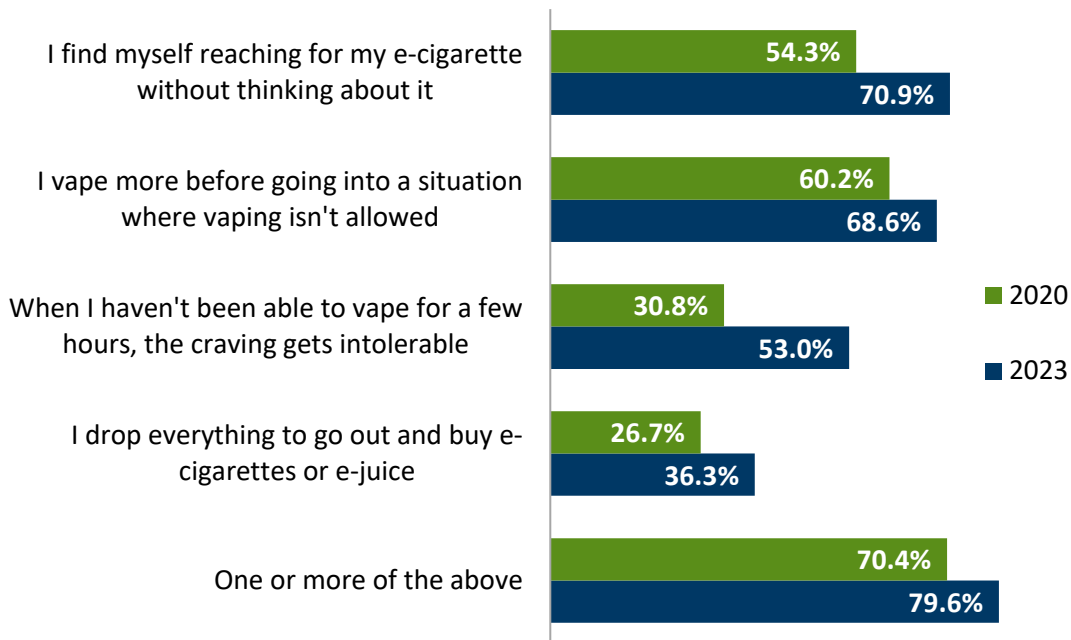


Data are from the Minnesota Youth Tobacco Survey, 2000-2023. Questions about e-cigarettes were added to the survey for the first time in 2014.

¹ Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota. (n.d.). Reducing the cost of smoking in Minnesota. Retrieved from <https://blog.bluecrossmn.com/our-communities/reducing-the-cost-of-smoking-in-minnesota/>

Data from the Minnesota Youth Tobacco Survey in 2020 and 2023 also show that more students who currently use e-cigarettes are reporting signs of dependence. Overall, 79.6% of students who use e-cigarettes in 2023 report one or more signs of dependence, an increase from 70.4% in 2020.

Figure 2 - Percent of students who currently use e-cigarettes and reported experiencing a sign of dependence, by year, 2020-2023.



Data are from the Minnesota Youth Tobacco Survey, 2020-2023. The denominator is students who reported having used e-cigarettes in the past 30 days. Students are counted in the numerator if they reported experiencing the symptom rarely or more often.

Nicotine can harm the developing adolescent brain. Because the brain is still developing until about age 25, youth and young adult exposure to nicotine can not only disrupt attention and learning, but it can also lead to future addiction to commercial tobacco use or the use of other substances. No amount of nicotine is safe for young people.^{2, 3, 4} The tobacco industry also has e-cigarette products called pods or

² Counotte, D.S., et al. (2009). Long-Lasting Cognitive Deficits Resulting from Adolescent Nicotine Exposure in Rats. *Neuropsychopharmacology* 34(2), 299-306.

³ Slotkin, T. A. (2002). Nicotine and the adolescent brain: insights from an animal model. *Neurotoxicology and teratology*, 24(3), 369-384.

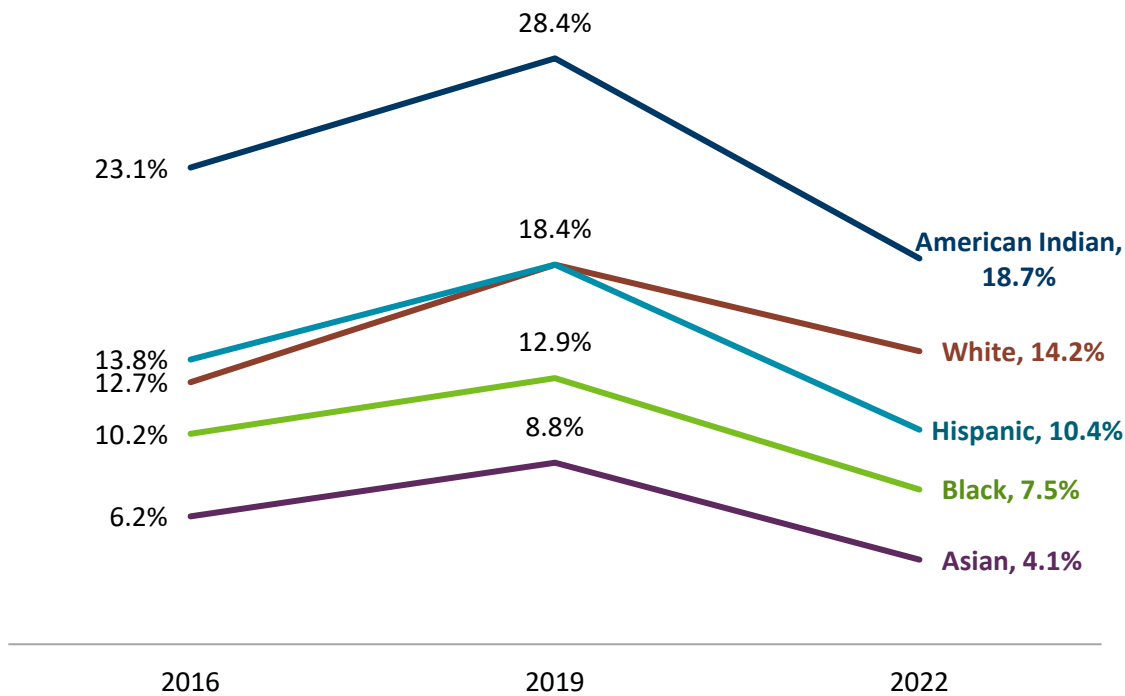
⁴ Gould, T. J., & Leach, P. T. (2014). Cellular, molecular, and genetic substrates underlying the impact of nicotine on learning. *Neurobiology of learning and memory*, 107, 108-132.

cartridges that use nicotine salts, which can increase the level of nicotine that is inhaled.⁵ One recent study found that youth who use high nicotine content pods are more likely to report signs of nicotine dependence, and be daily users, than if they did not use high nicotine content pods.⁶

Many communities still use tobacco at higher rates

Significant disparities remain among both youth and adult populations historically targeted by the tobacco industry. Data show that while, overall, commercial tobacco use is declining, rates are not declining at the same pace for all communities, as shown in Figure 3 and Figure 4.

Figure 3 - Percent of 8th, 9th, and 11th grade students in Minnesota that used commercial tobacco in the past 30 days, by race

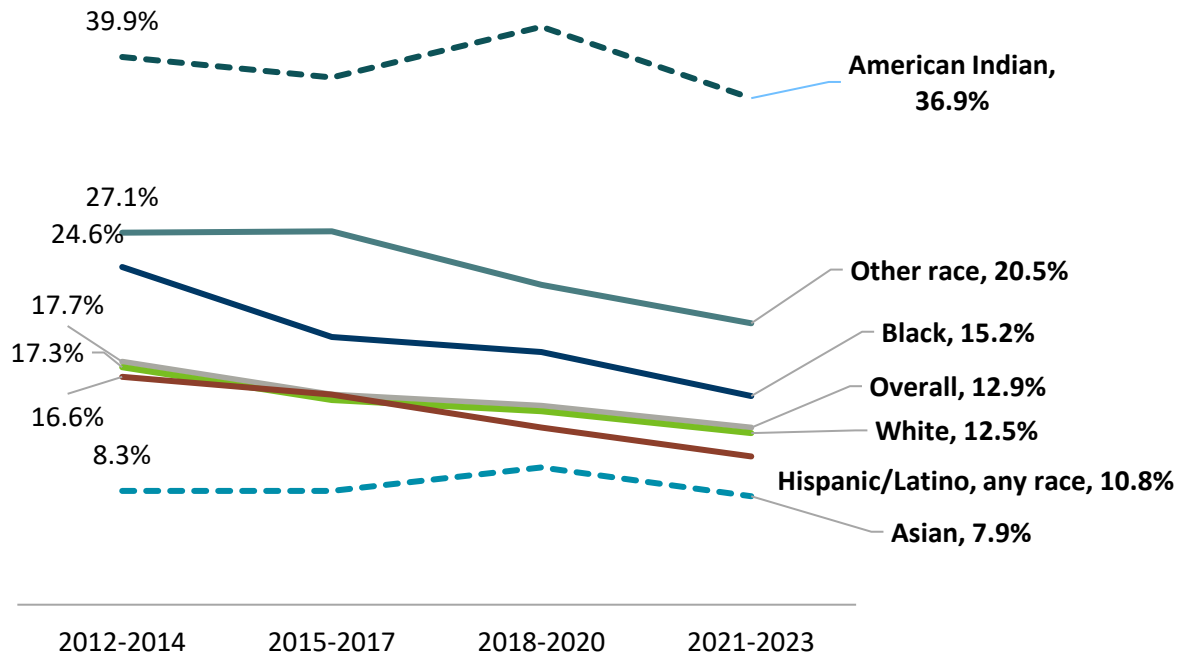


Data are from the Minnesota Student Survey, 2016-2022

⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. E-cigarette, or vaping, products visual dictionary. Accessed from https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/pdfs/ecigarette-or-vaping-products-visual-dictionary-508.pdf October 17, 2024.

⁶ Boykan, R., Goniewicz, M. L., & Messina, C. R. (2019). Evidence of nicotine dependence in adolescents who use Juul and similar pod devices. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 16(12), 2135.

Figure 4 - Percent of Minnesotan adults that smoke, by race



Data are from the Behavioral Risk Surveillance System, 2012-2023. Dashed lines mean we are not confident if there is an actual decrease, increase, or if the trend stays the same. In this case, we are unsure if there is indeed a decrease in American Indian and if trend stayed the same for Asian group.

Other race includes other race, multi-race, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. All races did not include Hispanic except the Hispanic/Latino group.

Flavored commercial tobacco products are also not used at the same rate by different communities. Due to aggressive marketing by tobacco companies, menthol flavored products are used more by commercial tobacco users who identified as Black, American Indian, or LGBTQ+. ⁷

Culturally competent, tailored, and community-led efforts are needed

The 2016 Community Voices report described the deeply embedded social norm of commercial tobacco use in many communities. ⁸ Often, commercial tobacco products are widely available, easily accessible, and marketed to target specific communities, including youth. Additionally, commercial tobacco use is

⁷ Minnesota Department of Health. (2024, October 20). The Hidden Harms of Menthol: Ending the Legal Sales of Menthol Commercial Tobacco Products Would Advance Health Equity in Minnesota. https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/tobacco/data/docs/briefs/03-21-2024_menthol.pdf

⁸ Minnesota Department of Health. (2016). Community Voices: Reducing Tobacco-Related Health Inequities. <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/tobacco/initiatives/docs/voicesreport.pdf>

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often seen as a lesser threat compared to other community issues that are reported as more serious or urgent. It is critical that communities identify and address their own commercial tobacco-related needs and priorities.

The report also notes that when quitting, community members wish to use services that are provided by members of their own communities, which are not readily available. There is a shortage of culturally specific and appropriate outreach and education efforts and services, which contributes to misconceptions about commercial tobacco. Culturally relevant and peer-to-peer messaging is most effective.

MDH has launched the Quit Partner Ambassadors Grant Program as way to address the disparities noted in the report. The overall goal of the grant program is to support organizations to engage community members and build trust in Quit Partner programs, with the goal of increasing use of these services and reducing commercial tobacco use among adults.

Minnesota's Comprehensive Commercial Tobacco Control Framework

The Minnesota Comprehensive Tobacco Control Framework, 2022-2026⁹ lays out an ambitious path to address commercial tobacco use. This framework serves as a guide for partners in Minnesota's commercial tobacco prevention and control efforts. It outlines notable achievements in this work to-date and provides a roadmap for commercial tobacco prevention work in the future. This framework embraces goals and actions that lead with racial and health equity and builds upon the previous framework's charge to use a health equity lens.



The framework was created by Minnesota's two remaining primary funders of commercial tobacco programming – the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota – with guidance and input from 30 partners who support and implement commercial tobacco prevention and control activities in communities across Minnesota.

The framework is a guide for Minnesota's commercial tobacco prevention and control efforts. It provides policymakers, public and private public health organizations, healthcare professionals and health systems, and other stakeholders with seven guiding principles, four bold goals and 40 bold actions that build on best practices established by the CDC. The ability of state, local, and Tribal partners to make strides towards the framework's bold goals will require our collective collaboration and coordination.

This framework is informed by both the community experience and expertise and CDC's Best Practices for Comprehensive Tobacco Prevention and Control.¹⁰ It recognizes that the application of best and promising practices will vary by community, and that people with lived experience are in the best position to determine what works to reduce and eliminate commercial tobacco use and harms in their community. Innovation often comes from adaptation to local and tribal needs.

⁹ Minnesota Department of Health. (2022, February). Minnesota Comprehensive Commercial Tobacco Control Framework 2022-2023.

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/tobacco/initiatives/docs/mnframework2022.pdf>

¹⁰ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2014). Best Practices for Comprehensive Tobacco Control Programs: 2014. Retrieved from

<https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/stateandcommunity/guides/pdfs/2014/comprehensive.pdf>

Commercial Tobacco Use Prevention Funding for Local, Tribal, and Statewide Efforts

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) administers state funds awarded under Minnesota Statutes, section 144.396, Tobacco Use Prevention (TUP),¹¹ to support statewide commercial tobacco prevention efforts through competitive funding for community grant programs, a system of statewide technical assistance and training (TA), community engagement, specialized evaluation, and the Minnesota Youth Tobacco Survey. Grantees work to prevent initiation among youth and reduce commercial tobacco's harm through community education and engagement, cessation promotion, changes to cultural and community practices, and implementing local commercial tobacco control policies, systems, and environmental changes through a range of evidence-based strategies or promising practices, while TA builds their capacity for implementing activities by providing ongoing support. Additionally, the Minnesota Youth Tobacco Survey and grantee evaluation efforts help measure commercial tobacco's harm in our communities. The Minnesota Youth Tobacco Survey is conducted every three years and results are shared in a separate report.¹²

The grant work aligns with CDC's Best Practices for Comprehensive Tobacco Control by providing funding to community-based organizations to strengthen their capacity to positively impact social norms; empower local communities to build coalitions and partnerships that facilitate collaboration; implement evidence-based and promising practices; and support community strategies to educate and create awareness of commercial tobacco use. The Minnesota Department of Health acknowledges that the application of CDC's best practices may look different in different situations depending on history, context, community readiness, and available resources.

Commercial Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Grants and Activities

The Minnesota Department of Health funds multiple unique grant programs that work across Minnesota to reduce the burden of commercial tobacco use across the state.

¹¹ Minnesota Legislature (1999). Tobacco Use Prevention Act. <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/461.12>

¹² Minnesota Department of Health. (2023). Teens and Commercial Tobacco in Minnesota: Highlights from the 2023 Youth Tobacco Survey. <https://www.health.state.mn.us/data/mchs/surveys/tobacco/docs/teenscommercialtobacco2023.pdf>

Commercial Tobacco-Free Communities Grants

Eleven grantees work to address health disparities caused by the tobacco industry and commercial tobacco influences by supporting community organizations to work towards their communities becoming commercial tobacco free. Their work includes:

- Community outreach and engagement
- Cultural practices and education
- Youth commercial tobacco prevention
- Retail environment and tobacco industry influence restrictions
- Commercial tobacco-free events and outdoor spaces
- Cessation referral and integration into existing services and networks
- Health systems change for commercial tobacco treatment

Community-based Disparities Grant

One grantee works to address the high disparity rates of commercial tobacco use among African American and Black community members. The grant focuses on reaching persons in recovery from mental health and/or substance use challenges. This grant is a requirement of our CDC funding, and their focus is:

- Community engagement
- Social norms and policy, systems, and environment changes
- Cessation promotion
- Cessation referral and integration into existing services and networks

Quit Partner™ Ambassador Grants

Three grantees work to increase awareness of and trust in Quit Partner cessation services by supporting community organizations to educate and engage their communities about available services and benefits of quitting. The grantees conduct:

- Community engagement
- Assessment of community attitudes and behaviors around cessation services
- Quit Partner promotion
- Cessation referral and integration into existing services and networks

Technical Assistance and Training Provider Grants

Three expert community organizations work to provide high quality technical assistance and training, individual consultation, and resource materials to support grantees' work and ensure they are successful. The grantees support the network of community grants by providing:

- Individual consultation
- Group trainings and peer learning
- Development of online resources and education materials

Tribal Commercial Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation Grants

Ten grantees work to reduce the high prevalence of commercial tobacco harms, including preventing youth initiation, by promoting culture and connectedness within Tribal Nations. The grantees conduct:

- Indigenous lifeways (cultural prevention programming)
- Youth commercial tobacco prevention
- Community education
- Increase access to growing traditional tobacco for ceremonial purposes
- Cessation promotion
- Reduce exposure: smoke free housing, grounds, buildings

Youth E-cigarette Prevention and Cessation Grants

Ten grantees work to prevent youth e-cigarette use and promote youth to quit by supporting youth-led initiatives for peer-to-peer education, engagement, and policy changes. The grantees conduct:

- Youth commercial tobacco prevention
- Community and youth engagement
- Social norms and policy, systems, and environment changes
- Cessation promotion

Commercial Tobacco-Free Communities Grant Program

The Commercial Tobacco-Free Communities Grant Program (CTFC) funds local community organizations and Technical Assistance and Training (TA) providers with the aim of preventing youth commercial tobacco use, promoting cessation, and addressing commercial tobacco-related disparities in Minnesota by implementing community-driven commercial tobacco prevention and cessation activities and strategies. CTFC helps build community capacity, change social norms around commercial tobacco use, and foster community readiness and support for commercial tobacco control policies within local communities to protect youth from the harms of commercial tobacco. CTFC grantees receive a range of support including one-on-one consultation, training and skill-building on policy, systems, and environmental change, as well as online resources from the TA providers. The TA support and resources ensure community grantees have the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively address and reduce commercial tobacco related health disparities and the harm caused by the tobacco industry in their communities.

In 2022, the Minnesota Department of Health initiated a competitive Request for Proposals process, and 11 community grantees were awarded grant funds as part of the Commercial Tobacco-Free Communities Grant Program.

African Immigrants Community Services

African Immigrants Community Services serves East African refugees and immigrants in the Twin Cities with a focus on youth and adult women. They work to assess the needs of the East African refugee communities for commercial tobacco prevention and cessation services. This assessment is done by engaging East African community members, including youth, through listening circles, online surveys, community forums, and individual interviews. They have recruited and trained twenty East African youth and women as peer educators on commercial tobacco prevention and cessation who engage with the community. African Immigrant Community Services conduct regularly scheduled youth and women's groups focusing on mental health and wellness that includes commercial tobacco cessation and prevention. Successes include African Immigrants Community Services conducting monthly educational sessions with youth and women to increase their awareness and knowledge of the dangers of commercial tobacco use and resources available for cessation.

Ain Dah Yung Center

Ain Dah Yung Center's Ninijanisag (Our Children) Program serves American Indian youth between the ages of 8-21 who live in the Twin Cities metro area. They work to reduce commercial tobacco use among American Indian youth and young adults. The Ninijanisag Program teaches youth about traditional tobacco use and general health education, engaging them in leadership and advocacy roles for a healthy lifestyle within their cultural context. This culturally responsive program leverages the strengths of the American Indian Community, including learning respect for tobacco as a sacred medicine and understanding how to live life in a good way. Successes include Ain Dah Yung Center engaging 31 youth in culturally centered commercial tobacco prevention groups.

American Lung Association

The American Lung Association of Minnesota works with communities located in south central Minnesota in the cities of Mankato, North Mankato, and Saint Peter. They work to reduce commercial tobacco's harm through building community coalitions that work towards policy to eliminate flavored commercial tobacco products, educating decision-makers and the community about the industry's influences on commercial tobacco products and prevention best practices, and reducing initiation through comprehensive communications strategies. Successes include the American Lung Association re-establishing a local coalition, as well as a partnership with Minnesota State University, Mankato.

Association for Nonsmokers – Minnesota

The Association for Nonsmokers – Minnesota (ANSR) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to reducing the human and economic costs of commercial tobacco use in Minnesota. They work to engage communities in policy change for commercial tobacco-free living, including point of sale policies and smokefree housing policies protecting renters from secondhand smoke exposure in the Twin Cities metro area. Through collaboration with community partners, city planners, and multi-unit housing residents, they are exploring policy options and promoting commercial tobacco cessation support services for those currently using commercial tobacco. Successes include ANSR staff working with the city of Minneapolis to maintain commercial tobacco shop restrictions that set a minimum distance between retailers – a policy that helps keep products inaccessible to youth.

Lao Assistance Center of Minnesota

The Lao Assistance Center of Minnesota works with Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities in Minnesota, specifically Lao, Hmong, Bhutanese, and Cambodian, with a focus on the Twin Cities metro area. They work to increase commercial tobacco use services in their community by developing resources translated into specific languages (e.g. smoking harms, cessation information), partnering with other AAPI-serving organizations, and conducting outreach and community engagement to improve commercial tobacco cessation system navigation. Successes include integrating commercial tobacco education and access to services into preexisting programs at the Lao Assistance Center. This includes the creation of the Lao Center Recovery Department which hosts the Opioid and Gambling Program and Tobacco Program.

Minneapolis American Indian Center

Minneapolis American Indian Center (MAIC) works with American Indian youth in the Twin Cities metro area, with a targeted focus on the southside of Minneapolis, to develop leadership skills of young people. MAIC's Sacred Leaders Program works with youth to educate people about the difference between commercial and sacred tobacco, the traditional uses of sacred tobacco, how the tobacco industry targets American Indian people, and how commercial tobacco use has harmed the community. MAIC provides opportunities for youth to: increase their skills to change norms and advocate for smoke-free spaces; to raise awareness of and increase the use of cessation services; and to build a broader

commercial tobacco-free community in the American Indian Cultural Corridor (a stretch of Franklin Avenue in Minneapolis that serves as a hub of the American Indian community). Successes include 13 youth participating in MAIC's Golden Eagles Program (a youth leadership group), serving as advocates for this work and strengthening their cultural ties.

Neighborhood HealthSource

Neighborhood HealthSource is a federally qualified health center with four clinics located in Minneapolis and Coon Rapids. They primarily serve the Latinx community in North and Northeast Minneapolis, as well as the northern metro area suburbs. They work to raise awareness of existing commercial tobacco cessation programs and connect people who use commercial tobacco to cessation programs by creating and distributing culturally appropriate messaging. They formed relationships with community partners to develop and implement and evaluate an individual-level strategic outreach plan. Successes include Neighborhood HealthSource creating positive health systems change by implementing a commercial tobacco use and cessation assessment, with a warm handoff to a medical assistant for Quit Partner promotion and referral.

NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center, Inc.

NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center, Inc. is a community-based multi-service agency for communities in Hennepin County. NorthPoint collaborates on commercial tobacco policy work, with support from their youth coalition. They work to advance policies that restrict access to menthol and flavored commercial tobacco products, as well as minimum price policies for cigarettes and smokeless commercial tobacco products. NorthPoint promotes cessation services through community engagement with partner organizations, clinic staff, and community members. Successes include education of Minneapolis City Council members about policies to establish a minimum pack price and close sampling loopholes. NorthPoint also collaborated with the Minnesota Department of Health on a capacity-building initiative coordinated by the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials called Increasing State Menthol Capacity Learning Collaborative. This initiative brought together eight state tobacco use prevention teams, each paired with a local community-based organization, with the goal of reducing menthol and flavored tobacco product use through strong linkages between the two stakeholders within each participating state.

Sierra Leone Community in Minnesota

Sierra Leone Community in Minnesota (SLCM) works to engage West African immigrants and their families within the Twin Cities, promoting a commercial tobacco-free mind, body, and environment. They work to engage and educate community members on the harms of commercial tobacco, as well as collect culturally specific data to inform their work, fill gaps in publicly available data, and develop and execute activities that promote both behavior change and policy, systems, and environmental changes. Successes include Sierra Leone Community in Minnesota establishing a community leadership advisory group to increase support for their commercial tobacco work, developing meaningful partnerships, and developing strategies to achieve their goals. SLCM trained over 75 new youth from West African

communities using the Commercial Tobacco 101 curriculum developed by the Association for Nonsmokers – Minnesota.

Tobacco-Free Alliance

Tobacco-Free Alliance (TFA) works with youth groups and community partners in Ramsey and Dakota counties to address the harms of commercial tobacco. Through engaging community partners, they hope to increase the capacity needed to reduce the tobacco industry’s influence and reduce access to, and availability of, commercial tobacco products. They engage the community and educate local decision-makers on point-of-sale policies. Successes include TFA establishing the Vape Waste Team that encouraged young people to consider the negative impact commercial tobacco has on the environment and innovate on solutions. They implemented a student survey, which 415 high school students in Dakota County responded to, and provided data on social, cultural, and environmental factors influencing vape device disposal practices.

WellShare International

WellShare International serves the East African and Somali communities in Minneapolis, Saint Paul, and parts of greater Minnesota. Their East African Smoke-Free Program focuses on reducing commercial tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure among children, youth, and young adults. They achieve this through youth education, partnership with local businesses and organizations to implement commercial tobacco-free policies, and by raising awareness of the dangers of hookah use with health care providers and at community events. Successes include WellShare working with partners to implement commercial tobacco-free policies in four new spaces, including on-site daycare centers. They also partnered with the city of Minneapolis to conduct outreach and data collection on residents’ understanding of smoke-free policies.

Community-Based Disparities Grant

The Communities-Based Disparities Grant funds the Twin Cities Recovery Project (TCRP), an organization that serves people seeking support for substance use, mental health, and criminal justice recovery. TCRP primarily serves African American, Black, and low-income residents in Minneapolis. Through this grant and additional support from the CDC National and State Tobacco Control Program funding for DP20-2001, TCRP is working to:

- Educate the community about the harms of commercial tobacco use and predatory targeting by the tobacco industry.
- Train peer recovery specialists in cessation support and referral.
- Promote cessation in the community and among staff who use commercial tobacco.
- Integrate cessation referral and treatment into TCRP services and programs.
- Implement and enforce commercial tobacco-free norms and policies at TCRP locations.
- Train other community organizations to implement commercial tobacco-free policies and promote cessation services.
- Educate local decisionmakers about their efforts to reduce the harms caused by commercial tobacco use.

TCRP successfully established partnerships with multiple community partners and is a member of the Ramsey Tobacco Coalition and the Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation coalition (MSFG). By participating in coalition efforts, they connect with other organizations working on commercial tobacco policy efforts. TCRP joined MSFG's Racial and Health Equity Committee to help share their perspective of how proposed policy efforts impact racial and health equity. They conducted outreach with partners to educate communities on tobacco industry marketing tactics that target Black, low-income, and other communities of color. TCRP has reached over 1,400 community members and multi-unit housing residents to raise awareness, to educate, and to provide cessation resources.

TCRP trained their staff, including peer recovery specialists, on commercial tobacco harms and cessation resources and support, using evidence-based and culturally relevant curriculum. Commercial tobacco and cessation training has been integrated into all peer recovery specialist orientation and ongoing professional development, allowing all people receiving services or support from TCRP to gain access to cessation support and referral. TCRP established a partnership with the Minneapolis Fire Department to have a peer recovery specialist on site and on call to assist anyone who comes to the Fire Department in need of recovery services. This served as an expansion to an overdose prevention program that designates the firehouse as a community overdose prevention point, with free Narcan available anytime. With training on commercial tobacco harms, the relationship to mental health and substance use, tobacco's role in recovery, and cessation resources, TCRP's peer recovery specialists are uniquely positioned to offer commercial tobacco cessation support during initial interactions with new peers. This enables peer recovery specialists to strengthen relationships with their peers and provide ongoing recovery support.

TCRP successfully engaged and educated community members across Minneapolis. TCRP has tabled at over 25 community events and conducted over 30 presentations, reaching thousands of community members. Events included Juneteenth celebrations, Black Pride, and Open Streets, as well as TCRP-

hosted events, like monthly free barbeques. Additionally, through a separate grant, TCRP has been able to provide nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) to community members seeking cessation support. TCRP has engaged over 600 community members around NRT and provided NRT samples to over 320 community members.

Quit Partner™ Ambassador Grants

The Quit Partner Ambassadors Grant Program launched in April 2022 and funds local community-based organizations to raise awareness of Quit Partner¹³ programs in their communities. The focus is on communities disproportionately impacted by commercial tobacco use. The overall goal of the grant program is to support organizations to engage community members and build trust in Quit Partner programs, with the goal of increasing use of these services and reducing commercial tobacco use among adults.

American Indian Cancer Foundation

The American Indian Cancer Foundation (AICAF) is a national non-profit and Native-governed organization established to address the cancer inequities experienced by Native communities. AICAF partners with Tribes and tribal communities throughout Minnesota to increase knowledge of Quit Partner programs, specifically the American Indian Quitline.

AICAF connected with 20 Tribes and Tribal communities to offer educational presentations at clinics, including carbon monoxide testing, which is a way to assess smoking behavior and educate individuals on the health effects of smoking and encourage people to quit.¹⁴ AICAF developed culturally appropriate quit kits and distributed them to participants at these presentations. Additionally, AICAF tabled at over 30 Tribal and community events, reaching hundreds of community members with the American Indian Quitline information and cessation resources. AICAF also developed a survey to capture community members' experiences with Quit Partner and the American Indian Quit Line, to gain feedback on materials and messaging and to examine how to increase use of these quit services. The results will be used to inform future Quit Partner and the American Indian Quitline promotion.

Comunidades Latinas Unidas en Servicio

Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio (CLUES) is the largest Latinx-led organization in Minnesota, serving over 15,000 individuals annually through direct services. CLUES advances social and economic equity and wellbeing for Latinx people in Minnesota by offering a wide range of services, including

¹³ Quit Partner (<https://www.quitpartnermn.com/>)

¹⁴ Goldstein, A. O., Gans, S. P., Ripley-Moffitt, C., Kotsen, C., & Bars, M. (2018). Use of expired air carbon monoxide testing in clinical tobacco treatment settings. *Chest*, 153(2), 554-562.

comprehensive behavioral health care, child and parent support, community health programming, asset-building (e.g., employment, workforce skills, and housing), financial empowerment, elder care, and youth development.

CLUES leverages existing relationships and programming across their organization to engage their community on Quit Partner services and smoking cessation. CLUES integrated promotion of Quit Partner and other cessation resources into all organization events, such as food distribution, health fairs, and their mental health and substance use programs. CLUES created videos and posts promoting Quit Partner, the benefits of cessation, and ways to connect to services through their many social media channels. Through both the media and the in-person outreach, CLUES has reached thousands of community members. Additionally, CLUES worked with its youth mental health and substance use prevention program to survey youth in their community on their perceptions of commercial tobacco use, risk factors associated with youth commercial tobacco use, and the types of cessation resources that would best serve youth. This data will be included in future reports.

Amherst H. Wilder Foundation

The Amherst H. Wilder Foundation (Wilder) is a community nonprofit serving the greater Saint Paul metropolitan area. Through direct service, research, and community engagement, Wilder works to break down barriers to improve people's lives and wellbeing. Wilder's strategic priorities are to improve community mental health and advance social and economic opportunities to promote health equity and prevent homelessness.

Their work focused on serving Southeast Asian community members, many of whom are immigrants and refugees. Wilder created culturally and linguistically relevant cessation education and support resources, such as a Wilder Steps to Quitting card printed in Hmong, Karen, and Spanish. They promoted these resources and educated community on the effects of commercial tobacco at tabling and community events like the Minnesota State Fair, reaching hundreds of community members. Wilder trained over 200 behavioral health providers on commercial tobacco use, its harms, and cessation resources. In conjunction with staff training, they implemented an enhanced tobacco screening process to identify people who use commercial tobacco within their programs and to initiate a follow-up with providers. Wilder also identified over 300 people who use commercial tobacco and provided them follow-up resources and support. The culturally appropriate commercial tobacco resources and the commercial tobacco screener added to their Electronic Medical Record (EMR) will be sustainable resources that Wilder will continue to use after the grant has ended.

Technical Assistance and Training Provider Grants

Technical Assistance and Training (TA) Providers support community grantees in their commercial tobacco prevention and control work by ensuring they have the necessary knowledge, skills, and resources to be successful in achieving their goals. TA Providers provide a variety of education and skill building opportunities for grantees and community members throughout the grant period, including one-on-one consultation, webinars, in-person grantee meetings, toolkits, model policy language, and other resources. These opportunities are meant to build the capacity of community organizations and local public health and strengthen their knowledge in foundational public health practices – including assessment, community and partner education, and community engagement. Community grantees also receive TA on commercial tobacco control best practices, including smoke-free housing, commercial tobacco-free outdoor spaces and events, worksites, schools, and point-of-sale strategies. TA Providers offer education on tobacco industry tactics, commercial tobacco use disparities, community and youth engagement strategies, media and communication planning, and policy development.

TA Providers help grantees identify and elevate their individual cultural or community strengths and help the grantee use these for addressing specific community needs. This individualized approach to TA helps grantees create community-driven and culturally responsive policy strategies that change community norms related to commercial tobacco and result in sustainable changes. TA Providers also serve as commercial tobacco prevention and control policy subject matter experts and provide individualized consultation to community grantees on stages of PSE change, including strategy development and mapping, policy options, policy adoption, implementation, and enforcement.

TA Providers assist commercial tobacco grantees statewide, including the 41 community health boards funded through the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP).

ACET, Inc.

ACET, Inc. is a woman- and minority-owned small business enterprise based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Their staff have strong theoretical and practical knowledge and skills to support the successful design and implementation of projects and deliverables. They have extensive experience in providing technical assistance to grantees, working on projects to prevent commercial tobacco use and promote cessation, leading positive youth development and engagement work, and providing innovative and coordinated statewide campaigns on pertinent health issues.

ACET provides TA to the ten Youth E-cigarette Prevention and Cessation grantees. TA includes individual needs assessments, evaluation planning and support, youth engagement training and resources, and connecting grantees to other TA providers and resources. ACET coordinates quarterly trainings for the grantees, facilitates monthly peer group meetings, and supports the Youth Advisory Council. They also worked with Minnesota Department of Health staff, partners, and grantees to help plan and produce the Youth Summits in 2022 and 2024 reaching over 300 youth.

American Lung Association in Minnesota

The American Lung Association (ALA) works across Minnesota to eliminate commercial tobacco use and related death and disease. ALA has passed a wide variety of policies in many settings, including health care, community, school, multi-unit housing and worksites. They have a strong understanding of rural-specific dynamics and issues. ALA provides TA on commercial tobacco-specific policy, systems, and environmental strategy to Greater Minnesota (outside the 11-county metro) area grantees. ALA provides grantees and their partners with TA and training focused on healthcare systems change, which increases the availability of commercial tobacco treatment and services in hard-to-reach communities. This happens in traditional primary healthcare settings as well as innovative settings like public housing and community mental health and substance abuse treatment centers.

ALA supported grantees in greater Minnesota with policy, systems and environmental changes including updating commercial tobacco retail license ordinances to align with state and federal laws to prevent youth access and initiation to commercial tobacco products. ALA also worked on updating resources for grantees and school staff working to address commercial tobacco use among youth and smoke-free housing resources and signage. ALA presented a smoke-free housing 101 webinar in partnership with Association for Nonsmokers – Minnesota (ANSR) and Public Health Law Center (PHLC). Additionally, ALA worked with ANSR and Minnesota Department of Health staff to create and deliver a two-day in-person training to our grantees on the steps to policy, systems, and environmental changes.

Association for Nonsmokers – Minnesota

The Association for Nonsmokers – Minnesota (ANSR) works to reduce the human and economic costs of commercial tobacco use in Minnesota. ANSR’s core commitments are to reduce the number of young people who smoke and to continuously advocate for the rights and health of those who do not. ANSR provides commercial tobacco-specific policy, systems, and environmental strategy TA to the 11-county metro area grantees.

ANSR worked with grantees to pass local point-of-sale policies across the metro area, often bringing several grantees and local partners together to work on a policy. ANSR presented a webinar on flavored commercial tobacco products along with ALA. ANSR continued to support grantees and multi-unit housing residents with smoke-free housing resources and presentations. ANSR also supported grantees and school staff with updated resources for schools and presentations on alternatives to suspension. They send out weekly newsletters summarizing commercial tobacco-related news to grantees and partners, and monthly TA grantee newsletters to highlight tools and resources.

Public Health Law Center

The Public Health Law Center (PHLC) has expertise in commercial tobacco control policy change and specializes in state and local commercial tobacco-related legal and policy issues, with the mission of improving health through the power of law. PHLC provides tailored legal TA to grantees across Minnesota on commercial tobacco-related policy options, policy analysis, and development of model language and resources.

Tobacco Use Prevention: 2025 Report to the Minnesota Legislature

PHLC updated the Tracking Commercial Tobacco Laws: A Minnesota Digest in 2023;¹⁵ a popular and essential resource for grantees and state and local government staff to understand Minnesota’s laws addressing commercial tobacco. Other PHLC publications included an updated model ordinance for smoke-free multiunit housing in Minnesota, an outdoor smoke-free and commercial tobacco-free model policy and an updated model K-12 school policy for commercial tobacco. PHLC provided individual legal technical assistance to grantees working on local policies across Minnesota, along with presenting on several webinars and developing resources.

¹⁵ Public Health Law Center. (2024). Tracking Commercial Tobacco Laws - A Minnesota State Digest. Retrieved from <https://www.publichealthlawcenter.org/sites/default/files/resources/MN-Tracking-Tobacco-Laws-Digest.pdf>

Tribal Commercial Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation Grants

The Tribal Commercial Tobacco Prevention Grants include activities based in both Anishinaabe and Dakota cultures. 10 of the 11 Tribal communities, on whose lands the state of Minnesota was formed, have accepted these grant funds and tailored programming to meet the unique needs of their community. These grants were created to address chronic disease prevention and commercial tobacco prevention and cessation in Minnesota Tribal Nations. These grants are non-competitive, five-year opportunities for Tribal communities to implement culturally driven healthy eating, active living, and commercial tobacco prevention and cessation efforts.

Tribal Nations in Minnesota have a connection to traditional forms of tobacco since time immemorial. These connections often stem from the origins of these Nations and are ceremonial tools for traditional Indigenous lifeways. However, colonization has deeply impacted this connection for Tribal Nations. From about the late 19th century to the middle of the 20th century, American Indian people were not allowed to practice their traditional ceremonies under threat of incarceration, and their cultures and languages were stripped from their children during the boarding school era. These legal implications and genocidal acts have had lasting impacts on Minnesota Tribal Nations and their relationships to traditional forms of tobacco. These impacts are arguably correlated with current American Indian disparities in commercial tobacco use. For example, in Minnesota, commercial tobacco use is highest among American Indian populations. According to the 2023 Tribal Tobacco Use Project survey, 46% of adult American Indians in Minnesota smoked commercial tobacco.

Despite these struggles, which still impact communities today, there is also a strong history of resiliency within Tribal Nations. Resiliency for Tribal Nations comes, in part, in the form of cultural practices and language. Recent research on populations who have experienced historical trauma have highlighted the legacies of those impacts on their respective populations, and the importance of culture as a form of resiliency.^{16, 17} SAMSHA also indicates that cultural connectedness is a protective factor from adverse health behaviors for Tribal Nations.¹⁸

¹⁶ Brave Heart MYH, Chase J, Elkins J, Altschul DB. Historical Trauma Among Indigenous Peoples of the Americas: Concepts, Research, and Clinical Considerations. *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs*. 2011;43(4):282-290.

¹⁷ Yehuda R. The On Being Project [Internet]. Minneapolis, MN: The On Being Project; 2017. Podcast. <https://onbeing.org/programs/rachel-yehuda-how-trauma-and-resilience-cross-generations-nov2017/>

¹⁸ SAMHSA. Culture is Prevention. In: Connections N, ed. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; 2018.

Tribal Partners’ Success Summary

Tribal Tobacco partners work on reducing high prevalence rates of commercial tobacco use through a variety of grant strategies and corresponding activities. The grant activities are designed around five strategies: conducting an assessment, working on engagement and education, increasing access to traditional tobacco, decreasing exposure to commercial tobacco smoke, and cessation and community-clinic linkages. These overarching grant strategies help inform the type of activity needed to achieve the grantee’s strategic goals. For example, prior to these grants, not all tribal community members had access to traditional forms of tobacco and instead relied on commercial tobacco for their spiritual, ceremonial, and traditional practices. To address this cultural gap, these grants help fund the cultivation of traditional forms of tobacco used by the community. They also create space for education on the harvesting and uses of traditional tobacco and the harms of commercial tobacco. Grant activities also target five different setting areas: schools, worksites, childcare, community, and health care depending on the needs of the community. These grant activities take a Policy, Systems, and Environment (PSE) approach, in that they actively work towards making a PSE change within each tribal community to promote traditional tobacco use and culture as prevention in each Tribal Nation.

Tribal Tobacco Grant Activities

Tribal Nation partners have reported that most grant activities are centered around their community, first and foremost, with an emphasis on engagement, education, empowerment, culture, and increasing access to resources, see Figure 5.

Figure 5 - Tribal Grant Activities by Type

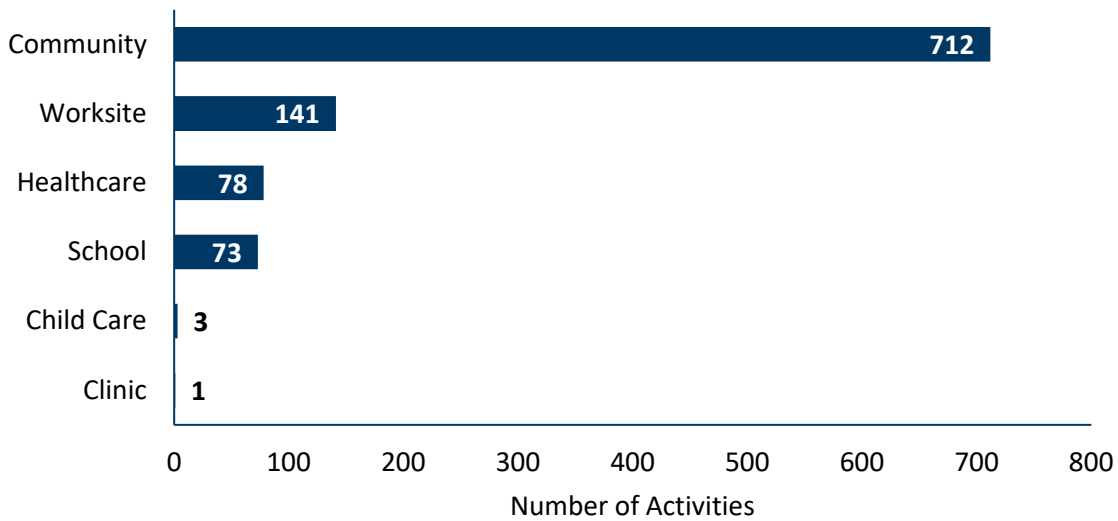


Additionally, many of our Tribal Nation partners have strong coalitions made up of community members who do work on commercial tobacco in collaboration with the grant coordinators in their community. Due to staff turnover, many new staff have been hired into the commercial tobacco work, and there was an emphasis on building employee capacity via trainings and networking.

Tribal Tobacco Grant Settings

During the reporting cycle, the primary setting our Tribal Nation Partners worked in was with the community, see Figure 6.

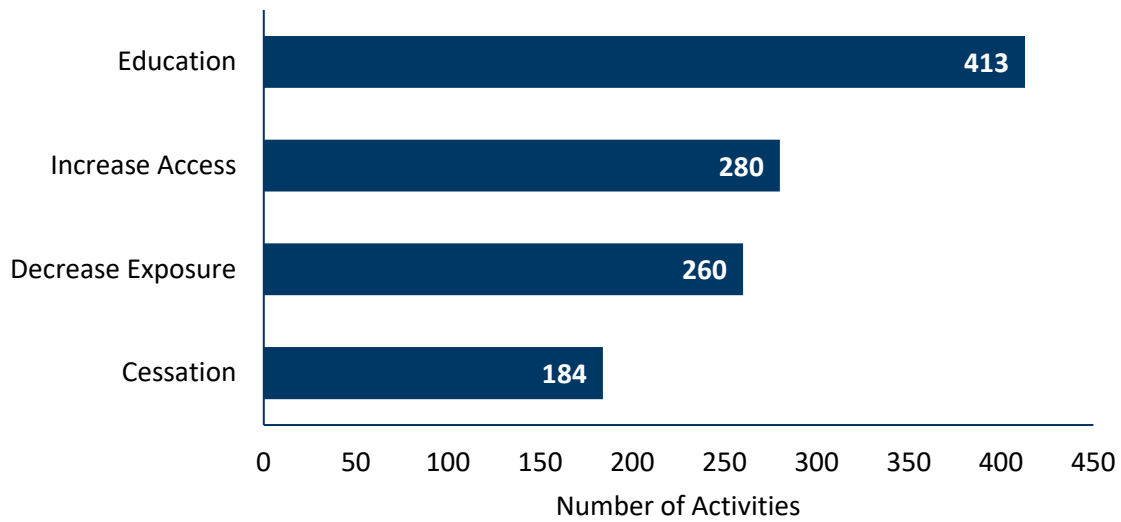
Figure 6 – Tribal Grant Activities by Setting



Tribal Tobacco Grant Focus

A major focus of the work done by our Tribal Nation partners is on education of all facets of prevention of commercial tobacco and increasing access to traditional forms of tobacco and cultural resources related to traditional tobacco. Decreasing exposure to secondhand smoke and cessation were also important focuses of work being done by our Tribal Nation partners, see Figure 7.

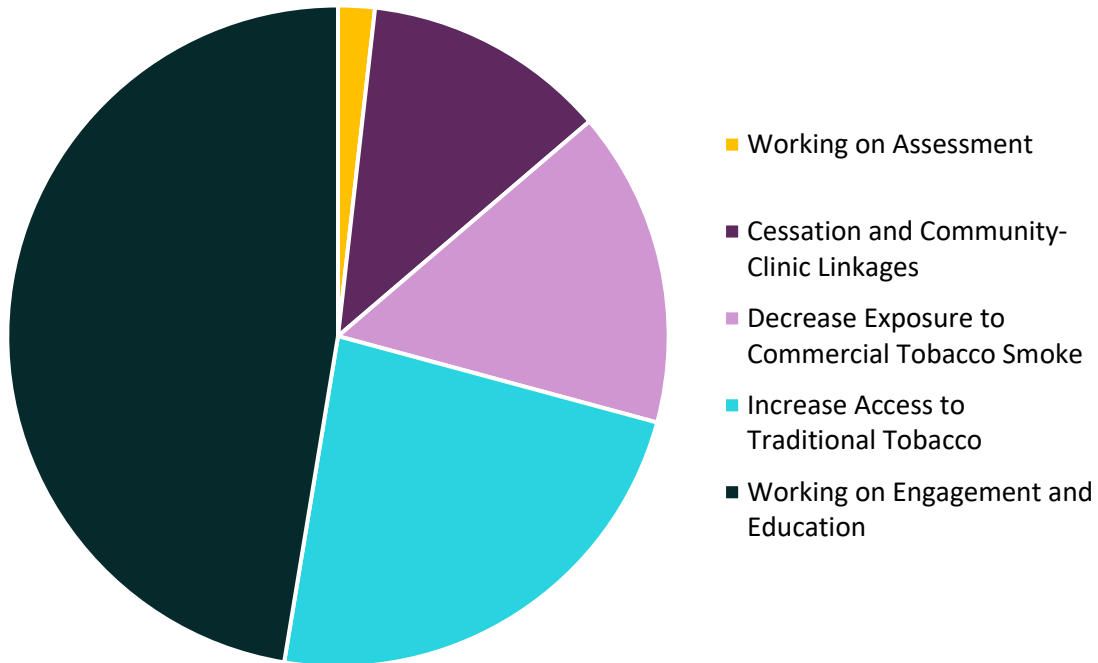
Figure 7 – Tribal Grant Activity by Focus Areas



Tribal Tobacco Grant Strategies

Figure 8 shows that most Tribal Nation Partner’s work on commercial tobacco is focused on education and engagement strategy. Additionally, increasing access to traditional tobacco and decreasing exposure to commercial tobacco smoke are important strategies of the work.

Figure 8 - Proportion of Grant Activities by Strategy

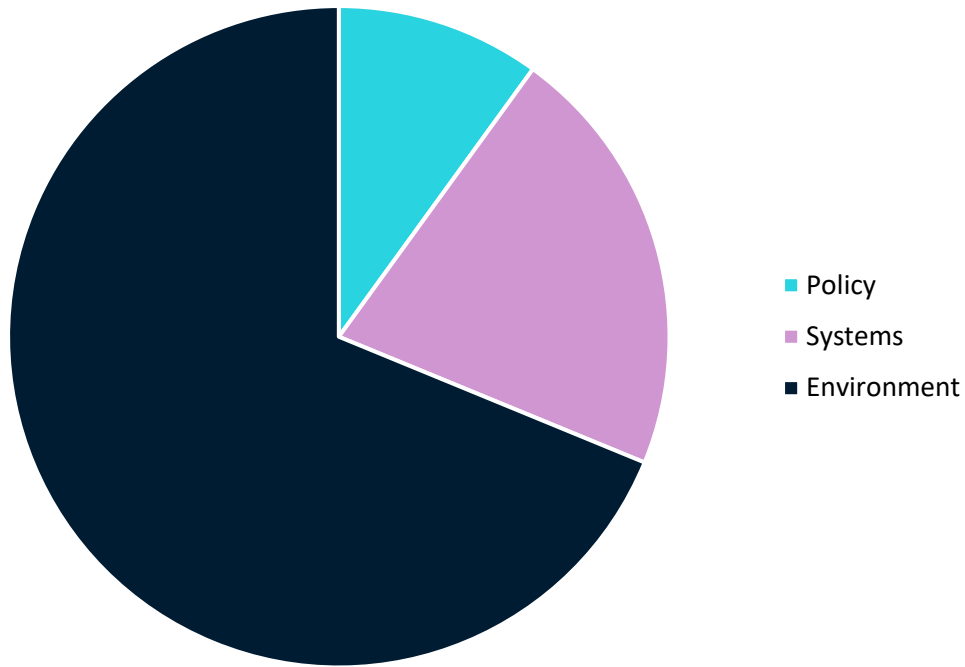


This figure correlates to the importance of integrating culture as a form of prevention when working on commercial tobacco prevention and cessation with our Tribal Nation Partners. Grant activities include educating about the traditional uses and forms of traditional tobacco in their communities.

Tribal Tobacco Grant PSE Summary

Figure 9 shows that a vast majority of the commercial tobacco grant PSE work is focused on creating environmental changes in community for our Tribal Nation Partners.

Figure 9 - Proportion of Grant Activities by PSE Areas



Tribal Tobacco Grant Estimated Reach

Tribal Nations support PSE efforts and work collaboratively with their communities to educate and inform community members. Through grant reporting efforts, they have reported a significant reach of an estimated 50,000 people. Reach is reported as individuals who participate in the grant activities put on by Tribal Tobacco Coordinators and directly receive services from the grant.

Youth E-cigarette Prevention and Cessation Initiative

In 2021, the Minnesota legislature appropriated funding to reduce and prevent youth and young adult e-cigarette use, increase youth cessation efforts, and support youth mental wellbeing. The Minnesota Department of Health launched the Minnesota Youth E-cigarette Prevention and Cessation Initiative to focus on five areas:

- Initiating an evidence-based, statewide, counter-marketing communications and media campaign to educate youth on the dangers of vaping and support mental health and wellbeing.
- Creating youth prevention, engagement grants to youth-based and youth-serving organizations to educate, train, and engage young people on the harms of vaping and tobacco to change social norms and promote mental well-being.
- Engaging youth in community and school efforts to advance policy, systems, and environmental changes to prevent youth initiation and reduce youth access.
- Enhancing nicotine and vaping cessation promotion and communication activities aimed at youth and young adults who vape and promote resources on mental wellbeing.
- Increasing surveillance and evaluation of youth and young adult tobacco, nicotine, and substance use.

The goal of the Initiative is to reduce youth and young adult e-cigarette and commercial tobacco use in Minnesota by 25%, by 2026.

Youth E-cigarette Prevention and Cessation Grants

The Minnesota Department of Health funds 10 community grantees as part of the Youth E-cigarette Prevention and Cessation Initiative. These grantees work to develop and engage youth as essential partners to raise awareness and change social norms and behaviors around youth e-cigarette and commercial tobacco use.

This grant program is a comprehensive, statewide effort to reduce youth e-cigarette and commercial tobacco use. It leverages existing youth programs to make sustainable changes to community policies, practices, systems, and environments. Grantees integrate factors of mental wellbeing that contribute to reducing commercial tobacco use among youth and participate in local and statewide communications efforts.

Association for Nonsmokers – Minnesota

The Association for Nonsmokers – Minnesota (ANSR) works to reduce the human and economic costs of commercial tobacco use in Minnesota. ANSR's core commitments are to reduce the number of young people who smoke or use e-cigarettes and to continuously advocate for the rights and health of people who do not use these products. Working with a youth group comprised of 25 students from Hennepin and Ramsey counties, ANSR has helped inform youth, community members, and decision makers on different policy priorities, such as restricting flavored commercial tobacco and price discounting. Significant policy wins included working with community members to pass a full flavor prohibition and

capping of licenses ordinance in Richfield; passing license capping, proximity ordinance,¹⁹ and updated penalty structure in North Saint Paul; and passing a license cap and proximity ordinance in New Brighton. ANSR’s direct work with their youth group has helped the youth develop strong leadership and advocacy skills, resulting in several students presenting at the 2022 National Conference on Tobacco or Health and sharing their personal experiences with community stakeholders.

Horizon Public Health

Horizon Public Health is a local public health organization located in west central Minnesota serving five counties – Douglas, Grant, Pope, Stevens, and Traverse. Horizon Public Health’s mission is to work in partnership with individuals and communities in creating an environment that promotes the health and improves the well-being of all people in the five-county area. As a result of the collective efforts between Horizon Public Health and youth groups from Ashby and Morris, a ‘support over suspension’ policy was implemented in Morris Area High School. The statewide billboard campaign, Hey Norm, was implemented with a focus across the five-county area, and youth quit kits were assembled and distributed at Ashby Public School. Interest and recruitment for the Ashby and Morris youth groups continues to grow as they focus on passing a local ordinance to cap the number of commercial tobacco licenses in the city of Alexandria.

Indigenous Peoples Task Force

Indigenous Peoples Task Force (IPTF) is a nonprofit organization with a population focus on Native American youth from Minneapolis, Saint Paul, and Boise Forte Tribe in Minnesota. A 12-member Native youth coalition was formed called Planting the Seed of Hope with the slogan “Ciggy Ain’t Jiggy.” The purpose of this coalition is to do peer-to-peer education on traditional tobacco and the harms of vaping. To achieve this, all committee members participated and completed the Waybinagay (substance abuse prevention) curriculum and showcase their learnings and experiences through multiple creative and cultural outlets such as plays and fashion shows to raise awareness on issues currently impacting their community. Other notable achievements include passing a resolution that traditional tobacco ceremonies will be incorporated in all IPTF programming, passing a proclamation to recognize August 11, 2023, as Sacred Traditional Tobacco Day, and bringing their youth group to multiple important conferences and events, such as the Return to First Medicines conference.

Lincoln Park Children and Families Collaborative

Lincoln Park Children and Families Collaborative is a nonprofit organization in the Lincoln Park community of Duluth dedicated to supporting children and families by connecting them to resources

¹⁹ A proximity ordinance is a law that sets rules about how close certain things can be to each other. For example, it might say that a new factory can't be built too close to a residential area, or that a bar can't be too close to a school. These ordinances are often used to protect people's health, safety, and quality of life.

and opportunities, embracing cultures, and building community and well-being through strong and equitable leadership. Eleven youth in their community have been recruited into their advisory committee, called Youth Against Kommercial Tobacco (YAK). Their primary activities include providing education opportunities around traditional tobacco, e-cigarette use and its harms, and the benefits of cessation and resources such as My Life, My Quit™ to their community with a focus on LGBTQ2+ youth. YAK members planted traditional tobacco seeds and smudge together at the beginning of each meeting, which is an Anishinaabe practice that their elders lead. Their policy, systems, and environmental change strategies include building a coalition of partner organizations that includes a youth advisory committee, offering health and wellbeing opportunities to reduce commercial tobacco use and increase resiliency, and engaging members with the state Coalition and local school boards to assess and implement commercial tobacco-free policies.

myHealth for Teens & Young Adults

myHealth for Teens and Young Adults is a nonprofit healthcare clinic in Hopkins, Minnesota. myHealth partners with school districts, community organizations, and coalitions to meet the growing needs of young people and their families, as well as adults. The clinic offers comprehensive, preventative, and youth-focused medical and mental health services and community education. myHealth's Youth Advisory Board (YAB) is the bridge between the clinic and the community it serves. The YAB is comprised of fifteen 18-year-olds who are dedicated to improving the health of their peers, advising young people on the risks of nicotine use, and providing resources for quitting that work for young people. Through peer education and community outreach, the YAB assists schools, such as Minnetonka and Hopkins Public Schools, in building sustainable vaping prevention programs and enacting change to school disciplinary policies to discourage severe penalties for first time offenders and favor mental health support.

Northfield Healthy Community Initiative

Northfield Healthy Community Initiative is a nonprofit organization that aims to cultivate collaborative communities in Rice County that support, value, and empower youth. Their primary objective is to increase the amount of middle- and high-school youth in Rice County who choose not to use an e-cigarette by intentionally engaging and power sharing with local young people, communicating that vaping is the symptom of larger issues (e.g. a coping skill), and by working toward more restorative, less punitive, ways to engage youth in quitting. Northfield Healthy Community Initiative has recruited ten youth from Faribault and Northfield to their leadership team, called Reduction and Awareness of Vaping and E-cigarette Use (RAVE), to achieve these goals. This group works with five existing youth groups in the county that represent a wide range of youth including LGBTQ2+ youth and youth in recovery. Notable achievements and current work include creating a chemical health team at Faribault Public Schools; implementing a new health curriculum at Faribault Public Schools with a new chapter on vaping; promoting spaces outside of school that are chemical-free/safe and culturally appropriate; implementing Youth and Teen Mental Health First Aid Trainings to all sophomores in Faribault and Northfield Public High Schools; and working with Rice County Public Health and the city of Northfield to update tobacco ordinances to include restrictions on commercial tobacco flavors.

Olmsted County Public Health Services

Olmsted County Public Health Services provides a broad range of services to individuals, families, and communities to promote and protect the health of those who live and work in Olmsted County. Olmsted County Public Health formed a youth group called the E-cigarette Prevention Initiative Youth Action Council (EPIYAC) to guide and support the work of the Youth E-cigarette Prevention and Cessation Initiative goals of reducing e-cigarette and commercial tobacco use in Minnesota. EPIYAC currently has 19 youth members from six different schools in Olmsted County. By organizing subcommittee groups based on youth interests, such as the environmental and social justice group, the EPIYAC group has been able to achieve their goals in several ways. The EPIYAC group has established brand recognition through creative campaigns and a strong social media presence, planned an annual youth summit event to promote a non-vaping culture among their peers and provided education and cessation resources related to youth vaping in three schools in Olmsted County – STEM Academy, Dover-Eyota High School, and Pine Island High School.

Sierra Leone Community in Minnesota

Sierra Leone Community in Minnesota (SLCM) is a nonprofit organization which provides educational, health and cultural services to Sierra Leonean immigrants and their families in Minnesota. Since 2004, SLCM has actively collaborated with other West African organizations and advance policy changes that reduce the use of commercial tobacco products among West African youth. Their primary objectives within the grant include educating and training a group of 50 West African youth on commercial tobacco and e-cigarette use; data collection increasing opportunities for prevention and cessation; and disseminating information through presentations at cultural events. In collaboration with their youth and adult coordinators, several key projects have been achieved such as hosting a youth leadership retreat, educating local policymakers and parents on the harms of flavored e-cigarettes, passing policies in metropolitan cities like Minneapolis, Saint Paul, Brooklyn Park, Lakeville, and Roseville to restrict the sale of flavored commercial tobacco products, and advocating for the decriminalization of violations of purchase, use, or possession by youth under 21.

Something Cool, Inc.

Something Cool, Inc. is a nonprofit organization that serves rural youth in Aitkin County and parts of District 2 of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Reservation. They partnered with the McGregor Public School District to engage youth in the community through education, service, recreation, and business opportunities. Something Cool, Inc. established a group of 11 students called the Student Health and Wellness Team to combat commercial tobacco sales, promote healthy recreational activities, and distribute vaping prevention materials in their community. Significant achievements include: creating an anti-vaping video campaign called The Big Threat of Vaping in a Tiny Town; participating in a billboard photoshoot to increase awareness on the effects of vaping; hosting a vaping prevention information booth at the Aitkin County Fair; and creating public service announcement videos to showcase to students, parents, staff, and the school board at the County Board’s public hearing on the proposed commercial tobacco and e-cigarette ordinance. Something Cool and McGregor Public Schools are

continuing to saturate their community with counter-marketing behavior messaging and discuss with school staff opportunities for vaping education for students with vaping violations.

Steele County Public Health

Steele County Public Health is a public health organization located in Owatonna with a mission to prevent disease, promote wellness, protect health, and decrease health inequities by meeting the needs of underserved and rural residents in Steele County through various services. A diverse group of 15 students from Medford, Owatonna, and Blooming Prairie schools make up their youth advisory council, called Youth-Oriented Leadership Organization (YOLO). Their primary objective is to increase the capacity of students to have conversations about mental health and to develop skills and resources for peers and parents. With this goal in mind, the YOLO group: established a strong social media presence on Instagram; created a video intended to increase parent awareness on how to have conversations about vaping and mental health with their youth; participated in over a dozen activities, such as a documentary screening of *Hiding in Plain Sight*, to help normalize conversations around mental health; and developed materials, such as the Youth Voices display at the Day at the Capitol event, to help support the passing of local policies to reduce access to commercial tobacco products. Their current and future work will focus on addressing policy needs related to vaping in schools, specifically related to alternatives to suspension.

Youth counter-marketing

The Youth E-cigarette Prevention and Cessation Initiative includes statewide, counter-marketing campaigns to engage youth as essential partners to raise awareness and change social norms around e-cigarette and commercial tobacco use in their communities. These campaigns also enhance nicotine cessation promotion among youth and young adults who vape nicotine as well as promote resources on mental wellbeing.

Room to Breathe brand and campaign

Room to Breathe was created in 2023 as part of the Youth E-cigarette Prevention and Cessation Initiative to be a safe space for youth to learn about the dangers of e-cigarette use and how they are targeted by the industry, resources to help them quit, and ways to get involved in their communities.

Room to Breathe reaches youth primarily online through social media. Aside from its website (<https://aroomtobreathe.org/>), Room to Breathe videos run on digital media, and youth typically see content while scrolling through apps like Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat.



Figure 10 - A Selection of Social Media Images from the Room to Breathe Campaign



Hey Norm campaign

The Hey Norm campaign was created in 2023 as part of the Youth E-cigarette Prevention and Cessation Initiative to help encourage peer-to-peer engagement on the topic of e-cigarette use. Formative research conducted during campaign development indicated that youth may be aware of the dangers of e-cigarette use, and while they are concerned about their friends who use e-cigarettes, they do not necessarily feel like it is their role to intervene.

This campaign centers around its main character, Norm Davidson, who is here to help start the “vape talk” with youth. Norm has a hotline, 1-833-HEY-NORM, that young Minnesotans call to receive tips on talking to their friends, to learn more about the dangers of e-cigarette use, receive words of encouragement, or to find resources to quit.

Hey Norm reaches youth through a mix of digital and out-of-home media, but youth are primarily exposed to the campaign on social media (see Figure 9). In 2023, the campaign was also promoted by local and national influencers, and it was featured at events like Saint Paul’s Grand ol’ Day and the Minneapolis Pride Parade. Youth attending these events recognized Norm and requested photos with him.



Figure 11 - Examples of Campaign Ads Place on Digital Media and on Billboards



The core 2023 campaign was in market from March until July 2023. During that time, the campaign gained over 370 million impressions across all media, 384 thousand link clicks, and its videos had seen 27 million views. The Hey Norm hotline received nearly 12,000 calls, many of which came from Northern Minnesota (Brainerd, Bemidji, and Duluth areas) and Central Minnesota (excluding the Twin Cities).

Escape the Vape Video Challenge

The Escape the Vape Video Challenge is a contest to engage Minnesota middle and high school students and raise awareness of the dangers of using e-cigarettes, often called vaping. To participate, students submit a 30-second public service announcement (PSA) video to educate their peers, schools, families, and community on the dangers of vaping nicotine. This opportunity allows students to use their creative energy to make a difference in their community.

In 2024, the Escape the Vape Video Challenge ran its fourth contest with over 500 students from 38 Minnesota schools creating 30-second videos to educate their peers on the dangers of vaping. Minnesota students submitted 232 video entries. Middle and high school students served as judges and helped select the 14 finalists. Nearly 1,400 public votes were cast to choose the winners for each division.



In 2023, 664 youth from 52 schools participated in the contest. In total, 347 videos were submitted, and 2377 public votes were cast to choose the winners.

Youth leadership gatherings

2022 Escape the Vape Youth Leadership Summit

The Escape the Vape Youth Leadership Summit was held in 2022. Participants included teens and youth groups affiliated with the Minnesota Department of Health, the Masonic Cancer Center, and past Escape the Vape Video Challenge participants. The speakers focused on how powerful and effective young people are using their voice to fight against commercial tobacco use, educate their peers and send messages to decision-makers about the need to protect children from nicotine addiction. The event provided breakout sessions with topics on engaging community, advocacy, developing leadership skills and, alternatives to suspension. A panel of young leaders shared their personal experiences advocating for change, educating their peers, and how they are currently using these skills. To close the event, the Ikidowin Peer Education Program and Youth Theater Acting Ensemble performed.

2024 EPIC Youth Gathering

The 2024 E-cigarette Prevention Initiative Cohort (EPIC) Youth Gathering participants included the Youth E-cigarette Prevention and Cessation grantee organizations and their youth groups. The planning committee and Youth Advisory Council provided input on the speakers, objectives, and themes for the event. Indigenous Peoples Task Force youth presented a series of spoken word poems about the harms of e-cigarettes called “Culture is Prevention.”



The Gathering provided a variety of breakout sessions for participants with topics ranging from messaging through digital storytelling, strategizing peer education, and commercial tobacco’s harm on the environment. Four panelists who were previously involved in grantee youth groups provided information on how they educated peers and local decisionmakers to advance e-cigarette prevention efforts, the skills they acquired, how they used their experiences to develop their career paths and provided advice to youth working in e-cigarette prevention.

Figure 12 - Photos from the 2024 EPIC Youth Gathering



Youth Advisory Council

The Youth Advisory Council (YAC) was created to bring youth voices to the Minnesota E-cigarette Prevention and Cessation Initiative. The Council gives youth an opportunity to be the face of change in their community by advising the Minnesota Department of Health on various youth initiatives and engaging in efforts to advance policy, systems, and environmental changes to prevent youth initiation and reduce youth access to vaping and e-cigarettes.

The YAC was formed in October 2022, meeting monthly through the school year. The second year of the YAC started in the fall of 2023 and concluded after the youth summit in June 2024. Planning for a third year of the YAC began in Summer 2024. During the monthly YAC meetings youth participate in team building activities, receive training in advocacy or leadership skills, and action plan in small teams. Some of the trainings the YAC has been offered include the PSE process, how to talk to decision-makers, mapping power, and communication skills. Additionally, council members have provided feedback on the creation of the Hey Norm and Room to Breathe campaigns, reviewed and voted on the winners of the Escape the Vape Video Challenge, and advised on the themes and agenda of the youth gatherings. YAC members were also given opportunities to participate in events to educate decision-makers about the harms of youth vaping and practice the skills they had been trained on.

Other Tobacco Use Prevention Efforts

JUUL Settlement Community Input Process

The Minnesota Department of Health conducted an extensive community input process to engage partners in how to use funds from Minnesota's 2023 JUUL Settlement Agreement. In Fall 2023, the input process included meetings with community partners, primarily grantees and staff from across the Department. In 2024, input was gathered from individuals and organizations, building on input from the previous year. Participants were able to provide feedback via online survey or by attending in-person or virtual community input sessions. In total, more than 250 people from communities across the state provided valuable input for this process.²⁰

This input process was supported with Tobacco Use Prevention funds through a contract with North American Research & Analysis, Inc. (NARA). NARA supported an extensive community input process to engage a wide array of state and local partners in a series of meetings to gather input to identify future funding initiatives from Minnesota's 2023 JUUL Settlement Agreement. NARA assisted the Department with coordinating and facilitating the input process. In Fall 2023, the input process included meetings with community partners, primarily grantees and staff from across the Department.

Minnesota Quitline Network

North American Research & Analysis, Inc. (NARA) supports the Minnesota Quitline Network (MQN), a collaboration of Minnesota's health plans and the Minnesota Department of Health. MQN meets on a quarterly basis with health plan representatives to discuss cessation-related topics and review state quitline data. NARA assists with the facilitation of quarterly network meetings and bi-weekly planning meetings. NARA shares with MQN participants research on quitlines, e-cigarette cessation-related articles, and other topics requested by MDH. In addition, NARA assisted MDH with the development of the statewide cessation services request for proposals.

Minnesota Youth Tobacco Survey

The Minnesota Youth Tobacco Survey (MYTS) is supported with Tobacco Use Prevention funds through a contract with ICF Macro. The survey has been conducted since 2000 by the Minnesota Department of Health to provide comprehensive, in-depth information on middle and high school student commercial tobacco use to help inform and evaluate prevention efforts. The MYTS is a representative sample, online survey. The 2023 MYTS revealed that fewer middle school and high school students are vaping than there were three years ago. However, signs of nicotine dependence have intensified among those who

²⁰ Minnesota Department of Health. (2024, October 29). Community Input for Minnesota's 2023 JUUL Settlement Funds. <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/tobacco/settlement/index.html>

vape. Many teens who use e-cigarettes wish to quit, want help to quit, and have tried to quit but are still using these addictive products.

Financial Report

Grants and contracts	SFY 2023 Awards	SFY 2024 Awards
Commercial Tobacco-Free Communities Grants		
African Immigrant Community Services	100,000	100,000
Ain Dah Yung Center	125,000	125,000
American Lung Association in Minnesota	150,000	150,000
Association for Nonsmokers - Minnesota	165,000	135,000
Lao Assistance Center of Minnesota	125,000	125,000
Minneapolis American Indian Center	125,000	125,000
Neighborhood HealthSource	150,000	135,251
NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center, Inc.	150,000	150,000
Sierra Leone Community in Minnesota	125,000	125,000
Tobacco-free Alliance	150,000	150,000
WellShare International	125,000	125,000
Subtotal	1,490,000	1,445,251
Community Disparities Grant		
Twin Cities Recovery Project, Inc.	90,000	90,000
Subtotal	90,000	90,000
Quit Partner™ Ambassador Grants		
American Indian Cancer Foundation	65,000	65,000
Amherst H. Wilder Foundation	50,000	65,000
Comunidades Latinas Unidas en Servicio (CLUES)	65,000	65,000
Subtotal	180,000	195,000
Technical Assistance and Training (TA) Provider Grants		
ACET, Inc.	440,000	300,000
American Lung Association in Minnesota	150,000	150,000
Association for Nonsmokers - Minnesota	150,000	165,000
Public Health Law Center	320,000	366,292
Subtotal	1,060,000	981,292

Tobacco Use Prevention: 2025 Report to the Minnesota Legislature

Grants and contracts	SFY 2023 Awards	SFY 2024 Awards
Tribal Tobacco Prevention Grants		
Bois Forte Band of Chippewa	82,460	82,460
Fond Du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa	96,991	96,991
Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa	79,629	79,629
Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe	135,195	135,195
Lower Sioux Indian Community	79,511	79,511
Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe	95,276	95,276
Prairie Island Indian Community	77,091	77,091
Red Lake Band of Chippewa	143,195	143,195
Upper Sioux Community	76,562	76,562
White Earth Nation	134,090	134,090
Subtotal	1,000,000	1,000,000
Youth E-cigarette Prevention and Cessation Initiative Grantees		
Association for Nonsmokers - Minnesota	145,000	130,000
Horizon Public Health	130,000	120,000
Indigenous Peoples Task Force	120,000	120,000
Lincoln Park Children and Families Collaborative	150,000	145,000
myHealth for Teens & Young Adults	120,000	120,000
Northfield Health Community Initiative	125,000	120,000
Olmsted County	125,000	120,000
Sierra Leone Community in Minnesota	150,000	145,000
Something Cool, Inc. (ISD 4 McGregor Public School)	100,000	100,000
Steele County Public Health	120,000	100,000
Subtotal	1,285,000	1,220,000
Other Tobacco Use Prevention Efforts		
ICF Macro (Minnesota Youth Tobacco Survey)	189,523	14,996
North American Research & Analysis, Inc.	24,804	68,760
Subtotal	214,327	83,756
Total Funds Awarded	5,319,327	5,015,299