

# Building Community Consensus for Smokefree Environments

Health Education Inc. / Tobacco Free Lincoln · Executive Director & Coalition Leadership

ROLE: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & COALITION LEADER

## THE CHALLENGE

When our work began, smoking inside restaurants and bars was widely accepted throughout the community. Voluntary efforts to encourage smokefree environments were an important first step—but they could not adequately protect public health on their own. Achieving lasting change would require broad community understanding, careful policy development, and sustained collaboration among deeply diverse stakeholders.

The effort faced substantial resistance: business organizations and the hospitality industry challenged proposed policies, legal obstacles emerged, threats were made against supporters, and even within the public health community disagreement existed about acceptable approaches. The challenge extended far beyond passing legislation—it was helping an entire community work through a complex public policy question.

## THE APPROACH

Rather than attempting to impose a predetermined outcome, the effort focused on creating the conditions for informed public dialogue. This integrated scientific research, coalition coordination, community education, stakeholder engagement, and policy development into a multi-year initiative designed to help the community make its own decision.

We translated complex scientific evidence into accessible information, brought nationally recognized experts into the community, coordinated public polling to understand—not assume—community sentiment, and built a broad coalition of healthcare organizations, nonprofits, educators, business leaders, and elected officials working toward shared understanding.

## KEY CONTRIBUTIONS

- Chaired Tobacco Free Lincoln and coordinated a broad, multi-sector community coalition
- Secured grant funding supporting public education, coalition development, and policy initiatives
- Conducted and synthesized policy and scientific research on secondhand smoke and smokefree policy
- Brought nationally recognized air quality experts into the community to demonstrate health impacts
- Coordinated public polling to understand community perspectives and guide education strategy
- Developed messaging and oversaw a comprehensive multimedia public education campaign
- Collaborated with the Board of Health, elected officials, healthcare leaders, and business stakeholders
- Assisted with drafting and refining ordinance language
- Coordinated the ballot campaign following City Council action
- Prepared testimony and coached community members and volunteers for public hearings

## OUTCOMES

Approximately two-thirds of voters approved the smokefree measure through the ballot box—not because a policy was imposed, but because years of research, education, coalition leadership, and community dialogue created the conditions for an informed community decision. Smokefree environments became a lasting community expectation.

## IMPACT AT A GLANCE

✓ ≈ 67% VOTER APPROVAL

✓ MULTI-SECTOR COALITION BUILT

✓ COMMUNITY-OWNED OUTCOME

## CORE SKILLS

Coalition Leadership

Community Engagement

Policy Research & Analysis

Public Education

Grant Strategy

Stakeholder Engagement

Legislative Support

## From Voluntary Efforts to a Community-Chosen Policy

### BEFORE → AFTER

| BEFORE                                                                             | AFTER                                                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Smoking accepted as normal in restaurants, bars, and public spaces                 | <b>Smokefree ordinance adopted as a community-chosen decision</b>                         |
| Voluntary smokefree programs limited in reach and unable to protect public health  | <b>Approximately two-thirds of voters approved the measure at the ballot box</b>          |
| Community divided; policy debate contentious with significant organized opposition | <b>Broad community consensus built through years of research, education, and dialogue</b> |
| Scientific evidence on secondhand smoke not widely understood by the public        | <b>Technical scientific research translated into public understanding</b>                 |
| No lasting, community-wide protective policy in place                              | <b>Smokefree environments established as a lasting community expectation</b>              |

### CONSULTING PROCESS

- 1 Research & Funding**  
Secure grants, synthesize scientific evidence, analyze comparable community policies
- 2 Coalition Building**  
Recruit diverse partners, coordinate volunteers, align stakeholders across sectors
- 3 Public Education**  
Translate scientific research into accessible information; multimedia campaign and community outreach
- 4 Policy Development**  
Draft and refine ordinance language; collaborate with Board of Health and elected officials
- 5 Legislative Engagement**  
Prepare and coach testimony; brief officials; support public hearings
- 6 Ballot Campaign**  
Coordinate community campaign following City Council action; mobilize supporters

### CLIENT VALUE DELIVERED

#### Community Ownership

The smokefree policy emerged from a genuine community process—not external pressure. Voters made an informed decision with approximately two-thirds approving the measure, giving the policy lasting legitimacy.

#### Research Infrastructure

Scientific evidence on secondhand smoke health impacts was synthesized, validated by national experts, and translated into accessible public information—enabling residents to evaluate evidence for themselves.

#### Cross-Sector Coalition

Built and coordinated a diverse coalition including healthcare organizations, nonprofits, educators, physicians, public health agencies, business leaders, elected officials, volunteers, and national partners.

#### Public Dialogue at Scale

Engaged thousands of community supporters; developed materials that translated complex science into plain language; created the conditions under which informed public discussion could occur organically.

#### Lasting Policy Change

Smokefree environments moved from contested proposal to established community expectation—a durable outcome rooted in genuine consensus rather than political circumstance.

*"I didn't want to impose on the community. I wanted the community to choose for itself. The goal was never simply to achieve a policy outcome. It was to ensure the community had access to credible research, meaningful dialogue, diverse perspectives, and trusted leadership so that the decision, whatever it might be, would genuinely belong to the people it would affect."*

Helping organizations improve execution through better systems, governance, documentation, AI-enabled workflows, and operational design.

*"The gap between vision and results is rarely effort. More often, it is the absence of a structure capable of turning strategy into execution."*

AREAS OF PRACTICE

|                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Program &amp; Project Management</b><br>Designing the structures, reporting, and governance that allow complex programs to execute with clarity.                       | <b>AI-Enabled Operations</b><br>Building practical AI workflows, prompt libraries, and documentation systems that teams can actually use.                 |
| <b>Process Improvement &amp; SOP Development</b><br>Standardizing how work gets done so execution quality doesn't depend on who's doing it.                               | <b>Executive Reporting &amp; Decision Support</b><br>Creating the visibility infrastructure that helps leadership make faster, better-informed decisions. |
| <b>Grants Management &amp; Program Delivery</b><br>Designing and sustaining grant-funded programs with the compliance, documentation, and operational rigor they require. | <b>Organizational Diagnostics</b><br>Identifying the structural patterns—not surface symptoms—that slow execution and limit organizational performance.   |

Cindy Jeffrey, MA, PMP, LSSGB

[cindyjeffrey.com](http://cindyjeffrey.com)

Program Management · Process Improvement · AI-Enabled Operations · Organizational Diagnostics