Communities as Engines of Change: Achieving Quality in Environmental Policy Evaluations

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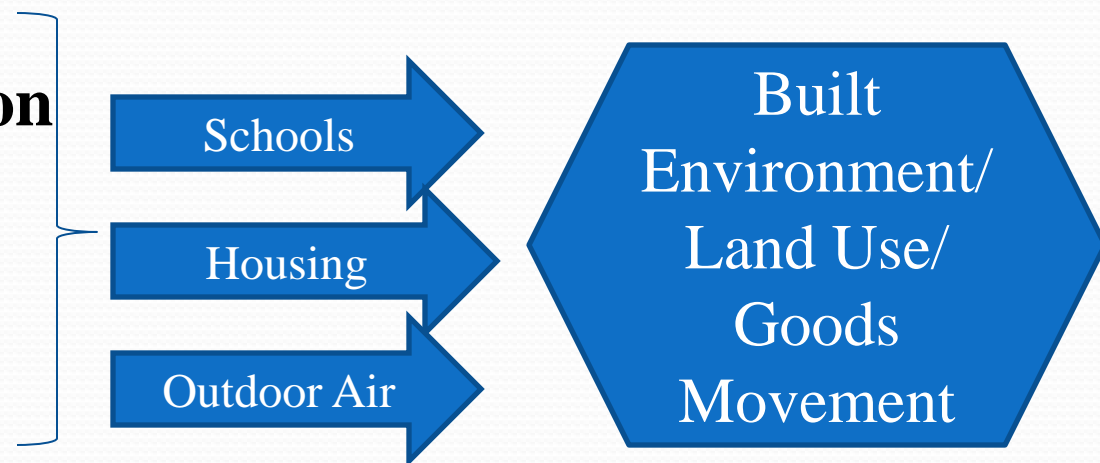San Francisco

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Overview of Presentation

- Evolution of Environmental Policy Initiative to reduce asthma risk factors,
- Supporting Policy and Evaluation,
- Creation of System of Inquiry,
- Evaluation approach to Policy Advocacy in CAFA,
  - Methodologies,
    - Quantitative measures of outcomes and indicators,
    - Qualitative analysis to tell the narrative,
    - Policy maker interviews,
    - Analysis of Coalition approaches to policy advocacy.
- Key Findings.

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Evolution of Environmental Policy Initiative

- Moving from grant making focused on diseases to social determinants of health with environmental policy outcomes.

- Second round of funding provided opportunities to sharpen CAFA's local and statewide policy objectives.

- Evaluation findings can empower organizations and stimulate learning and inform decision making for communities and key partners.

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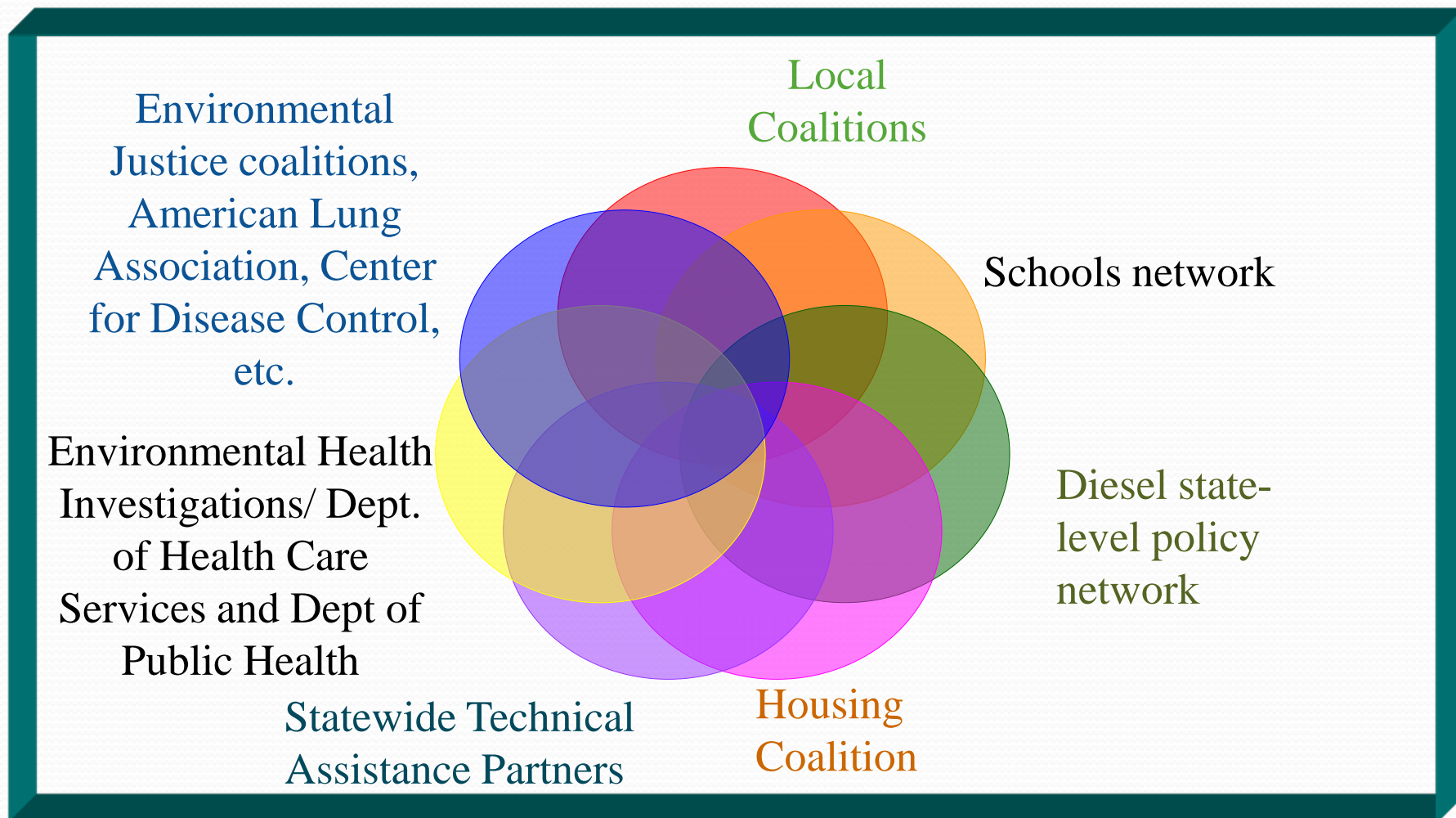University of California
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Community Action to Fight Asthma is a network of asthma coalitions in California working to shape local, regional and state policies to reduce the environmental triggers of asthma for school-aged children where they live, learn, and play.

Environmental Prevention To Reduce Health Disparities and Inequities

Schools →

Housing →

Outdoor Air →

Built Environment/ Land Use/ Goods Movement

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Systems Change

Understanding Root Causes Enables Focus on Prevention

and

Designing Systems Change Endeavors

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Statewide Model of Environmental Partners

Local Coalitions

Environmental Justice coalitions, American Lung Association, Center for Disease Control, etc.

Schools network

Environmental Health Investigations/ Dept. of Health Care Services and Dept of Public Health

Diesel state-level policy network

Statewide Technical Assistance Partners

Housing Coalition

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Health Outcomes →

Precursor factors at each of the following levels:

- **Individuals, Families, Caregivers**

- **Communities and Neighborhoods**

- **Social and Economic Factors**

- **Physical Environment, Place**

- **Schools**
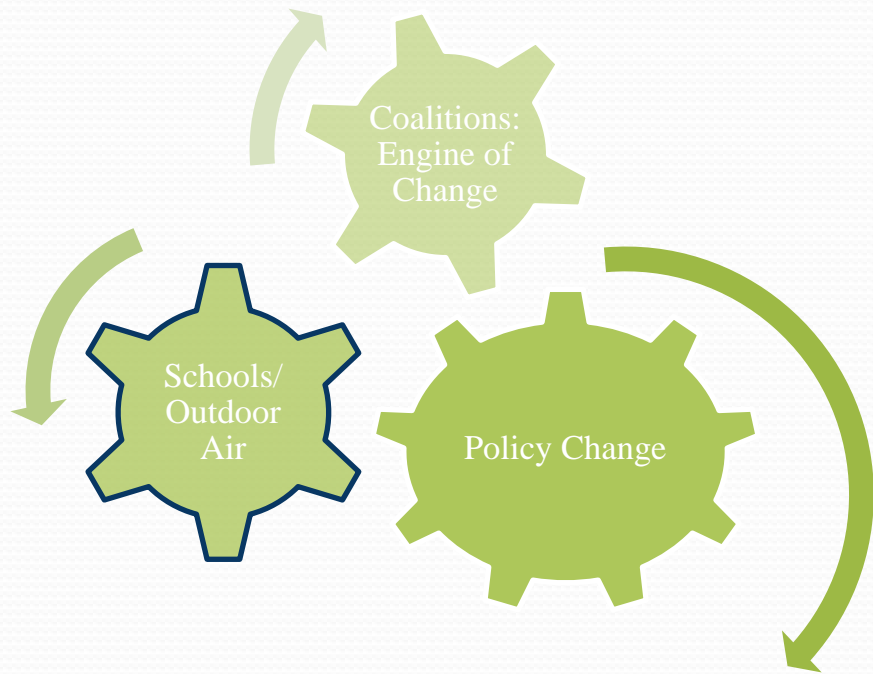
- **Housing**

- **Public Policy**

Evaluation Methodology

- Process and Outcome Evaluation using:
  - Structured site visits;
  - Collection and analysis of process data;
  - Technical assistance and feedback regarding the collection of outcome data;
  - Strategic partnership analysis;
  - Policymaker interviews;
  - Contextual analysis of the political and economic environment; and
  - Triangulation across all of these data sources.

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Systems Change Measures

- Changes in awareness and knowledge,
- Changes in organizational behavior,
- Changes in interorganizational partners,
- Changes in policy (big P, little p),
  - Legislation,
  - Regulation,
  - Administration, Procedures, Innovative governance , and
- Changes in policy arenas where change sought.

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Coalitions can be an Engine of Social Change: from the grass roots to treetops

Coalitions: Engine of Change

Schools/ Outdoor Air

Policy Change

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Creating a Learning Environment, System of Inquiry

Rapid Cycle Change Model: Learning as You Go

Within each cycle:
- Identify barriers
- Decide solution
- Set goal
- Try out new strategy
- Reassess
- Repeat "cycle"
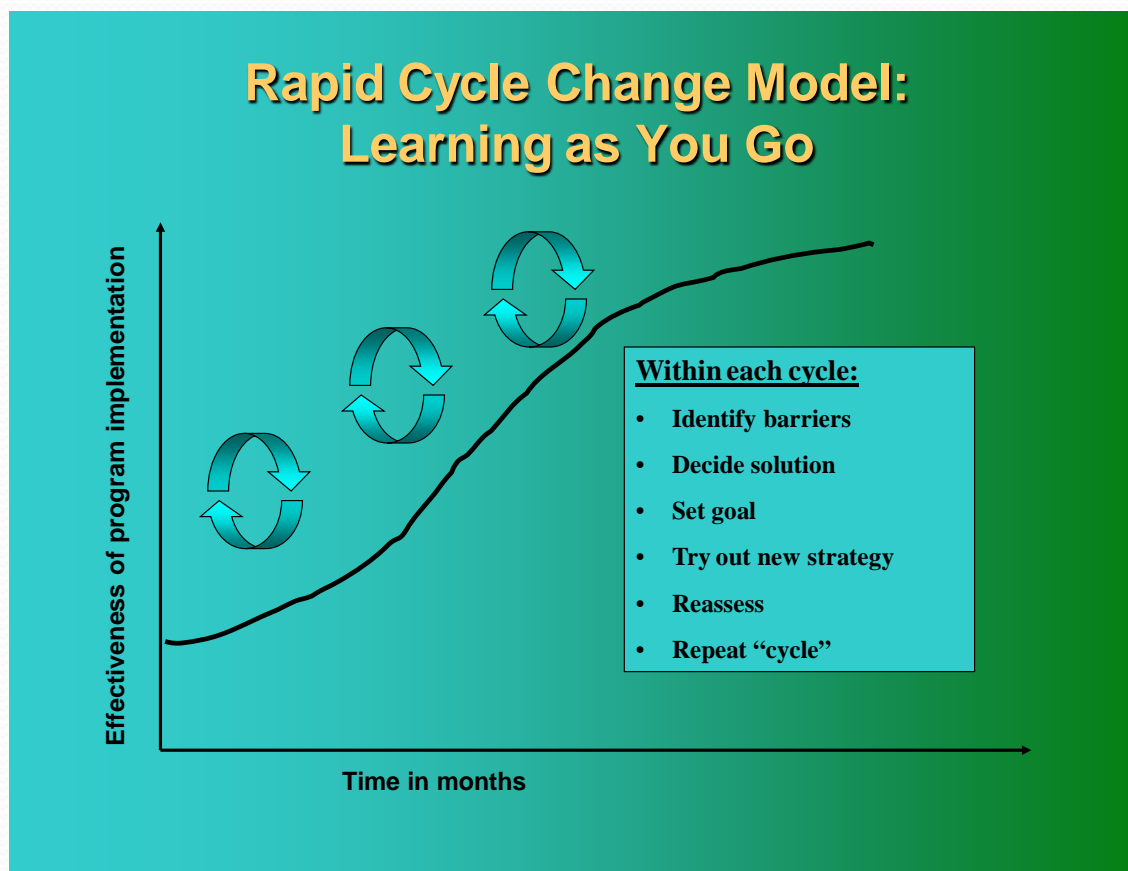
Challenges

▣ Building Credibility

- Using the precautionary principle and data,
- Interpretation and use of environmental, medical, and scientific data.
  - Example: Some Coalitions worked with their local hospitals, health departments, or Air Resources Boards to enhance their credibility.
- Coalition Resources.

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Challenges

- Recruiting and Managing diverse collaborative members and strategic partners –- at all levels.
- Matching environmental and social action scale.
  - Diversity of function, expertise, population: requires time, coordination, and trust, and choosing partners for specific issues.
  - Example: Central Valley Coalitions included organic farms and agribusinesses in their planning efforts.
  - Example: Businesses joined the Coalition's efforts in San Diego to keep housing out of an industrial park knowing there would be toxics and pollution too close to the housing units.

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Policy Successes: State-Level

- ▣ Diesel reduction strategies:
  - ■ Anti-idling legislation, replacement of older vehicles and modifications on trucks to reduce pollution.
  - ■ School bus idling legislation. Compliance in multiple communities.
- ▣ Port pollution strategies being worked upon:
  - ■ Ports, trucks that pick-up and distribute goods from the ports.
  - ■ Strategies to remove barriers from individual truck drivers by employing them by the port, regulate vehicles.
- ▣ Expansion of citizens' roles in Air District Board.
- ▣ 27 attempted, 15 passed over a three-year period.

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Ports/Goods Movement

- The Los Angeles and Long Beach ports are the gateway for approximately 49% of goods that come into the Country.

- The communities that live in the shadow of the port suffer huge pollution problems as do the workers at the ports.

- This issue affects the freeways, inland ports (cargo warehouses that can be acres long), rail, and other transportation systems.

- These ports now have a stated policy in place to reduce their diesel output by 46% over the next year.

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Key Findings

- Integrating community members into data collection and media usage opportunities empowers members beyond the scope of their organizations. (Coalition members have transferred these skills into employment opportunities.)
- A policy focus can seem abstract to some individuals or organizations. Meet organizations where they are, assist in moving to next level.
- It may take several iterations to increase awareness so that issues are prioritized.
- Training of community members in policy work is ongoing due to the above processes.

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