

COMMUNITY ACTION GUIDE

Controlling Billboards in Your Neighborhood

139362

U.S. Department of Justice
National Institute of Justice

This document has been reproduced exactly as received from the person or organization originating it. Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the National Institute of Justice.

Permission to reproduce this copyrighted material has been granted by

California Dept. of Alcohol
and Drug Programs

to the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS).

Further reproduction outside of the NCJRS system requires permission of the copyright owner.

139362

DEPARTMENT OF
ALCOHOL AND DRUG
PROGRAMS

This publication was prepared by the California Health Research Foundation and Evaluation, Management, and Training (EMT) Group, Inc., with funding provided by the California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs through contract A-0134-7. The opinions expressed herein are the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs.

Copies of this manual may be obtained by writing to:

California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs
Prevention Resource Center
1700 K Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Publication No. (ADP) 91-414

Table of Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	iii
INTRODUCTION	v
Who Should Read This Handbook?	vii
Handbook Organization	viii
CHAPTER ONE: RALLYING AROUND THE ISSUE	1
Advertising Works	4
CHAPTER TWO: DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN	7
Step 1. Building the Task Force	10
Step 2. Writing Down Goals and Action Steps	11
Step 3. Tactics for Implementing the Action Steps	13
Step 4. Flexibility: The Great Morale-Saver	13
CHAPTER THREE: PUTTING THE PLAN TO THE TEST	15
Context of the Billboard Project	17
Mobilizing Resources	18
Inform Your Task Force	19
Networking	19
Broaden the Base of Action	20
Maximize Political Assets	21
Document the Process	21
Negotiation and Cooperation	22
CHAPTER FOUR: CELEBRATING YOUR VICTORY	27
Implementing an Action Plan: One Community's Strategy	30
Planning for Community Change	32
<i>References/Resources</i>	33

NCDRS

NOV 10 1992

FOREWORD

This volume, *Community Action Guide: Controlling Billboards in Your Neighborhood*, and its five companions:

Building a Successful Task Force for Prevention Planning

Connections for Prevention: Networking strategies for Alcohol Abuse

Evaluating Community Prevention Programs

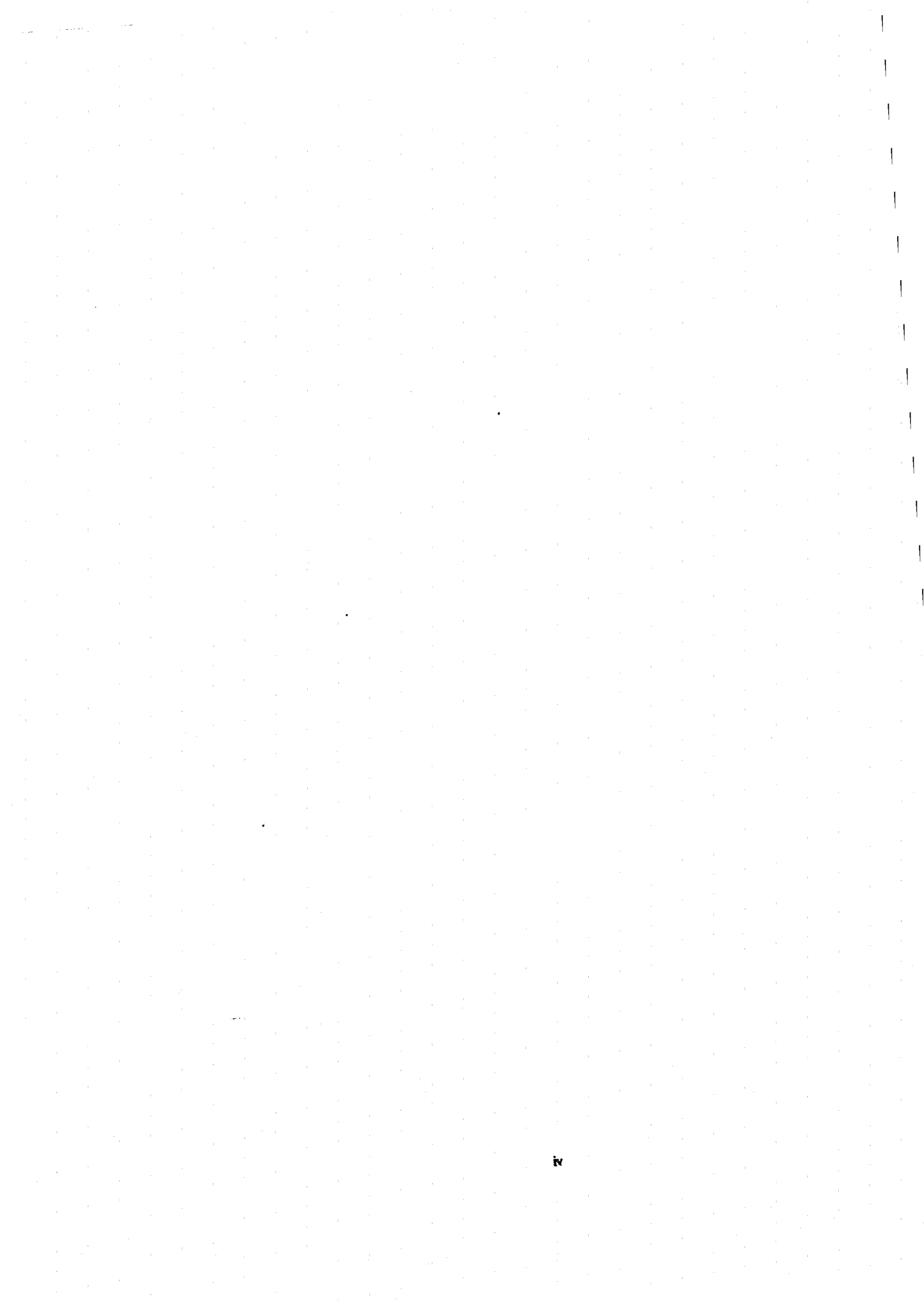
Keeping on Track: Setting Useful Goals for Community-Based Prevention Planning

Working with Clergy and Congregations for Alcohol Problem Prevention

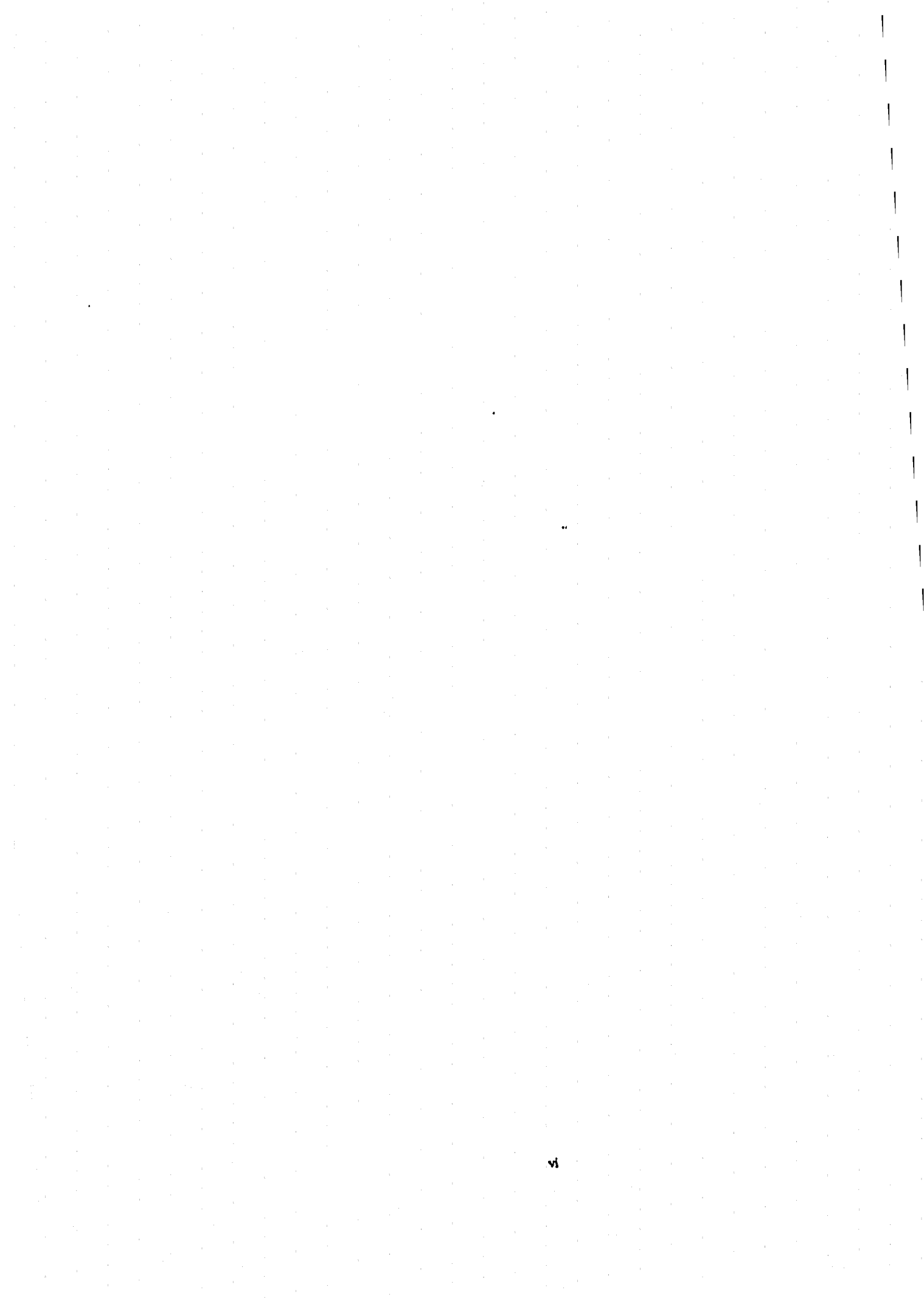
comprise part of the final report of contract DADP-A-0134-7 between the California Health Research Foundation, its sub-contractor Evaluation, Management and Training (EMT) Group, Inc., and the California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs (DADP). Together, these manuals comprise a basic reference source for those interested in developing, implementing, or assessing community-based prevention programs.

The project involved two separate evaluations of community prevention efforts. One assessment examined six community-based prevention planning projects and was initiated during the final months of the two-year contract that each of the six organizations had with DADP. The second evaluation examined the start-up operations of two prevention programs, one in a Black community, the other in a Latino community. We were able to monitor and assess these two programs throughout their entire grant period.

The accepted way of presenting research findings is usually through the final report. However, because of the richness and usefulness of the information collected and the need to ensure its widespread availability to the field, CHRF and EMT, with DADP encouragement, developed these manuals as the best way to report our findings.



INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

What is big, seen all over, and hard to get rid of? In many communities, the answer is billboards.

Billboards are the most intrusive form of advertising. Unlike other advertisements that can be eliminated at the flip of a switch or turn of a page, there is no possible way to turn off a billboard. Not only are they intrusive, but their messages often push products that are hazardous to the health of the communities they inhabit. For example:

- Cigarettes are the single most advertised product on billboards;
- Alcohol is next;
- If you live in an inner-city Black neighborhood, you will see 60 percent more billboards than if you live in the suburbs;
- Millions of dollars in advertising is being spent annually by the alcohol industry to target Blacks; and
- Alcohol promotion to Blacks has been so effective that some product marketing is directed almost exclusively to Blacks.

Community efforts to control billboards have often been met with frustration, for the billboard lobby ranks third in the amount of money paid to lawmakers--behind defense and tobacco industries. Its advertising is protected by the very law designed to control it: the Highway Beautification Act of 1965.

Some community groups, however, have been able to influence the number, placement, and content of billboards in their neighborhoods. This handbook is about what a community can do to protect itself against the use of billboards to advertise alcohol. It is based on the experiences of the Bayview-Hunter's Point Foundation for Community Improvement in San Francisco, an inner city community group interested in alcohol and substance abuse prevention.

WHO SHOULD READ THIS HANDBOOK?

This handbook is designed to be used by community groups who want to eliminate or change billboard advertising which affects their community. It is based on one community's experience: a predominantly Black community in which public drunkenness, street corner drug sales, and credit for "rot gut" liquor at corner grocery and liquor stores are standard.

They mobilized their resentment at being targeted by alcohol and cigarette company billboard advertisements into effective action. The obstacles to success for this community were enormous, yet they were able to affect change.

Every community is different, with different resources, different problems, different cultural values. One community's experiences in organizing will not be the same as another's. But many of the ways in which people go about deciding how to "take on the giant", many of the steps in community organizing will be similar despite communities' unique aspects. This handbook will help provide guidelines for planning, and perhaps also it will provide encouragement to continue the process when the size of the giant seems overwhelming.

HANDBOOK ORGANIZATION

This handbook contains four chapters:

Chapter One: Rallying Around the Issue -- information on billboard use, impact, costs. Alcoholism and advertising; targeting Black populations. Lists of resources.

Chapter Two: Developing an Action Plan -- identifying community resources (people, organizations, political interests); understanding vested interests (law enforcement, other administrative agencies, interest groups, political parties, communications media); identifying and overcoming impediments; step-wise action plan, including need for flexibility.

Chapter Three: Putting the Plan to the Test -- mobilizing resources; networking within the community; initiating the action plan; revising, remobilizing, maintaining momentum.

Chapter Four: Celebrating Victory -- vested interest feedback; use of media; community networking; compliance assurance (publicity, city ordinance support).

A reference and resource section is also included.

Chapter One

RALLYING AROUND THE ISSUE

Chapter One

RALLYING AROUND THE ISSUE

Drive through Black or Hispanic neighborhoods in virtually any big city and you're likely to see big billboards right next to homes and churches and across the street from schools and parks -- most of them advertising cigarettes and booze.

Ed McMahon, Coalition for Scenic Beauty

Blacks are not greater consumers of alcohol than are Whites, but suffer the most severe consequences of alcohol abuse.

Alcohol consumption among Blacks and Whites is about the same, however, the patterns differ: fewer Black women drink than do White, and more Black males in the 30-59 age group drink than do White males in that age group. Even though the overall proportions are about the same, a greater health and safety toll is extracted from Black alcohol abusers than White abusers.

Cirrhosis of the liver is ten times more likely to kill non-White males than White males. Similarly, esophageal cancer, promoted by both cigarettes and alcohol, is ten times more common among Black men than among White men. Among women, the rate of this form of cancer is from three to seven times higher for Blacks than for Whites. Additionally, Blacks suffer disproportionately from other alcohol-linked illnesses including hypertension, obstructive pulmonary disease, severe malnutrition, and birth defects.

The abuse of alcohol has been linked to physical violence such as homicide, criminal assault, child and/or partner battery, and problems with the law. This is especially so among Black American men.

The reasons for such disproportional consequences are the relative absence of health care, and the profound physical and psychological effects of economic and social poverty.

In minority neighborhoods, as many as two-thirds of the billboards push cigarettes and booze.

In St. Louis and again in San Francisco, separate surveys found nearly three times as many billboards advertising alcohol in Black neighborhoods as in White neighborhoods. Of these, 62 percent advertised cigarettes and alcoholic beverages compared with 36 percent in White neighborhoods. Clearly, minorities have been targeted by advertising companies as the new markets for their unhealthy, life-threatening wares.

ADVERTISING WORKS

In 1987, beer, wine and wine product manufacturers bought more than \$900 million of electronic media advertising. While the bulk of advertising to Black consumers is through newspapers, magazines, and the broadcasting media, up to 20 percent of product advertising budgets are spent on billboards.

Thirty-four to 45 percent of all billboard space in recent years has been devoted to the tobacco and liquor industries' never-ending quest for potential customers. It works. Advertising for malt liquors, which have as much as 20 percent more alcohol than most regular beers, are geared almost entirely to the Black consumer. Cognac is also marketed primarily to Black consumers using ads that suggest the class and sophistication among cognac drinkers.

The audience impacted by billboard advertising is every person who lives or works in the community affected by its presence.

Children, adolescents, alcoholics, nondrinkers: anyone within visual proximity of a billboard can be affected by its content. And the billboards contribute to positive images of drinkers and favorable attitudes toward drinking as being acceptable, rewarding, and attractive.

Exploiting the magnitude of their size, minority neighborhood billboards show beautiful, well-dressed Black men and women, the vision of success and sophistication, as they consume a particular alcoholic beverage. The visual impact is profound, perhaps particularly so in communities where public drunkenness, street corner drug sales, and the cycle of poverty are a way of life.

The advertisements exploit not only through their intrusive placement, size, and content, they exploit women through sexual innuendo and guarantees of sexual success.

Part one is the lady. Part two is the Colt. Now remember that the Colt is essential. And part three is a little luck. Well, I've got my lady. So wish me luck. . . . Colt-45: It works every time.

Indirectly, they also exploit children who are exposed to the ads on their way to school or the grocery store, playing basketball, and just hanging out. Although sports figures under current contract do not advertise alcoholic beverages, former super-jocks of the basketball, football, and baseball worlds, and models who look like athletes, do. Their faces look down from 30 feet, implying "This will make you cool, like me. A powerful, successful super-jock." By drinking a certain beverage, the implication has it, you can have all this.

The impact of billboards in minority neighborhoods is profound. Negative health messages are inappropriate messages in communities already struggling to become healthy communities with healthy citizens.

The billboard industry is rich and powerful.

The billboard lobby, the Outdoor Advertising Association of America, Inc. (OAAA) is the third most powerful lobby in Washington, smaller only than those of the defense lobby and tobacco industries.

Billboard advertising is big business. In 1966, billboard sales were \$150 million; in 1986 they were over \$1 billion. In 1983, the billboard industry was the second largest payer of speech fees to Congressional senators. They paid out more than \$550,000 in honoraria from 1983 to 1987. This does not include the millions spent on PAC contributions, individual contributions by industry executives, or donated space for campaign advertising.

The lobby's influence on legislation can be seen in the Highway Beautification Act of 1965, a piece of legislation that was supposed to get rid of billboard blight. Instead, it actually wiped out 50 years of billboard control decisions by the courts, and shifted the burden of the cost of billboard removal from owners to taxpayers. It also, through vague language and fine-print clauses, removed all limits on billboard height, and allowed size limits to increase from 300 square feet to 1200 square feet.

Communities can do something about intrusive billboards hawking unhealthy messages in their neighborhoods.

Even though the billboard industry is powerful, precedent has been set for their regulation. Dozens of cities around the country have passed regulations limiting the erection of new billboards, and/or banning all new billboards. Billboards are being banned along scenic corridors (to reduce competition with the natural beauty), busy freeway areas (as a safety

measure), and in inner cities (to reduce visual blight and the promotion of negative health messages).

While a total ban on tobacco or alcoholic beverage advertising may not be constitutional, controls including a total ban on all commercial billboards have been upheld by federal and state courts. In 1981, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a community may totally ban all "commercial billboards" as a legitimate time, place, and manner restriction on speech.

Some key points in the issue of billboard advertising of alcoholic beverages, then, are:

- Although alcohol consumption among Blacks and Whites is approximately proportional, detrimental health effects are greater among Blacks.
- Minority neighborhoods are being targeted by the alcohol industry through use of billboard advertising.
- The advertising is effective. The market share of Black alcohol consumers is up.
- Billboard advertising is invasive, affecting not only consumers, but also those for whom alcohol consumption is dangerous or illegal (alcoholics, pregnant women, and children, to name a few).
- Legal precedence has been set. Something can be done on a community-wide level to control billboard advertising in a neighborhood.

Chapter Two

DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN

Chapter Two

DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN

The billboard industry is powerful: money talks, and billboards are a profitable form of advertising. Taking on a such a giant, whose Washington lobbyists are among the nation's most skillful, takes unified community effort and careful planning.

The plan presented here did just that. It is based on the experiences of Bayview-Hunter's Point Foundation for Community Improvement in San Francisco. This organization serves a neighborhood sometimes referred to as "the forgotten part of San Francisco". It is marked by high unemployment, with the tremendous social needs produced by poverty: children having children, needs for basic literacy education, child care, and a large population of people at risk of AIDS.

A Foundation staff member described the community:

Public congregating and drinking are common sights, street corner drug sales to individuals who do not live in the area as well as to people who live there are visible, local grocery stores make credit as readily available to purchase a bottle of 'rot gut' liquor as they do to purchase a loaf of bread, and numerous billboards giving false messages advertise alcoholic beverages using Black models.

The community needs seem nearly overwhelming, and its resources sometimes non-existent.

The California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs provided limited funding to develop a program addressing the prevention of alcohol abuse in the community. This chapter describes steps taken by the Bayview-Hunter's Point Foundation to accomplish their goal of gaining the attention and cooperation of billboard companies advertising in the community.

The chapter will lay out steps necessary for developing both community organizing and planning. It will include:

- Identifying community resources and forming a Task Force

-
- Understanding diverse vested interests (of law enforcement, other administrative agencies, interest groups, political parties, communications media)
 - Developing appropriate goals and objectives
 - Step-wise tactics for implementing the plan
 - Understanding the need for flexibility

STEP 1. BUILDING THE TASK FORCE

The greatest resource of any community is its people; and where one person's skills leave off, another's may begin. A group of people are really a continuum of abilities that can accomplish tasks that would overwhelm them as individuals.

Members of a task force should:

- Have an interest in the issue at hand
- Be willing to donate their time and energy for "the cause"
- Represent diverse people in the neighborhood including different age groups, religious groups, community organizations, occupational groups, and ethnic populations
- Be able to work in a group
- Have either the personality, experience, skills, or education to round out Task Force capabilities

It is important to understand that each Task Force member will bring with her or him certain vested interests which shape the member's personal agenda regarding the issue of billboard advertising of alcohol. Personal agendas on task forces are inevitable, and that's just fine because they are the source of motivation for people. They become a problem for a group only when people are unaware of their own motivations, or when they choose to keep them hidden from the group, perhaps believing that they will not affect their participation.

Good organizers help to make those vested interests public to the group, so that they become resources to the planning process. One good way of doing this is to take time early in the process for each person in the group to introduce her/himself, identifying:

- Why she/he is there (in what way the issue of alcohol advertising is of interest);
- What she/he wants to happen regarding the issue; and
- What personal experiences are brought to the Task Force related to the issue.

The group leader might use butcher paper and a broad-tipped felt pen to record, by category, the reasons for participation, and the desired outcomes. Following this, a group discussion can help Task Force members to understand ways in which special interests are really special resources to the project.

Diversity, however, is a double-edged sword. Differences of opinion will inevitably arise among Task Force members. Understanding the context of another person's opinion can sometimes help the process stay on course, allowing for negotiation and compromise. A certain amount of struggle, of pulling in different directions, is a natural part of group process, and serves to assist in the emergence of group leadership.

The process described above requires facilitation—that is, it takes someone who understands the intent to get the ball rolling. This is one of the reasons why it was important that Bayview-Hunter's Point Foundation had a staff member to plan, shape, and monitor the process. Organizing can be done without the assistance of a professional, but it often takes much longer for a collection of individuals to become a group with a focus without such help.

STEP 2. WRITING DOWN GOALS AND ACTION STEPS

Possibly the most important step in organizing around an issue is to develop a statement of the group's intent: What does the task force hope to accomplish? This goal statement helps to keep the group's focus on their intent during the long and often frustrating process of making it happen.

The process of articulating just what you want to accomplish is a clarifying task. Each task force member will have her or his own special interest in the issue, and broad ranges of secondary, or hidden, agendas often exist. Developing a goal statement helps develop a sense

of group mission regarding the issue. Each Task Force member can become vested in the goal because she/he has helped to shape it.

Before stating the outcome goals of the group, the Task Force might develop a statement of its purpose. This statement can reflect whatever the group sees as its possible realm of influence. Often statements of purpose address the ideal intended outcome.

A statement of purpose might be:

The goal of the Task Force on community billboards is to promote a better quality of life for the residents of Bayview-Hunter's Point. It will stimulate community awareness and involvement in specific problems, such as drinking and driving, youth and alcohol use, sales of alcohol beverages to minors, promotion, advertising, pricing and sale of alcohol beverages generally.

The next task is to develop Task Force goals: the outcomes this group intends to accomplish. Often a community organization has several goals surrounding an issue. For purposes here, one goal will be illustrated.

Goal 1. Negative billboard advertising of alcoholic beverages will be reduced in the community.

Objectives are steps to accomplishing a goal. They are the nuts and bolts to reaching the intended outcome of reducing negative billboard advertising. They provide a plan, but the plan must be flexible enough to adapt to the inevitable unexpected impediments which will arise during the process. Each individual Task Force must identify the objectives appropriate to their particular community and their particular group membership. Good planning at this point of the process is critical because it lays the groundwork for the group's sense of direction.

Objectives for Goal 1 might be:

- 1a. Contact all billboard companies informing them of their negative impact in the community;*
- 1b. Contact all owners of property on which billboards are placed to inform them of the Task Force objectives, asking them to prohibit negative advertising on their property;*
- 1c. Contact all merchants selling alcoholic beverages to inform them of the Task Force and its objectives; and*

-
- 1d. *Encourage ownership of billboard issue in the community by publicizing the Task Force intent.*

STEP 3. TACTICS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE ACTION STEPS

Using group input, determine and write out a time-line for accomplishing each Objective. Task Force members will have suggestions and can determine which Objectives they choose to help develop. The group needs to get a commitment from several persons to complete specific tasks and report back to the Task Force in a specified way (such as verbally at the next meeting, or in writing to the Task Force chair, for example).

At each meeting, members need to be informed of all action taken. This helps to keep the group functioning as a group, produces group problem-solving, and maintains a sense of momentum. Once again, good leadership skills enhance the group's ability to accomplish the objective steps, and maintain group cohesion.

A summary of tactics for implementing the plan is:

- Develop a time-line for each Goal and each Objective to that goal;
- Get specific commitment to specific tasks (i.e., Mrs. Williams will telephone the Merchant's Association and follow up with a letter (content of letter agreed on at meeting)). Mr. Lowry will contact the officers of the Ministerial Association and follow up with calls to people suggested by the Association officers, etc.
- Develop a feedback process so all members are kept informed of tasks completed;
- Critically review each objective step before it is completed; and
- Remember that group problem solving is empowering and productive.

STEP 4. FLEXIBILITY: THE GREAT MORALE-SAVER

A plan is as good as its execution. Experienced planners understand that "set-backs" in making something happen are all part of the process. In fact, they are not really "set-backs", but are instead points at which a second (or third, or fourth) alternative is selected as an action.

It is important for Task Force participants to understand that it is quite expected that most plans do not work out without false starts, disappointing results, and the need to modify objectives and sometimes even the desired outcomes. That is not failure: it is part of a process. Not all meetings with critical parties will work out as desired. Sometimes unexpected turns of events occur -- a change in political leadership, or a natural disaster that causes the need to re-prioritize -- over which there is no control. Understanding that a normal and expected part of the process is the need to periodically change a plan or reanalyze the situation, helps to make "set-backs" less frustrating. It can be difficult to regain group momentum if discouragement sets in when the need for modifying an action steps arises. The best defense is a good offense: plan for changes in the plan.

The Bayview-Hunter's Point Foundation task force represented people from:

New Bayview Newspaper
True Hope Church of God in Christ
Catholic Social Services
Hillcrest Elementary School
Economic Opportunity Council
Bayview Hunter's Point Ecumenical Council
Young Community Developers
Bayview Hunter's Point Foundation Youth Services
San Francisco Unified School District
Pacific Gas and Electric
All Hallows Catholic Church
Grace Baptist Church
San Francisco Senators Youth Project
National Council on Alcoholism
San Francisco Police Department
San Francisco Black Fire Fighters
Liberation House, Inc.
San Francisco Department of Parks and Recreation
Mariners Home Owners Association
Bayview Hunter's Point Youth Day Care Center
University of California Adolescent School Project
Providence Baptist Church
Human Rights Commission of San Francisco
Bayview Baptist Church
Bayview Hunter's Point Foundation Drug Program
Three staff members, Bayview-Hunter's Point Foundation -
Center for Problem Drinkers

Chapter Three

PUTTING THE PLAN TO THE TEST



Chapter Three

PUTTING THE PLAN TO THE TEST

Once a Task Force has been organized around an issue, goals and objectives developed and written down, and resources in the action group identified, the time comes to take action.

This section will outline the steps to making your plan happen. It includes illustrations of the way that Bayview-Hunter's Point Foundation proceeded with their plan for local control of billboard advertising.

CONTEXT OF THE BILLBOARD PROJECT

The issue of alcohol advertising arises from different sources in different communities. Most community action emerges from interests in an existing agency, or grassroots community organizers associate themselves with an agency (or become one themselves). The benefit of agency affiliation is

- The availability of hard resources (a meeting room, telephone, perhaps staff support or sharing of typewriters, copy machines, etc.); and
- Support of professionals and people sympathetic to the interests of the Task Force as resources.

The Center for Problem Drinkers in South San Francisco is part of the Bayview-Hunter's Point Foundation. The Center offers treatment, intervention and support groups for alcohol abusers. It is the only program in the neighborhood that addresses alcohol abuse. The Center opened in 1975; the prevention program from which the billboard project emerged was established in 1986 with California State Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs (DADP) funds. The funding supported a fulltime "Prevention At Its Best" Coordinator, some administrative overhead, and part-time clerical support.

The prevention program goals were to improve quality of life and to positively impact the community through a strong community movement. During the second year, increased

emphasis was directed to involving youth and integrating their issues in program planning activities. The overall goals of the program were to empower the community for grassroots improvement projects.

The Prevention Task Force was comprised of community members and leaders wishing to affect change. It was open to any citizen interested in committing time and resources to the issue of alcohol abuse prevention, and over time, its membership evolved to include representatives from vested agencies throughout the city.

MOBILIZING RESOURCES

Once the decision has been made to pursue a community issue, talents and resources on the committee and within the community need to be specifically evaluated. The Bayview-Hunter's Point Prevention Task Force identified members with information about billboards in the community. They led discussions to share information, including facts about alcohol advertising and organizing.

Letters were written to Gannet Outdoors and Foster & Kleiser, two billboard companies with ads in the neighborhood. A sample letter is shown in the highlighted box on page 22. Components of the contact letter:

- Identify your organization
- Clarify the issue of concern
- State what you want to happen
- Include a mechanism requiring the organization to respond such as inviting a representative to a Task Force meeting
- Include the name of a contact person and a telephone number.

It is usual practice for initial contact letters to be clear, courteous, and short. It is much easier to work cooperatively than confrontationally. For this reason, cooperation should be assumed in the letter: No one is the "bad guy"; a failure to understand the profound negative impact on the community of alcohol ads has occurred. Now that the company has been informed, their cooperation is assumed.

Do not be surprised if cooperation is not forthcoming. Have your next step planned.

INFORM YOUR TASK FORCE

Clarifying your own opinion and values regarding the issue of billboard advertising is essential. In Bayview-Hunter's Point, a local newspaper publisher who was on the Task Force led a discussion around the issue of the liquor industry in Black communities: the "double bind" of Black organizations receiving money from the alcohol and cigarette industries; and the problem of Black publications selling a major portion of advertising space to the same industries. Black advertising agencies are employed for creating the very ads that the community group organized against. Issues are not always perfectly clear; discussing just that can help build group cohesion and clarity.

NETWORKING

Members of the Bayview-Hunter's Point Prevention Task Force met with Department of City Planning staff who confirmed information regarding total density of billboards on the main thoroughfare, and confirmed the percent of billboards that advertise alcohol and cigarettes.

The group requested and received information concerning the position of the mayor and Board of Supervisors on billboard advertising, as well as information on other local and national groups with aesthetic concerns about billboard ads. They took a stand to support city efforts to reduce billboard advertising city-wide, and agreed to do further investigation of disproportionate billboard advertising in Bayview Hunter's Point.

Networking with other groups is critical for community organizing. The efforts of other community groups with similar interests can be combined to reduce any duplication of effort in researching and organizing around an issue. A list of organizations with names and telephone numbers of key contact people, distributed to all interested parties, is an indispensable tool.

Initiating and maintaining contact with other cities interested in the issue, as well as with other city organizations, is another networking technique of value. Bayview-Hunter's Point contacted three other cities to share information and strategies.

The Prevention Task Force also contacted the Human Rights Commission and were informed of the national movement to deal with billboard problems. The director of the subcommittee on Youth and Education volunteered to look at the issue of alcohol advertising in the Black community.

He further agreed to organize a group of his kids to count and document the number, size, and advertising content of all billboards in the area; then go to two other sections of the city for comparison counts. (San Francisco is a city historically identified by discrete areas, so selecting other sections of town for comparison was relatively easy. It might take more effort in other cities to clarify the definition of a "neighborhood" for getting unbiased counts.) The cooperative effort spared Task Force members the actual task of counting and documenting, plus it provided a useful community action project for youth and promoted the investment of another community organization in the project.

BROADEN THE BASE OF ACTION

Effective community organizing always includes developing a broad base of support. It almost always also includes developing a broad base of action regarding the issue: a shot-gun approach to gaining community-wide attention on the issue. Broadening the targeted plan of action provides the Task Force greater community visibility and ownership in the issue.

A monthly report from Bayview-Hunter's Point Prevention project on billboards indicates the level and breadth of activity they engaged in to move their project along:

- Write to Foster & Kleister (the billboard company who responded to the contact letter). They suggested a counter-campaign, however, it will not address the long term, greater problem.
- Prepare Foster & Kleister agenda: counter campaign, reduction of number of billboards in community by 50 percent; reduction of number of billboards advertising alcoholic beverages by 70 percent.
- Contact liquor industry to share social awareness of the community impact of their advertising.
- Contact landowners of billboards.
- Solicit support from the city alcohol control commission to address the issue.
- Contact National Council on Alcohol Policies to find out what kinds of policies they are trying to formulate.
- Write National Black Alcoholism Council to see what steps they are taking nationally and to determine how the Task Force can support their efforts.

-
- Contact M.A.D.D. and start a petition asking for taxing of liquor to provide support for alcohol rehabilitation services.
 - Telephone the billboard company that did not respond to the contact letter.
 - Present draft letter on billboard advertising in Black and Hispanic communities to be sent to editors of the city's newspapers. Obtain Task Force approval to mail.

MAXIMIZE POLITICAL ASSETS

Momentum for action can be maintained by inviting outside speakers interested in your issue to attend your meetings. Learning what other communities and/or other organizations are doing about the issue you are tackling can be a validating process, and it provides a vehicle for sharing ideas. Invite as many resources from inside and outside the community that you can to attend meetings, and/or talk about their experiences. Some resources are:

- The mayor
- The city planning commissioner
- Parallel county government officials
- Members of other task forces with similar concerns
- Key members of neighborhood coalition organizations
- An official from any appropriate state regulating agency (drug and alcohol programs, or council of alcohol policies)

When speakers from outside the community are brought in, publicize the event in the newspaper and by informing the network you have generated of sympathetic and like-minded organizations and people. That will not only broaden the base of shared information, it will enhance the Task Force's visibility within the community.

DOCUMENT THE PROCESS

Maintaining complete meeting minutes and written documentation of all Task Force activities is important. They provide a track record of efforts and accomplishments, and can

be tremendously instructive resources if a strategy fails because they have recorded the group's decision points and actions.

The Bayview-Hunter's Point project was a funded project requiring documentation. Whether or not yours is, maintain meticulous records of activities, copies of letters of contact, and lists of names of participants.

NEGOTIATION AND COOPERATION

The response from one billboard company to Bayview-Hunter's Point's initial contact letter was a courteous letter pledging support for their concerns, and requesting specific action from the Task Force and they could cooperate on to alleviate the problem. After careful group discussion, a subcommittee met with the billboard company representative and requested

- Reduction in the total number of billboards;
- Reduction in the number of alcohol and tobacco billboards;
- An ongoing health promotion billboard campaign;
- A school poster design contest; and
- Establishment of a scholarship program.

As a result of these requests, the company agreed:

- To research the disproportionate number of alcohol and tobacco related billboards in the community;
- To begin a public service announcement campaign;
- Research ways to make money for a scholarship and possibly to promote an internship program for one student to work with their graphic artist;
- Assist with developing an elementary student contest to develop a billboard. A prize provided by the billboard company will be awarded by the company.

The Task Force responded quickly by establishing procedures for the billboard contest, which included obtaining the donation of the graphic reproduction of the winning design as well as billboard space at three locations to display the winning design. They contacted local elementary schools, speaking with principals and teachers.

The cooperating billboard company sent a letter to the second company, their competitor, outlining their agreement with Bayview-Hunter's Point Prevention Task Force and requesting cooperation in the "Create a Billboard" contest.

Sixteen months had gone by since the Bayview-Hunter's Point Prevention Task Force discussion on the plethora of billboards in the community advertising alcoholic beverages. In just 16 months, numerous changes had taken place in the community regarding alcohol advertising on billboards, and numerous other changes were in process:

A spirit of cooperation rather than conflict had been developed with one major billboard advertising company.

- The cooperating billboard company proved to be a resource in finding funding for a scholarship in art. An art school in the city with an interest in "giving back to the community" was put in contact with the Task Force to negotiate the scholarship terms.
- Additionally, the company coerced a second billboard company's cooperation for the "Create a Billboard" contest.
- The "Create a Billboard" contest, developed cooperatively, provided a unique opportunity for the exposure of a talented child in the community as well as publicity of the issue of alcohol abuse.

Alcohol related billboards were reduced.

- Both major advertising companies began to voluntarily reduce alcohol and cigarette advertising. Whether their motivations were from a desire to improve community conditions, or from fear of losing out completely through city and neighborhood regulation cannot be known, but the outcome was a positive one for the community.

The process of organizing around the issue and seeing results of those efforts, is empowering.

- Each Task Force member, and all people who participated directly or indirectly in the billboard project – including the children who learned how important it was to design an anti-drinking poster, and who expended their energies designing and drawing something – learned that their voice in their community makes a difference.

-
- Plans to continue the "Create a Billboard" contest in future years were underway, this time to be coordinated by the school district.

A network was developed of sympathetic organizations and people within the community, the city, around the local area, and in the nation.

- Contacts made on behalf of the Prevention Task Force will remain resources. Continued sharing of information and strategies to improve their communities can occur if the network is maintained.
- The success of the Task Force can serve as a spring-board for other prevention activities in the area of substance abuse. An existing support network of similarly vested professionals and members of the community at large is one of the best resources an activist can have.

**SAMPLE LETTER TO
CONTACT BILLBOARD COMPANIES**

Date

Mr. Joseph Ryans
Public Relations Officer
Billboards Company
2293 Highroad
San Francisco, CA

Dear Mr. Ryans:

The Foundation for Community Improvement is deeply concerned about the negative consequences of billboard advertising of alcoholic beverages in our neighborhood.

We understand that your company owns many billboards in our community that contain ads for alcohol, and we request of you that alternative, health-promotion choices for advertisements be made.

Our Task Force on billboard advertising will be meeting next month, June 15th at the Community Center, 1293 Bayside, at 7:30 p.m. We would like to invite you to attend our meeting, and participate with us in problem solving the issue of the negative impact on our community of alcohol ads.

Please let me know if you will be able to attend the meeting. I can be reached at the Community Center at 923-1600. We look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,

(Name of Contact Person
On Behalf of Task Force)



Chapter Four

CELEBRATING YOUR VICTORY

Chapter Four

CELEBRATING YOUR VICTORY

The experience of accomplishing a goal is exhilarating, and your Task Force deserves a time of celebration and congratulations. Throw a party to celebrate the accomplishment of your goal. Make it a media event, with a photographer from the local newspaper and invited special guests from the larger community network.

Conspicuously display posters with lists of community improvements that have taken place. Be always sensitive to create positive, cooperative statements of accomplishments. Remember: nothing is done in isolation from one's immediate as well as one's larger community. Inter-agency, inter-city, and intra-city cooperation is critical for the success of any project; and it will continue to be so in your community.

Use the opportunity of success to maintain an energized and empowered community. Provide feedback on the project's success to all organizations and persons who were part of your project's network. Be especially certain to send a letter of thanks to key community leaders and city officers. The publicity generated by celebrating a positive community change can help to assure continued compliance by the cooperating industries.

A good watchword for your community organization is vigilance. Your Task Force cannot afford to sit back, assuming their success to be permanent. Communities are dynamic entities, forever changing. Use your success to continue developing objectives for further community improvement. And good luck.

IMPLEMENTING AN ACTION PLAN: ONE COMMUNITY'S STRATEGY

Mobilize Resources

- Telephone or write other community organizations to inform them of your intent.
- Seek support from city hall: the Planning Commission, the Human Rights Commission, the mayor's office, the Office of Alcohol and Drug Control . . . any government body whose support your community wants to gain.
- Find a sympathetic ear at your local newspaper.

Build a Support Network

- Keep a list of names, organizations, and telephone numbers of people who support your position.
- Keep people on your list informed during your process.
- Share recourse and information.

Engage in a Broad Base of Action: Attack the Issue From Several Directions

- Use media support to inform the community of alcohol advertising.
- Sponsor workshops in churches.
- Sponsor a school project to create health promoting ads.
- Attend public meetings and represent your issue.
- Inform neighborhood merchants of the Task Force intent.

Document Your Process

- Keep minutes of Task Force meetings.
- File copies of all letters sent and received.
- Make and file written notes of plans, conversations, and actions.

Set a Tone of Cooperation and Negotiation

- Present yourself and your issue in a positive light.
- Assume that everyone wants a strong community.
- Remember that actions are motivated by vested interests.
- Understanding motivation helps to understand attitude and strategy.
- Negotiate directly with industry representatives, alcohol merchants, and advertisers whenever possible.

Acknowledge the Efforts of All Parts of Your Network When Goals are Accomplished

- Community action takes a COMMUNITY.
- Success is empowering; share it.

PLANNING FOR COMMUNITY CHANGE

Build a Strong Task Force of People Who:

- Are vested in time the issue of controlling alcohol advertising in the community.
- Have the time and energy to spend on a community issue.
- Represent all aspects of the community.
- Are skilled, experienced, or have the personality or education to round out the committee's resources.

Develop and Write Out Task Force Goals and Objectives

- Develop a written statement of purpose for the Task Force.
- Write each goal of the Task Force.
- Follow each goal by a set of objectives, or action steps for attaining the goal.

Implement the Objectives

- Develop a time line for each goal and for each objective.
- Use subcommittees of people, with one person primarily responsible, to address specific objective steps.
- Feedback all action to Task Force members to keep all members equally informed.
- Critically review the planned objectives as you go along, preparing to modify plans if necessary.
- Be patient with group process; it can take time, but is empowering in the end.

Use flexible decision making: the need to change plans will arise repeatedly; it indicates process, not failure.

REFERENCES/RESOURCES

REFERENCES/RESOURCES

Atkins, G. A., Ronald Collins, and Michael Jacobson. *The Booze Merchants*. Center for Science in the Public Interest. 1501 16th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 1987.

California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs
444 North 3rd Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Coalition for Scenic Beauty
216 7th Street, SE
Washington, D. C. 20003
(202) 546-1100

Hacker, George A., Ronald Collins, and Michael Jacobson. *Marketing Booze to Blacks*. A report from the Center for Science in the Public Interest. 1501 16th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 1987.

McMahon, Edward T. *Zoning News*. American Planning Association. 1313 East 60th Street, Chicago, IL 60637. June, 1988.

Miller, James Nathan. "The Great Billboard Double-Cross". *Reader's Digest*, p. 1-8. June, 1985.

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA). *A Guide to Planning Alcoholism Treatment Programs*. U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. 1986.

Zimmerman, Robert, ed. *Prevention File*. University of California, San Diego, Extension Program on Alcohol Issues. 1988

Report of the Secretary's Task Force on Black and Minority Health. Department of Health and Human Services Publication, Vol. 1. August, 1985.

Womble, M. "Treatment of Black Alcoholics". *Alcoholism Treatment Quarterly*. 1985.