

Policy Perks Through Facebook Outreach

At A Glance

The Somerset Public Health (SPH) tobacco prevention program explored a unique outreach and mini-grant promotion approach, using Facebook Messenger to connect with businesses.

Public Health Challenge

Policy outreach can be a challenge. As many have observed, the pandemic created new stressors for businesses and organizations which already taxed their limited capacity. Additionally, as companies move increasingly toward digital advertising and messaging on social media, they become harder to reach through conventional methods like cold calls, voicemails, and emails. So, SPH decided to meet businesses “where they’re at” ... online.



Skowhegan Drive-In was one of seven locations that adopted smoke-free policies with Somerset Public Health in spring of 2022.

Approach

SPH was already promoting policy work and available mini-grants by launching posts on Facebook and Instagram. While the reach for these posts was good, the engagement was limited. So, the tobacco team began reaching out directly to businesses and organizations through Facebook Messenger.

Note: This required one team member to use their personal Facebook account.

A member of the tobacco team sent the already crafted social media graphics and mini-grant promotion language to each business/organization through the “Message” option on their Facebook page. Again, to the business/organization, the message appeared to come from an individual, not directly from a public health organization. Businesses/organizations that requested more info received follow-up from another member of the SPH tobacco team who navigated the vital policy work.

Success

Town of Norridgewock, C Haggan Jr Excavation, Burrows Farm and Petting Zoo, and the Skowhegan Drive-In all passed policies due to SPH’s Facebook Messenger outreach and skillful follow-up. The Skowhegan Drive-In even used their mini-grant to create a trailer, which runs before the movies, to educate their patrons about their smoke-free policy.



Sustainability

This Facebook outreach strategy utilizes an individual’s Facebook account. SPH could mobilize community members to engage with businesses/organizations with a Facebook presence. SPH could provide these community members with the graphics and mini-grant promotion language to use in conducting Facebook Messenger outreach.

“If we had the opportunity to produce a similar trailer in 2016 to accompany introduction of the state’s new regulations, the outcome might have produced a more positive impact.”

- Don Brown, Skowhegan Drive-In

For More Information:

Sean Landry, Community Health Educator
slandry@rfgh.net
Somerset Public Health
<https://somersepublichealth.org/>
<https://www.facebook.com/SomersetPublicHealth>

