PHOTOVOICE

TOOLKIT

Sharing Pictures to Change Communities and Local Policy

SUMMARY

This toolkit was adapted from publicly available material for use by contractors and grantees of Montana's Tobacco Use Prevention Program. The toolkit is designed as an entry level resource to support contractors, grantees and program participants with youth and community engagement to support environment change.

Section 1: Understanding Photovoice

What is Photovoice?

Photovoice is a form of community-based participatory research (CBPR). This type of research has gained the interest of public health professionals as a means of creating programs with a high likelihood of community adoption. What makes CBPR different than other forms of evaluation and research is that it engages in a process of involving community members. CBPR has been defined as "a systemic inquiry, with the collaboration of those affected by the issue being studied, for purposes of education and taking action or effecting change"[1].

Photovoice is a particular form of community-based participatory research that relies on photographs. Photovoice has **three** main goals:

1. Empower people to photograph and record their community's strengths and concerns
2. Promote group and community discussion about the critical issues in their community
3. Provide opportunities for community change through reaching policy and decision makers

The most critical element of any photovoice project is that the project is used to elevate the voices of the participants to decision makers.

Photovoice has been adapted by many organizations and groups to help make the process more accessible. There are many guidance manuals on photovoice out there in the community. This manual is intended to be a simple, easy to use introduction for individuals with no or limited experience in public health evaluation and research.

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[1] Faridi Z, Grunbaum JA, Gray BS, Franks A, Simoes E. Community-based participatory research: necessary next steps. Prev Chronic Dis [serial online] 2007 Jul [11.28.2018]. Available from http://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2007/jul/06_0182.htm.

Should I use Photovoice?

Photovoice is an excellent tool to support the work you are already doing to engage youth and your community to advocate for policy change.

You should use photovoice if you want to:

➢ Engage with youth and community members to understand how local issues affect them and emphasize these perspectives and concerns to decision makers

You should **not** use photovoice if you are only interested in engaging with participants and do not plan on collaborating with them to bring their voices to decision and policy makers. It is critical that photovoice projects engage with the broader community and decision makers.

What are the benefits of Photovoice[2]?

➢ Gain new insight into how youth and community participants view social issues such as tobacco advertising, second hand smoke in community parks, or vaping among youth.
➢ Provides participants an opportunity to share their experience through photography.
➢ Actively engages participants and demonstrates the value of their perspective and experience.
➢ Participants can gain a sense of belonging and community through the process.
➢ The combination of photos and narration provides a powerful and easy to understand description of complex issues.
➢ Photovoice projects can be adapted to fit different community needs.
➢ The photographs and stories provide a mechanism to promote the community perspective to decision makers and influence policy decisions.
➢ Photovoice is a powerful tool for health equity and to support community voices in the decision making process- particularly voices and perspectives that are not usually heard by decision makers.

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2 Nykiforuk, Candace I J et al. "Photovoice as a Method for Revealing Community Perceptions of the Built and Social Environment" *International journal of qualitative methods* vol. 10,2 (2011): 103-124.

Ethical Considerations

While photovoice is a fantastic tool to elevate community voice into the decision making process, it is important to recognize that it won't necessarily result in policy change. When embarking on this project, here are some important considerations:

➢ Are the participant's voices and projects **accurately portraying what is most important** to the participant? Ensure the final product shared with the community and decision makers reflects the perspective of the participant.

➢ **Expectation setting:** engagement with decision makers prior to the project is important to understand the likelihood of a policy or environmental change before initiating the project with the community.

➢ **Anonymity:** Participants should be given the option of having their names or identity associated with the final product and control over what is shared and not shared publicly.

➢ **Informed consent:** Pictures of individuals should only be shared if they have given their consent for the photograph.

Critical Elements of a Photovoice Project

➢ People

➢ Cameras

➢ Group discussion

➢ Final projects (photos + narrative)

➢ Community and Decision Makers engagement

Section 2: How to Implement a Photovoice Project

Photovoice Methods[3]: Basic steps to implement a photovoice project

1. **Select and recruit a target audience of policy makers or community leaders:** Who in your community sets policy and makes key decisions? You may want to target decision makers such as your board of health, city commissioners, mayors, local journalists, business owners, religious leaders, etc. Identify among those leaders who could be a champion or advisor to your project. Your champion or group of sympathetic leaders will help your group share your final product and help you set realistic policy goals.

2. **Recruit a group of photovoice participants:**
   Who in your community do you want to engage? Photovoice is a great activity for youth and adults of any age. Be creative with your recruiting techniques to assemble a group of participants that will fittingly represent the issue at hand. *Is second hand smoke an issue on main street?* Try gathering a group of local business owners and concerned patrons through fliers and face to face meetings to address this issue. *Trying to make tobacco free parks a reality?* Work with local sport groups and recruit from the park and neighborhood. The recommended group size is around seven to ten people. In the group assembling process, try to gather participants with differing viewpoints to capture the issues through many perspectives.

3. **Introduce the photovoice methodology to participants and facilitate a group discussion around photo ethics:**
   The first meeting should be an introduction to the methods of the project, discussion of how to use the camera, ethics of taking pictures and the goal of the project (sharing final products with community and decision makers). It is not recommended that pictures be handed out yet- first, you should have a discussion of the ethics and power of photos. Sample questions for discussion could include:
   - *Should you take a picture of someone else without their knowledge?*
   - *What is a good way of asking someone to take their picture?*
   - *When would you not want to have your picture taken and why?*

4. **Obtain Informed Consent:**
   You should consider the risks of taking photographs and have participants complete an informed consent form that describes project activities, potential risks and benefits, the voluntary nature of participation and the option to stop participating at any time. You may also want to include that their photos will only be shared publicly with their consent. If there are any identifiable people in the photograph, you must receive a consent form from that person.

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[3] Wang, Caroline C. "Photovoice: A Participatory Action Research Strategy Applied to Womens Health." *Journal of Womens* Health, vol.8, no.2, 1999, pp. 185-192., doi:10.1089/jwh.1999.8.185

5. **Suggest a theme or question for the photos:**
Participants might arrive to the meeting already aware of the theme, however, discussing and reaching a group consensus on the theme is necessary. They may want to brainstorm as a group how they are going to portray the issue or what they are going to take pictures of.

6. **Distribute cameras and explain how to use them:**
You may also have participants use their smart phones. If you have any local photographers or youth experts on photography, see if you can recruit them to come to this meeting to offer photography tips.

7. **Provide time to take pictures:**
We recommend one to two weeks. Extending past this time frame may reduce participant engagement and interest.

8. **Meet to discuss the photographs:**
Because you will need a way to share the photos with the group, ensure participants bring copies of their photos. You could get creative and have a group hashtag, a shared Instagram account, or other online methods of sharing photographs. There are three stages to discussing the photos. Also, be aware that sensitive discussions and conversations may arise. Setting ground rules, ensuring mutual respect and confidentiality is important.
    1. Select the photographs: As a group, have each participant select one or two of their photos that they feel are the most significant.
    2. Talk about the photographs: Have each participant describe what the photographs are about. You may ask questions such as: "*What do you see here? What is really happening here? How does this relate to our lives? Why does this situation exist? What can we do about it?*"
    3. Group the photographs: As a group, discuss the common themes represented by the photographs. Encourage group discussion, but also facilitate discussion towards present key issues and possible solutions.

9. **Establish a platform with participants to share the photographs and stories with policymakers or community leaders:**
As a group determine how you want to share the photos. *Through a Board of Health PowerPoint presentation with narration? A school assembly and published in school newsletter? Through one on one meetings with local decision makers? At an art gallery and press release? Or through local news stories and interviews?*

Section Three: Photovoice Tools and Resources

Comprehensive Toolkits on how to Implement a Photovoice Project:

- Counter Tobacco: Point of Sale Photovoice project guide
- Community Toolbox: Guide to Implementing Photovoice in your community
- Manuscript on using photovoice to advocate for change to a campus smoking policy
- Facilitators toolkit for a photovoice project
- Prairie Women's Health Center: Practical Guide to Photovoice

Examples of Photovoice Projects and their Process:

- Tobacco Youth Photovoice project
- Health in my Hometown- Youth photovoice project.
- Picture of Health: Youth photovoice project with introductory explanation on how to set up a project
- Vermont Kids Against Tobacco Photovoice Project
- Photovoice Hamilton: Process video for the Photovoice youth program
- Tobacco in the Community
- LGBTQ Health Photovoice Project

Sample Survey Questions for Photovoice Evaluation

This survey is about your experience participating in photovoice. The information you share will be used to improve similar activities in the future. Your opinion is very important to us, so please answer truthfully. Do not write your name on the survey. Your answers will be kept private.

1. What is one thing you liked about the photovoice project?

2. What is one thing you didn't like about the photovoice project?

3. What is one thing you learned in the process of the photovoice project?

4. Would you participate again?

5. Would you recommend this to a friend?

6. Did you feel that you made a difference?